

TAR

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of prose, poetry,
and essay.

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The April Reader (TAR) is a monthly online publication of poetry, prose, essays, and other user-submitted content. With its origins in 4chan's literature imageboard, TAR now aims to distribute the work of its contributing authors to a wide variety of audiences and communities. Ideologically, TAR hopes aid developing authors in becoming a voice for their generation. Practically, TAR aims to link its authors to a wide variety of readers, giving the former a chance at receiving critical feedback from many perspectives, and the latter a good set of reads.

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FICTION

OUR FAR FLUNG CORRESPONDENT



By Donald Borenstein

Back in the spring, a real reporter at a real news bureau with a real computer published a phony April-Fool's article saying that the EU Copyright Court was relocating to Sealand due to the micro-nation's, "unique position of diplomatic impartiality". My editors at the Akron Evening Beacon didn't recognize the piece as a farce, and I was installed as the first foreign correspondent for any local paper in the tri-county area. The conversation leading to my deployment, if I remember correctly, went as follows:

"Lewes, you're young and you're hungry for a good beat, right?" The Editor-in-Chief at the Beacon, Carl Sanderson, was a deranged living caricature of J. Jonah Jameson¹.

"Of course si-"

"How'd you like an assignment overseas?"

"I'm not sure I can do that with my counsel-"

¹ This is how Sanderson actually communicated with other human beings. It should be noted that anyone under the age of 40 was, in Sanderson's eyes "young, hungry, and looking for a good beat", including poor Esther McConnell, the Akron Evening-Beacon's High School Tennis reporter for the past twelve years.

"It's in Sealand; you know, that little oil platform or fort or whatever that declared independence or some shit like that-"

"No, I don't kno-"

"Anyways, apparently they're moving the EU Copyright courts out there, and no one's on this beat-"

"Sir, I don't know if covering Sealand is a sound investment of ou-"

"Lewes, you sonuvabitch, you've got a mouth on you, and I love ya for it, but I've got a gut, and my gut never lets me down, and this big 'ol gut is pointing its big 'ol nose at this big 'ol beat, so you gotta trust my big 'ol gut on this one!"

"Well, even so, sir, I can't leave my girlfr-"

"Horseshit; of course you can. You're young! You're hungry for a good beat! I got a gut! You'll meet someone new, settle down, raise a nice Sealandian family!² I don't see where this doesn't fit into the equation!"

"Sir, I c-can-"

"I knew you'd come around! Felt it right in

² Sanderson's only remark, upon meeting my girlfriend Tania at the office's Christmas dinner: "Oh."

the gut, I tell ya! You're a real go-getter, y'know, you've got that stuff, that right stuff. *The* right stuff, dare I say."

"Sir, I don"

"Now get out of here and get packed up, kid, you're flying out of Cleveland bright and early in the morning."

And that was how I dropped out of graduate school.

Sealand claims a double-digit populace, but only one of its citizens permanently resides on the re-purposed fort. The sole Sealandian keeping me company is the Honorable Sir Gerald McDermott, official Sealand Palace guard, Caretaker, Press Secretary, Engineer, Secretary of the Interior, and 1992 Recipient of the Silver Anchor Medal for exemplary service to God and Platform. He is a towering 5'5", with the physical presence of a cheap lamppost. We interacted three times a day: in the morning for the daily Sealand Palace Press Conference, at sundown for the lowering of the Sealand colors, and in passing as we returned to our respective, adjacent quarters for the night. Aside from these contexts, McDermott remained in his cabin, where his door was never left open.

I do what I can to distract myself. By the grace of Sealand's techno-utopian trappings, the platform has very basic internet access-- too slow for Netflix, too fast for AOL. I've gotten really good at solitaire. Sometimes I'll fritter away a few hours flipping a Sealandian half-dollar a few hundred times, just to double-check whether the law of probability holds up. It does, for the most part.

There's a boat I take every so often to the main-island³. I don't know anyone in the entire United Kingdom, though, so its not worth the effort most of the time, aside from my pilgrimages to the liquor store. I assume McDermott must make trips to the mainland in order to restock the platform's near-infinite supply of baked beans, but I've never caught him in the act. In spite of the hustle and

3 The "Sealand Steamer", contrary to what the name suggests, is actually a small motorboat with room for approximately four people. I have capsized the Sealand Steamer three times in my time on the platform.

bustle of life in Sealand, I never fail to submit my daily news brief to the *Evening Beacon*, and regardless of their reliable banality, Sanderson publishes every single one of them.

In late April I got the email stating that my term of correspondence in Sealand had been extended indefinitely; Sealand loved the press, and my daily updates were relatively popular with the Beacon's readership, so I suppose it was the sensible business decision. The email read as follows:

"Jake-

Sealand's offered to keep you stowed away-- on the house. I figure this is a great opportunity to corner the market on Sealand coverage-- the *Plain Dealer* can't offer that, eh?

If anything ever breaks in this place, they'll have to pick us up nationally. All you have to do is wait, maybe throw us a few gimmicky bones once in a while, and when something happens, my boy, it'l be grand. It'l be quite grand. You'd better not miss anything, because I've got a gut feeling, and this gut feeling is telling me that this could be grand, this story could be real grand. Keep toughin' on, soldier, you're a real champ, I knew it in my gut the moment I hired ya'.

-C.S.S.

EIC@AEB.BIZ"

And that was how I broke up with my girlfriend.

Every morning at 10:55 GMT, Press Secretary McDermott takes his place at the podium in the small conference room with the garish bruised-purple wallpaper that matches his skin, and he begins his daily debriefing, equally undeterred by my presence nor my absence⁴. News is unsurprisingly slow around these parts; the day's announcements

4 My Jameson-based diet has caused me to sleep through my fair share of alarms, and in such cases, whenever I attempt to reach Gerald for comments later in the day, he refuses to open his cabin door. In these emergency situations, I simply make stuff up-- it's justified, considering the context of my own deployment.

typically revolve around the more noteworthy individuals to purchase a title of lordship from the principality on a given day. Last week, the entire twenty-minute press conference was devoted to the news that Gwyneth Paltrow was now an official Countess of Sealand. Today was a busy day, though, as the official Sealand Roller Derby team-- composed entirely of British nationals, most of them Welsh-- were scheduled to visit the platform, along with his eminence himself, his Royal Highness Prince Regent Michael Bates I, to pose for photos before their first competition this Saturday.

I've met the Prince Regent a few times. He's a decent fellow: fifty, balding, and exceptionally portly, he's otherwise devoid of the aristocratic trappings others may have with such a title, though it does help that his nation commands no standing army. We've shared a drink or two, and small talk whenever he comes to visit⁵. The Prince Regent is convinced that expanding Sealand's athletic presence is the key to elevating the platform to a state of diplomatic legitimacy-- "Whatever that means for our fine principality". As such, the Sealand Defilers' are a big deal around here; in his Press Release, Prince Regent Michael declared the team to be, "the newest, most exciting chapter in Sealand's burgeoning history".

The People's History of the Principality of Sealand is maintained by the Chief Historian of Sealand, Gerald McDermott. It is written in reverse, as McDermott simply staples a new page on top of the ledger with each additional entry. *The People's History of the Principality of Sealand* reads in verbatim as follows:

¶ 2012: Sealand is bringing an online casino to the platform in December, featuring TWO massive computer servers and an extra satellite dish. Sealand has entered the 21st century! Hail Sealand! *E Mare, Libertas!* --Chief Historian and Domestic Affairs Chief of Sealand, Sir Gerald McDermott

¶ 2006: Sealand caught on fire, but we proudly rebuilt ourselves from the ashes, adorning the exterior of Platform Bates

5 Through such conversations I can confirm that the Prince Regent's wife is, indeed, "lovely".

solely in shades of Black and Red, as a display of Sealandian pride and fortitude. Hail Sealand! *E Mare, Libertas!* -- The Honorable Sir Gerald McDermott, Chief Historian and Domestic Affairs Chief for Sealand

¶ 1997: The founder of Sealand, the great and honorable Prince Roy Bates, retired to the UK with his wife. The exalted Prince Regent Michael also resides on the mainland, reigning over his birthright from afar with the utmost grace and poise. Hail Sealand! *E Mare, Libertas!* --Chief Historian, the Honorable Sir Gerald McDermott

¶ 1977: Self-proclaimed Prime Minister of Sealand Alexander Achenbach tried to stage a foolish military coup of the platform. It was wildly unsuccessful, and the treasonous dreg met his due fate. Hail Sealand! *E Mare, Libertas, Forever! Excelsior! Ahoy!*-- Chief Historian Sir [sic]Honorabable Gerald McDermott ⁶

¶ 1967: The Exalted Prince Roy Bates has rightfully claimed the abandoned HM Fort Roughs to be the Capitol of the Sovereign principality of Sealand! Hail Bates! Hail Sealand! *E Mare, Libertas!* --Chief Historian Gerald McDermott

Meanwhile, obnoxious college kids and fifty-year-old dads discovering the internet buy Sealand titles and t-shirts, and the Principality's economy supports itself through the merits of its own mere existence. That's about the whole of it.

The Sealand Defilers stood in a single row directly behind Press Secretary McDermott, ten-strong in their forest-green tank top uniforms. A couple of them clearly struggled to stifle a few chuckles at the absurdity of the honors they were there to receive before an audience consisting of a cold, soundless sea and its lone diligent correspondent. Each Defiler had their own coping stratagems; some shuffled their feet sheepishly, others bit their lips, all of them taking care to avoid

6 To elaborate: Achenbach enlisted the service of Dutch and German mercenaries, and stormed the platform while Prince Roy and his wife were on holiday, taking McDermott and Prince Regent Michael hostage. Prince Roy retook the platform with a fully armed Helicopter.

contact with the six other eyes in the room.

McDermott cleared his throat, and began,

“In 1967, the year of our Lord, our brave Patriarch, His Eminence Prince Roy Bates I, founded this nation with a vision of a community whose thresholds of acceptance were as broad and all-encompassing as the seas themselves.” McDermott's concept of pageantry mostly consisted of throwing regal-sounding words at a page until he was content with the end result, and may the Oxford English Dictionary be damned if it had any plans to get in his way.

Sometimes it worked out alright for Gerald, but more often than not, the end result was a masterwork of incoherence: “In Sealand's grand millennial ascendance to a state of greater global significance, we have championed our penchant for existing on the cultural zeitgeist, a grand beacon for the great global world in which our Principality was built to thrive. It is with this, then, that I am pleased to proclaim to the masses of this great planet, the official formation of the Grand Principality of Sealand's Micro-National Roller Derby Association!”

The Press Secretary paused, his hands aloft, awaiting the applause he felt such an announcement deserved. McDermott was in his mid-seventies by now, and the tradewinds showed their wear on his every tortured wrinkle.

I broke the silence with a golf clap, and McDermott deemed this sufficient enough recognition to continue, “And now, without further adieu, here to present the members of the SM-NRDA's very first Roller Derby club, his Royal Highness, the Prince Regent, Sir Michael Bates I, his holy see, and philosopher-king of the great empire of Sealand!”

McDermott crouched behind the podium, and pressed “PLAY” on a small tape-deck boombox he kept for such occasions. The Sealand National Anthem struggled to be heard through a haze of tape hiss and tinny speakers. Basil Simonenko's “*E Mare Libertas*”⁷ was a piece that clearly intended to

7 “*E Mare Libertas*”-- latin for, “From the Sea, Freedom”, is also Sealand's official motto. The Sealand National Anthem takes its name accordingly.

convey a sense of wonder and majesty, with its triumphant horn introduction and the sinusoidal sweeps of its flute and string melodies. It always seemed just a bit off-- as though it were an anthem filtered through the haze of a tipsy sailor, its attempted grandiosity undermined by the unfathomable silliness of its existence. Gerald McDermott, of course, was not in on this joke, and his eyes welled up with micronationalistic pride.

While I waited a lifetime for the two-minute anthem to run its course, I started staring off into the sea, an activity I undertook with surprising infrequency considering our location. Our deck faced the mainland--which, of course, is itself an island-- but it was impossible to see anything too far from the platform, thanks to Great Britain's primary exports of perpetually gray skies and impenetrable fog. I snapped back to attention just in time to see Prince Regent Michael stride casually down the center aisle of the room, dressed in Reeboks, a black polo, and denim shorts. He gave a quick wave of his hand, and told McDermott to cut the music. The most decorated man in Sealand fumbled with the buttons behind the podium for a moment or two before bringing the anthem to a slightly premature halt.

The Prince Regent cleared his throat for a moment, holding himself up by the edge of the podium, and he muttered: “Unfortunately, due to recent developments regarding the state of Prince Roy's health, we're rescheduling today's press conference for next Wednesday. I have no further news to share on my father's present condition at this time, and again, we're sorry for the inconvenience.” Prince Regent Michael left the podium almost too quickly for McDermott to play him off with the anthem. Almost.

The Sealand Defilers remained standing in a confused but respectful state of attention, trying to figure out what they would do for the next two hours while they waited for their ride. McDermott turned to the team and quietly whispered a few unintelligible attempts at instructions in their general direction. Before he could clarify, he'd already retreated to his cabin, leaving his guests completely in the dark. The Defilers now all stared me straight in the eyes, looking for answers, though I had nothing to offer. The

team captain-- a short, brunette, green-eyed woman who couldn't be more than twenty-six-- whipped out her cell phone, in hopes of stumbling across a signal to call their boat service. "We've got a landline down the hall," I mumble, as I tried to remember how to talk to someone vaguely near my age, and someone as astoundingly cute as the team captain seemed in that moment. "Dial nine for outside calls."

She chuckled. I didn't realize that she assumed my directions were a joke. "Do you--"

"Nope," I cut her off, "No idea. I'm just with the press corps." At this point, the entire team was cracking up.

The captain finally pulled herself together enough to ask me where they could find a bathroom. A sharper man would've pointed to the sea, but I simply directed the team to head downstairs past the boiler room. They filed down the staircase, still guffawing, still marveling that such a place existed. I often forgot that to most of the world, Sealand was a punchline, the kind of curiosity that inspires lazy Cracked articles and regurgitated blog posts at its expense. "How could such a ridiculous, nonsensical, and utterly *pointless* place *actually exist?*", they all inevitably ask with a self-satisfied giggle, seeking no actual answer. The question haunts my every waking hour. I take a moment to opt out of my prolonged existential discussion, as I fade into a beautiful daydream where my platform transforms into a pillar of white hot flames. In this fleeting moment, I feel warm and loved. *E Mare, Libertas.*

I decided to get my daily update out of the way, developing stories be damned:

"DATELINE:

OCTOBER 9TH, 2012

JAKE LEWES, FOREIGN
CORRESPONDENT FOR THE AKRON
EVENING BEACON

SEALAND, SEALAND

A ceremony to honor the establishment of an official Sealand Roller Derby team was derailed today by the news that the Honorable Prince Roy Bates I, founder of Sealand, was in

critical condition. No details are available at the time of press, though the ceremony has been postponed until further notice."

I emailed my report, and closed my eyes once more.

The Defilers were pulling away in a lifeboat, one or two of them blowing kisses in my general direction as I clung to the last remaining patch of unscorched steel. McDermott is sinking below the waves, still not uttering a word to me, the Sealand Anthem smothered by a deafening static crackle as the boombox suffers mortal water damage. Prince Regent Michael is hovering overhead in a helicopter, a ladder dangling in front of my face, a megaphone in his hand, bellowing something about getting on and getting out of there. Just as I reach my hand out, my patch of fake land collapses under my feet, and the promises of Sealand are fulfilled. *E Mare Libertas.*

I'm jolted awake by the roller derby captain's hand on my shoulder. "They told me to bring you out to the flag deck." I slowly straightened up, and I made my way down the empty red-and-black corridor --"The Hall of Military History", a title that vastly overstates Sealand's combat record by the mere suggestion of its existence. The deck itself is nothing more than a stretch of barren steel, with a single flagpole sticking up from the platform's edge. The national flag of Sealand is admirably hideous, attempting to employ some form of naval minimalism, as the flag consists of only three solid colors. Instead, the diagonal red, white, and black stripes make Sealand look like a fascistic upstart-- albeit, one that clearly never read Mussolini's memoir, "Chic Terror: Designing Your Totalitarian Regime". The cloth flew at half mast, using botched semaphore to convey its state of aesthetic distress. I often fantasize about a passing vessel mistaking our flag for a stranded ship, and they will insist on taking us back to dry land out of moral obligation. Yet the sun continues to rise and fall before an indifferent audience, and another part of me dies as I realize no one is coming to save us, or at the very least put us out of our misery. I can only imagine how little of Gilligan

remained by the end of the show.

The Defilers were stationed off to the side of the deck, biting at their fingernails, twiddling their thumbs, and in the case of the Captain, unsubtly probing their fingers into their nostrils. McDermott stood at attention in front of the flag pole, and Prince Michael of Sealand sat at the end of the deck, his legs crossed, his face resting in his hands. McDermott marched to the center of the deck, to do what he did best:

“It is with profound grief and a sadness that plumbs the depths of the sea itself that we sorrowfully announce the passing of His Royal Highness, Prince Roy Bates I, Philosopher King and Leader of Men, on this day, October 9th, 2012, in the year of our lord, *Anno Domini*. His supreme eminence presided over this platform from its founding until the days when his mind began to wane, though his spirit eternally waxed nonetheless, even in his twilight.”

McDermott paused for a moment to fight back the tears that came so easily to him, before returning to his profoundly heartfelt but syntactically overzealous elegy: “There will never be another man with even a modicum of the greatness and tenacity, and sheer inventive brilliance than that of our founder, and it is with a heavy heart that we trudge on in his absence. But fear not, my fellow Sealandians, for—”

“Alright, Gerald, that's enough.” Gerald McDermott gave Michael Bates a mortified glare, “I'll take it from here.”

The new Prince stumbled into an upright position, and wiped his grimy hands off on his jean shorts, leaving black fingerprints all over the fabric. “I loved my Father. I loved him more than any of you—” Gerald's face twitched with visible pain as Michael said this— “more than this shitty little metal island ever could. I don't want to talk about that, or about him. I don't ever want to talk about him. I just want to disappear, and live like a real person. All the years of my life I spent on this platform, pleading for relevance, and what do I have to show for it? T-Shirts? A wikipedia page? A flag?” By this point, Michael's face was flushed red and strewn with tears, and he panted as his lungs tried to keep pace with his ever escalating

volume and pitch.

“I don't care about any of it. I don't want to care about it anymore. I can't be arsed to care anymore. Therefore, in my first and last act as a full Prince, I, Michael Bates, am formally dissolving the nation of Sealand, effective immediately. I will be placing the property up for sale as soon as possible. Go home, people.” Michael shambled back into the main building to seek out his quarters, and no one else on the platform dared to break the silence.

A few hours had passed since Sealand's final press conference, and the renaming denizens of the platform shuffled about in an impatient daze. The Sealand Defilers, whose boat was an hour late and counting, were huddled up in the far corner of the Throne Room. Those of them who weren't napping spent their free time toying with the regal memorabilia and chatting amongst themselves. I started to type up a follow-up report to Akron, detailing the death of Roy Bates, and the dissolution of Sealand. I dreaded a response, knowing that Sanderson would have me exhaust this story before I could finally come home. I mulled over the fact that I still called Akron home, even though I'd never liked the place to begin with and now it had absolutely nothing to offer me. Before I could give the future any more thought, a severely intoxicated McDermott stumbled out of his quarters, and plopped down in the seat next to mine. He held his boombox in his right arm, and pressed play, prompting *E Mare Libertas* to hiss through the speakers once more. I stumbled for something to say, only to settle on the worst possible choice: “So, how are you feeling, Gerald?”

I watched his lower lip tremble, as his eyes nobly tried to hide the inevitable waterworks, and I braced myself a collapse that never came. Gerald held fast, a few tears half welling in the corners of his eyes, unable to trickle out fully on their own. He didn't say a word; when the weight of your world vanishes from your shoulders and leaves you with nothing, what can anyone possibly say? I pulled out a handle of Bombay Sapphire from my bag, and I poured him a large glass. The only toast that felt appropriate was the requisite, “*E Mare Libertas*”, and he threw his

entire drink back in a single, desperate gulp. I did my best to follow suit, but before I'd finished, Gerald had already poured himself another shot or five. The cassette tape came to a stop, prompting Gerald to flip it over, and press play again-- it was the same anthem on both sides.

I poured and summarily drank another two large glasses of gin, and Gerald did the same in silence. At one point, Gerald did the unthinkable, as he began to mutter drunkenly in my direction:

"Will I remember how to drive? I don't know if I remember how to drive. I haven't driven in forty-four years. I gave up the roads for this country." He returned to his glass, not saying another word before passing out face-first on the table. I hoped with all my hopes that Gerald was immersed in the same fantasy I enjoyed every night in my various stupors both sober and drunken, for he had earned it far more than I.

The Sealand Defilers were soon picked up by their boat service, and they offered me a ride back to shore before they left. I turned them down, telling them I had to finish a story overnight-- at least, I think those words came out of my mouth, but at this point, it was impossible to tell. I had another gin, and the minimally completed word document in front of me blurred into oblivion as I passed out in a heap next to my chair.

I jolted awake in the middle of the night, and my Pavlovian impulse was to check my email. Of course, it was Sanderson-- who else ever wrote to me anymore? As usual, the email was titled, "From the E-Desk of Carl Sanderson, Editor in Chief, Akron Evening Beacon"-- Sanderson had yet to discover the purpose of the subject line:

"Jake--

The AP beat you to the punch-- even got quotes from Prince Michael. You had ONE job. ONE. You had to be FIRST to these stories. AND YOU BLEW IT. Pack your things and get back here on the next plane; we need you to move your stuff out of your desk here in the office as soon as possible, because your ass is fired.

I had a gut feeling that you were the man

for this job, but it seems like my gut isn't what it used to be. It just fuckin' kills me to no end, Jake, because Goddamnit, YOU HAD ONE JOB. ONE. FUCKING. JOB.

THIS COULD HAVE BEEN GRAND, JAKE. THIS COULD HAVE BEEN BIG. YOU JUST HAD ONE FUCKING JOB, BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE GUTS FOR IT.

-C.S.S.

EIC@AEB.BIZ"

I start cackling like a maniac, and I push my computer closed, unable to contain myself. The laughter echoes off the metal walls of my enclave, my cries lost on a sea that can't be arsed to care. I expect the noise to cause Gerald to stir, but he's still passed out on the table. I don't even bother to consider whether he's still breathing, and I pray to some gleefully *laissez-faire* God that he's a decent enough man to do the same when the roles are reversed tomorrow morning.

Cinco de Mayo

By Lucy Younghusband

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that you go to your local Mexican joint on bank holiday Monday and find that it's all day happy hour with free food buffet thrown in. So you settle yourself and phone all your mates and tell them about this amazing deal and while you wait for them to arrive you order a margarita because why not, it's all day happy hour and you lick the salt from the edge of the glass and suck on the lemon because already you're forgetting that the buffet is free.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that the Mexican place is full of Mexican families celebrating Cinco de Mayo at great long tables spread out with food and grannies and children and babies in carrycots and you marvel at the bottles of tequila opened like wine on the table and you hope that one day you'll be rich enough to drink like that.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that the restaurant lays on a band and the families get up and start dancing and you start dancing too because that is the rule with good old Jose Cuervo but your latin moves are not quite up to the couple cha-cha-ing around the floor and somehow you end up rolling, rolling about on the parquet but the cha-cha-ing couple have also been fired by the tequila and think it is funny and join you until a whole gang of you is rolling about 'til

the band stops playing, refusing to go on 'til somebody gives them tequila. And the family adds a table to theirs so you can join them and talk in English while they talk Spanish (or so you assume) that you can't understand.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that you text your friends asking where the hell are they, are they coming because you know after four hours you should be going but yes, they text, we'll be there soon, don't go anywhere, so you order another margarita. And then your companion says oh my god there's broken glass in my tequila and indeed there is and for a while you're quiet thinking about glass shards in your stomach, intestines, slicing away to a slow bleeding death but in truth you're too drunk to care. So instead you call over the waiter and he says, Oh my and to compensate gives you free margaritas and free tequila shots. And the girl with tequila and glasses in holsters comes over and puts a hard hat on your head and it's hot and sweaty but you don't care because she is slamming a shot of tequila on top of your head and pouring it into your mouth and rolling your face and slapping your cheeks and kissing you courtesy of the management, just in case you could string two words of complaint together.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that your friends never do turn up. But it doesn't

matter because you have new friends now. A big family of friends. And it's closing time or at least it's dark and you're all piling into the back of a long black limousine and the man in the suit with black pencil moustache is saying to try a bit of Columbia's finest holding a rolled up twenty over a smoothed out newspaper. And next thing you know the limos pull up outside a club with torches each side of the door and everyone is smiles and welcomes and kisses on the cheek and inside it's latin music and mojitos and skin to skin dancing.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that you have work the next day. And you know you are too hungover to walk to work as you usually do but you're still too drunk from the day before to realize that you should be ringing in sick so instead you pick up the phone and order a cab because work starts in, shit, ten minutes. So you sit in the cab thinking all is okay until the driver asks, What are the maracas for? And you look down and see that round your neck are a pair of maracas hanging like testicles you got in the club you went on to after the one with the torches outside. And you're still wearing the same shirt.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is the receptionist at work saying, Oh good, you're here. And you say, Why? And she says, Mr. X just flew in from Hong Kong and wants to have meetings with you all day. And you're standing there in a floor stained shirt with testicle necklace and you think, No. But you have to because she's already phoned up to him. So you get a clean T-shirt from Marketing promoting products for children. But the shirt is for children and it's so small and tight that you look like one of those ladies that cameras at football matches like to follow. And all through the meeting Mr. X can't take his eyes off the two chicks on your chest popping out of their nest. And then he suggests a business lunch.

The trouble with Cinco de Mayo is that the topping up lunch goes so well you get a promotion. Which means more lunches and free food but also means damned sobriety.

And suddenly, quite suddenly, you find that you walked down tequila hall and opened the door to growing up. And that's worse than the hangover ever was.

Girls Gone

By Kieran Hunt

"Some boys take a beautiful girl
and hide her away
from the rest of the world
I wanna be the one to walk in the
sun
oh girls, they wanna have fun."
- Cyndi Lauper

Take a sweeping look over the EXX-Room nightclub. Glitz, glamour and neon-pink tinged lights hitting machine made smog. Vibrant colours clash violently against the small patches of shadow throughout the club. Waves of bodies jerk in sync to a post-dub trance song coming to the speakers via the young DJ's iMac Pro. Past the dance floor, before the crowded bar lay a series of 'stand around' tables painted a toxic tacky yellow. Purses, empty glasses, and roofed drinks scatter the tops of the mostly abandoned tables - sans one. 'The usual's' table. The table just close enough to the wall to remain inconspicuous but still keep a constant view on the dance floor. Arrived at early and guarded 'til close. Standing around the table, looking uncomfortable are E's (Esther), Tess (Altesa) and Mo' (don't ask). Focusing in on the girls, Tess is mid story, explaining about a particularly asshole-ish customer she had dealt with that day. Or another incident with a customer she has grown to loathe

over the years. Or just adding new nouns and dates to the same story; Tess isn't even sure at this point. But this "balding cockwiper" had been eating away at her all day, and now she had her chance to unload. Supposedly he had snapped at her unprompted, resulting in a flurry of tears and ethnic slur in the backroom.

E's and Mo' nod when looked at, and drink more as the story goes on.

The music is blasting at ear splitting volume, or what passes as audible to the brain dead crowd. Among the cheaply bought ambience, several things pop out: (aside from patches of skin and vomit streaks along the walls) the board behind the bar notating LOW LOW \$6.75 ANAL SLUTS in toxic green ink against a black board, the too embarrassing to be ironic wispy hairdo on the aging bartender, the groupies lining up to wink at said bartender. The bartender's brisk pouring and bobbing seems to cast silhouetted images on the bar as the strobe lights count off to the beat (currently a remix of early 2000s "classic" hip hop). E's eyes up the bartender, as she has been doing for the last few songs. E's had been fucking Flo' (nee(sic) Florence) for the past few weeks, with little regard to her current boyfriend. E's was just the type to indulge now and face facts later. Take the

whole cheesecake she'd eaten on a whim earlier that evening - the cake that would not mesh well with her Merlot come a few hours. The midlife crisis poster boy Flo' is going to have a hard time washing red chunks out of his tight white H&M rockstar jeans tomorrow.

Mo' seems to be the only one out of her element. Unlike the showboats and exhibitionists spread eagle throughout the club, Mo' seems to be the kind of gal that'd just get you right off the bat, if you'd let her. She's much too sensible for the EXX. Even how she's dressed: white tipped shoes (low heel, she's walking) a blue dress looking to be well worn, comfortable, something she has being out in for years and loving it. E's conversely, is a safari unto herself: Zebra print dress cut mid thigh, leopard leg warmers, a cheetah hair piece topped with a sparkly red collar. Tess, foreign and moody, is all black to, quote: appear skinnier, not like I'm in mourning, JACKASS.

E's, Tess and Mo' watch the meat show from their sick yellow table, alone among the wallflowers and 40+ y/o divorcees. Slowly mulling over their drinks, E's (merlot) wistfully blows and pins her hair back to its trademark 'poof' as Flo spills the shot peering over his gaggle of girls attempting to catch her eye. Tess (jager bombs, again) is planning her grand entrance onto the dance floor, to spasm wildly for what will seem longer than 3 songs. Once that's accomplished, feeling bloated and judged Tess will more than likely head home and vomit up the shame. Mo' (brew) is going to nurse her beer throughout the evenings, smile when talked to until some guy makes eye contact at her, to which she'll immediately get self conscious and leave without a goodbye.

The lights are picking up again for the drop, the music thudding so loud the drinks shake on their table. Tess, all worn out from recounting her day, wishes for more than the one cigarette she'd promised herself that night. E's has picked up the social slack and is yelling aloud about Flo's bitch of an ex wife. For someone who has moved on, why was she still calling Flo' daily, and what did that really mean? Mo' frowns, drinks, and makes a mental grocery list.

The honest to God light-up dance floor (complete with seductive cages, usually full) is packed with writhe and grind. In the stale Fresnel light and constant shadows, it is hard to tell where some couples begin, or end, or daisy chain to infinity. All around rhinestones shine on shirts, arms flex and contract, dresses ride up intentionally, wet panties are fumbled and bumbled by bulky fingers, perfume and musk meet to make a smell resembling sex's nauseous rank. Most important, all eyes are closed to keep from really seeing one another, Tess says as she slaps the table, hard, more angry at herself than the table. Mo' answers "or themselves" and everyone would pretend the music was too loud to hear her.

E's, Tess and Mo' don't work together anymore, have not worked together for quite some time now. Really, 'the usuals' have long since lost any reason to see each other, aside from these inane, disappointing excursions to the EXX. Each weekend (or second weekend on Holidays) they stand in line, stand at the bar, stand at the bathroom while Tess pissed for the fourth time that night, stand at their table, then go their separate ways. The only glue that held the group together was the unwiped stick of forgotten drinks on their favourite yellow table.

The music changes to something slower, instrumental. The crowd nearly breaks the DJ's MacBook in protest, crowding his 3 foot semi-raised platform, tossing used ice cubes his way. Top 40 run through a blender is put back on.

Things were different back when 'the group' was coming in its entirety. Almost 10 in total, mostly coworkers and friends-of-friends (who eventually became friends-with-benefits with friends and friends-of-friends) coming for a couple drinks and then heading to their respective houses or spouses. Then either one couple had a falling out, or worked weekend nights, and the couple drinks went up by the gallons. The more they drank, the later the nights became, the less 'the group' showed up. Tess once sobbed out that everyone was leaving her, it was like she was reliving high school all over again. Both E's and Mo' agreed.

Their drinks nearly done, 'the usuals'

were not surprised to see a fresh round being brought over by the barely legal serving girl. Fucking Flo had its benefits, and they raised a “cheers” to E’s. E’s, in turn slammed back her drink and gave Flo’ a glance that begged for something more. Before the gesture finished Flo’ hurried over as fast as his tawny legs could carry him, bringing with him a complimentary Pornstar. This almost made up for the tired innuendo Flo’ made every time he gave her the drink. E’s willed herself to look past Flo’s vague sexism, or possibly never saw anything to look past, downed the new drink and told ‘the usuals’ she was going to the stockroom. As they walked away, Tess and Mo’ heard an audible ass slap in the direction the two of them had headed. Tess had done her jager bomb already and despite her screaming bladder, decided she loved the song currently playing and was going to lose herself to something. (but never someone) Mo’ was still waiting for a bottle opener that she doubted was going to come.

Lights go black for dramatic effect as the DJ flips the tracks to something he himself had mixed. The sweating, heaving, happy(?) crowd on the floor is puzzled at first until their groins start to rhythmically return to autopilot. As the lights remain off, the three gals look around for one another, seeing nothing. A flash of light: E’s hands are unable to be seen as a shuddering, bug eyes Flo’ ushers her into the door behind the bar. Lights out, bass starts to build. Flash: Tessa has already bumped into three people. The club staff begins to gather around, they had been waiting for this for most of the night. Lights out, tune begins to enchant the dirty building. All lights up, Mo’ is sipping beer numero duo as a well-dressed mustachioed figure begins to notice her.

Blackout.

Trains

By Anthony Pokrovsky

Michael frowned at the paper. Not because it had done any to harm him, but rather because it hadn't actively helped him. Michael had been assigned to write a one page assignment on trains. A Herculean effort at the best of times, such a daunting feat would require complete synergy and cooperation between all parties involved. In order to properly prepare himself and his writing materials, he had taken the necessary precautions. First, he had waited until the day before it was due. Nothing like a little pressure to inspire fear in his pen and paper. Then, he had made sure to watch enough television to adequately expose himself to the world around him. "Surely reruns of *The Simpsons* will give me insight," Michael reasoned. For the sake of relevance, he chose an episode featuring a monorail; after all, monorails are basically trains. It was less informative than he had hoped. After the credits rolled, he realized that the remote had disappeared. Cursing the gods that conspired against him, he was

forced to sit through another episode. Seeing Homer learning the meaning of responsibility didn't help much either. "That's the trouble with television," Michael thought, "There are no practical lessons." Michael glanced at the clock. It was approaching midnight. He spat at his blank page in disgust. It now had his saliva on it, but still no words. He lifted up his notebook and held it under his desk lamp to inspect the damage. The marks from the saliva glittered in the light. It reminded him of the works of Jackson Pollack, one of his favorite artists. The wet specks juxtaposed with the dry paper in a way that mesmerized Michael. Tears glistened in his eyes, although that may have been from staring at the lamplight. "By God!" he cried in jubilation, "I'm a genius!" He tore the page from the notebook and tucked it into his backpack, making a mental note to save it for the art fair at the end of the month. Beaming with pride at the thought of his masterpiece, he climbed into bed as a warm sense of accomplishment lulled him to sleep.

Temperature

By Hume Francis

On the square of finely-cut grass at the centre of New Mercury stood a twelve foot thermometer. The residents of the town would pass each morning on their way to work or the store and make polite conversation with one another regarding the day's weather and how consistent the coming season would be. Those in less of a hurry, the elderly and the knots of children, would tarry on the pavements or stand cross-armed in the long shadow of the instrument and discuss not only the temperature currently recorded but also the records set in the past; the coldest winters and sweltering summers.

The children would place their bets, offering a small pile of baseball cards, candies and loose change as their stake, and one of the kids would approach the group of older men and ask them to validate a claim that the temperature hadn't been that high for the past two decades. Running back with the news like a messenger under a fire, the answer would be shared excitedly and the winnings distributed under the eager eyes of the children.

Early one day in mid-autumn the

town's residents ran through their panoply of morning routines, the sound of which seethed beneath the multitude of roofs and eventually spilled out and merged into the collective ignition of a thousand engines. When the first cars approached the road passing through the centre of town the more alert drivers noticed an absence in the corners of their eyes. The thermometer was gone. A blank space occupied the area where it had previously stood, and when the sun finally rose above the rooftops and dissipated the fog from the streets, the void at the centre of the town was emphasized by the rays of light lying unobstructed across the square.

Meanwhile Mr Franklin, the octogenarian living three blocks away from the town centre, tiptoed up creaking stairs to his attic. He flicked a switch and rows of fat bulbs pinged and illuminated the room. The steep green hills appeared glimmering after light rainfall; an effect he'd mastered after applying the glazing agent with several different brushes. With lips curled around his teeth and pale puffs of breath spurting from his mouth, he made his way excitedly along the lines of track,

occasionally leaning over to gain an eye-level perspective of the tiny world he'd built over the past decade.

After all was checked he flicked another switch and several trains jerked into motion, and soon he stood at the centre of his creation, a giant among the hills and the broad streets. He edged himself along the passage which allowed him to navigate the landscape, ducking beneath Big Top Mountain and reaching the other side just in time to watch the last carriage of the black steam train disappear into the tunnel.

At first there were questions. A town meeting was called and nobody could provide any answers to the anxious crowd that gathered. There had been troubles over the ownership of the land; a firm from out of state had maintained that their papers guaranteed possession of the whole square at the heart of New Mercury, and had at one point made moves to construct a fast food restaurant until a another location was chosen along a nearby highway. Thieves were suggested by a local store owner. He suspected the children of the migrant workers who were always out to make an extra buck, whatever the means.

The meeting and all the ones that followed it ended with disappointment and fatigue, a night of worried telephone conversations between neighbours and family members anxious to ease their nerves. Eventually people stopped gathering at the square; the children took a quicker route to school and the old men barely ventured from their homes to meet and discuss the temperature.

Two months after the thermometer vanished a group of men walked into the café which overlooked the town square. Each one wore a different colour suit, and what the handful of diners smelled as they screwed up their noses and turned to rest their eyes on this incoming pack of smiling men was the miscegenation of several brands of cologne; the aura of expensive putridity. In their bulky briefcases was a new

product designed somewhere in the East which had now surpassed powdered milk as the highest-selling product of the year in the mid-West. The men made their way down the streets of the town knocking on each door and nodding gaily at the faces peering anxiously at them from behind lace curtains as they passed.

Soon every other house had a twelve inch thermometer hanging on the wall above the breakfast table or television set. Crucifixes and old-fashioned clocks were taken down and placed in draws to make room for the new purchase. Before long more men in more suits arrived, and even the most apprehensive and sceptical citizens inched open their doors to hear what these strange men had to say. Cash was handed out and sealed boxes were cheerily passed beneath taught door chains.

The Disciple Luke Express was curling its way around the coloured tinfoil lake when Mr Franklin heard the doorbell ring. As he made his way downstairs as if treading on ice, he heard a car door shut and a vehicle pull away. Opening the front door he bent and picked up a wrapped present. Placing this on the kitchen counter he read the attached note: 'To Dad, Happy Birthday, Michael'. He hadn't seen his son in over a month, and stepped back outside into the surging wind to check if he was still around.

Confident that his son was in a hurry someplace, everyone else seemed to be lately, he removed the paper and opened the box underneath. Inside was a large thermometer with the national flag covering the front. Mr Franklin was initially confused as to how one would tell the temperature with this flag in the way, but upon closer inspection he realized it was a sticker to be peeled off by feminine fingernails. Lacking these, he located a pair of nail scissors and scraped it away. He looked the thermometer over as he would one of the small train carriages, and walked upstairs to place it on the set of drawers

between a picture of his deceased wife and another of his son on his eleventh birthday sat in the café a short way away, the sky behind their shoulders a clear cloudless blue.

Almost everybody in town had their own thermometer eventually. A billboard had been placed strategically on the road between the town and a colossal lumber mill, the main employer of its citizenry. On this giant board was the image of a suited man holding a thermometer at waist height, his two children and the family dog looking up at it in innocent awe while his wife, one thin arm wrapped around his neck, looked down at it from over shoulder with an erotic, secretive smile, her other hand clutching the base of the instrument. Neighbours in the more affluent areas had already become inquisitive as to the type of thermometer possessed by those around them. The manufactured excuse of a lost dog or an unreceived letter sent housewives knocking on neighbouring doors, looking around the walls for their thermometer while the owner went to check for any misdirected letters in the stack of mail they'd received just that morning.

Arguments between the men began breaking out, the superficial reason being drunkenness or a spilled drink but the memory of a comment regarding the size and accuracy of the other's thermometer being the underlying cause. One man, Frank Roberts, who had only recently moved into town from another state in search of work, was found dead in a back alley with his throat slit. The bloody teeth of a smashed bottle lay adjacent to the prostrated corpse. The police were left scratching their heads when no evidence suggested a murderer.

As winter set in the streets were empty, not even the bright-suited salesmen could be seen striding around with their smiles and fresh batches of thermometers. The new thermometers

were delivered directly to the now unchained doors of the consumers. Some homeowners had opted not to become involved with the trend, however. Their walls remained conspicuously thermometer-free.

These people were treated with more temple-tapping bemusement than those who had fallen into debt to acquire the latest, most extravagant model available on the market. Some friendship groups which had drifted apart now reformed, the sole topic of their tense and acerbic conversations being those deviants who had abstained from enriching their lives by purchasing a thermometer. A travelling priest preaching about the sins of rampant individualism was dealt a similar treatment, ushered out of town by a soundtrack of laughter.

The heavy snow clouds finally burst one Saturday afternoon and the streets and rooftops of New Mercury became padded snow like flat dead clouds. Mr Franklin had spent the morning working on the scene of his creation, adding trouser legs onto the shorts of the boys frozen forever in the midst of their games. Stepping back from this work he watched two trains pass beneath the town's water tower, imagining the passengers eagerly waving to one another through the windows before the final carriages parted.

In the kitchen the old man placed a kettle on the stove and sat in his favourite chair overlooking the small square of shaded concrete which served as his back yard. He sat watching two squirrels contesting ownership of a large pinecone, and a dozen wrinkles smiled across his face before his thin lips joined in. The kettle's whistle began its slow ascent, and Mr Franklin did not hear as one of the fat bulbs fell loose from the attic ceiling above. This bulb now drooped inches away from the south slope of Big Top Mountain, swinging imperceptibly and causing a landslide of oils and paint. The brown and green sludge descended slowly, revealing the wire mesh beneath. A small man dressed

in black stood pointing or saluting towards the mountainside as the children in the street, their legs shining from the glow, remained static beneath the descending mass.

When the first flames leapt into existence Mr Franklin was busy tossing breadcrumbs onto the snow near the squirrels that were still grappling near the pinecone. He was still chuckling as he slid the door back into place and rotated the blinds to shut out the fading light.

Once he reached halfway up the staircase leading to the first floor he stopped and his lips formed hurried, unspoken words. A stream of smoke spilled down the narrow wooden stairs which led to the attic, and the crack and pop of a steady fire could be heard from above as he approached them. Unwilling to see his creation destroyed, the old man flapped his way through the thickening smoke and ran shaking hands along the wallpaper as he ventured up to the burning room.

Gloria Patton stood washing the dishes while her husband reclined on the sofa in the living room in front of the television. Having recently reached her mid-50s, time had settled her facial features into an expression that an outsider would describe as snobbish or pompous. She noted each person cautiously walking down the street and, as her habit dictated, swiftly drew up a list of their faults and a summary of their chequered past. She paused from scrubbing the plates and turned to check the time. She saw the large thermometer where the clock had been and tutted before calling her husband:

“Honey, what’s the time?”
“Wha’d you say?” came the aggravated reply

“I asked you for the time if that ain’t too much to ask,” she shouted without turning this time.

“Four thirty, say is there any ham left over in the fridge?”

“Sure is, it’s gotta go out so you might as well eat it”

Mike Patton stumbled into the kitchen, stretching his thick arms in a silent yawn, and crouched in the cool glow of the new fridge which lay a block of dead light on the floor of the dark kitchen.

“Hey Mike take a look here,” said Gloria, letting a coffee cup splash into the water.

Mike rose and approached the window beside his wife. Across the street dense black smoke puffed from a small window just below the roof. As they watched this smoke became thicker and escaped more rapidly. Windows lower down began coughing too, and the couple stood and watched. They watched as the thick snowfall battled against the rising smoke, fighting for dominance over the scene.

“Looks like it’s burning up somethin’ fierce,” said Mike, yawning again and returning to open the fridge and kneeling again.

Gloria watched as the first orange flames became visible, creeping up the side of the stained white wall of the house opposite like Virginia creeper watched in time lapse. She turned and picked up the cordless phone but then looked up at the thermometer, biting her lip and clicking her tongue inside her mouth. Mike looked up and moves his eyes between his wife and the object of her gaze.

“What’cha doin there?” he asked.

“Oh I don’t know,” she replied after a pause. “Seems like I should do at least sumthin’ about that fire over there”.

Mike moved to his wife’s side once more. They stood looking up at the thermometer and noted the low, flaccid temperature line. Gloria eventually replaced the phone and Mike withdrew, stolidly taking small bites from the roll of ham he was holding. Gloria resumed the squeaking in the water and the flames were watched in silence all across the town.



POETRY

Michael Julian Arnett

The Dyer's Hand

The dyer obfuscates the soft
intangible garment and goes
about upon his grace beneath
the patient acacia, laughing
leafily when the samovar sings.

And putting down his book
coming with the always faithful
morning like the first spilled
breath upon the waking linen,
gathers sand from oblivion's shore

Michael Julian Arnett

Second Sun: A Fable

On the pilgrim trail from
the eastern empire
I saw the sun come down
and take another name.

I thought I saw him wink at me
before he disappeared into
the anxious world of things

as I walked until the temple
found me in my form
less wandering anxieties.

The door was soft and kept me
eager for another memory but
I could not leave behind
my second pair of boots.

But I made temerity my mask
and folded myself into
concrete annunciations.

One day they found me crying
behind the veil and shouldered me
into the anonymous desert.

And so in tattered breeches,
and bloody knees I crouch
to drink a shoreless sea
and await the second sun

Timothy Furgal

Our Daughter

standing on the shore
both of our hands
at our sides.
looking at how we are not looking
at each other.

the wind cuts hard
carving a line
where your smile used to live.

I think I'm cold.
I know I'm okay.

"It has to end you know.
Somewhere."

I don't know where you're looking
but I see it too.

ahead in the waves
a star crashes.

I wish I didn't care.

the dark grey clouds
of this darkest Great Lake
hang silent
while we stand there
the closest we've ever been
-- the further away we are.

our eyes
meet once – just once
but we don't recognize
what we see.

our daughter would've been beautiful
like her mother.
Sophia Azure
with eyes like the warmest summer weather.

Frederick Pollak

Desire to Travel

Autarky. No
ads except
on small stores selling
painfully preserved candies,
obsessive textiles.
For cafes, shouts and smells.
State pharmacies.
A wasp, sensing
saboteurs, agents
of multinationals,
sends them home itching.

The few tourists
stay indefinitely,
deciding whether to stay.
Those who do join
the ever-renewed War
on Flies or Battle for Education.
I haven't decided.
Watch fish scouting
my ankles in the warm
lucid shallows;
don't alarm them.

The sun turns blue
walls green, red pink,
pink white, print faint,
whites black, and peace
into joy.
A waiter pours, what,
sangría, speaking
poignantly. Speech here
is an end.
The sun does not set on this ocean;
there's only twilight,

and lamps. I write:
"You'll be glad to know
I no longer eroticize
cold – yellow light in
dove-grey, piles of
blankets ... With age,
there's a lot to be said for

Frederick Pollak

the sun. I miss you terribly
(for example).
One must dig one's own hole
in cliché.

“In a kind of dormitory, clean and
spare, like everything here, I saw
my parents.
You know my mother, so
fixed in life, moved
fast – I never saw her, all
these years, till now.
A twist of dark blue
blanket on a cot,
its back to me,
yet I knew it was she.

“And my father, whom
I had seen (he was changed,
mild), lay sleeping
on the next neat cot,
wearing familiar grey pajamas
though it was so hot.
I felt all the crap
I had felt after
they split, seeing them together,
but told myself,
Whatever they have been up to, they have to nap.”

Frederick Pollak

Iteration

One view, from
one window here,
with fading light and sight
and self-defeated mood, almost
approximates a stone
ledge, with its worshipful bowl
of wildflowers, looking
out on meadow and forest
in the encompassed brilliance
of evening, gold on green, with
things and people passing,
slow, scarce,
precious, desired like
the lawn and phone lines,
jammed passing cars, worn
drapes, stained
desk and crumpled paper,
by one who is poorer
but not too poor to want.

Thor Løve

I Wish I Was Tao

I wish I was Tao Lin.
I am jealous of Tao Lin's artistic success.
I am jealous of Tao Lin's popularity.
I am jealous of Tao Lin "making it" as a writer,
despite seeming to be a lot like me.
I am jealous of the attention Tao Lin is getting in the blogs.
I don't think I'm jealous of Tao Lin's money much.
If I were Tao, I would read every
"goodreads" user review written about my work.
If I were Tao, I would post deadpan jokes on my twitter.
If I were Tao, I would be as eccentric as he is.
If I were Tao, I would finally fuck some girls.
I find Megan Boyle hot.
I would definitely fuck her.
I find Tao Lin very likable.
I wish I was as likable as Tao Lin.
I can describe Tao's media persona
as "poser sociopath."
When other people see it too,
I will "break through" as a harder, genuine sociopath.
I will beat Tao in his own game.
My mom says that I am untalented,
and that I will never "make it" as a writer.
I say that "talent" is overrated,
and that art is finally being liberated of "talent privilege."
My mom laughs in my face.
If I "make it" as a writer,
I will not share any money earned from it with my mom.
I am still around 10 years younger than Tao Lin.
It is realistic of me to think about "making it" as a writer.
Fuck my mom.
Fuck Tao Lin.
I am still very jealous of Tao Lin.
Tao Lin expresses the ideas I could've expressed if I were him.
I wish I'd written the books Tao has written.

Gunker

Three part poem

section 1-a

grub we brought in from the orient.

It was hard feeding the desert grub.

was much effort in the desert.

stick welded, in neck formation.

Sweat trickling down a hot brow.

A patch of spittle on my path.

what you get for being a grub finder.

goggles, a path in your teeth and a doubloon string slung around your neck.

I hate it because it makes me look like a Roman.

section 1-b

There was an apple cider brought in from the Occident.

I sipped it in my hair.

Obviously.

Im being ironic yes.

That is what covers your sense of taste is eating too much hair.

I'd like to see a soul alive who could outdo my sense of taste bud perception in terms of fine apple cider.

I rest my case jury.

You dont have no power here.

They say that, but then who would critique their alcohol?

Gunker

Not me.

section 1-c

I am not old, I have a severe disorder involving my hands.

I cannot move them without pain.

The only thought that comforts me is if I get the law changed with a letter sent to a local pm.

concerning the rights of disabled parking space and permit holders.

I don't care which side I'm on as long as my hands die way after the words are formed.

foot notes= The roman empire didnt fully collapse until 1866. It is widely belived that tribes as the jutes and angles contributed to their downfall, if this is the case then the threshing machines wouldnt have been invented.

INFORMATION

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* * *

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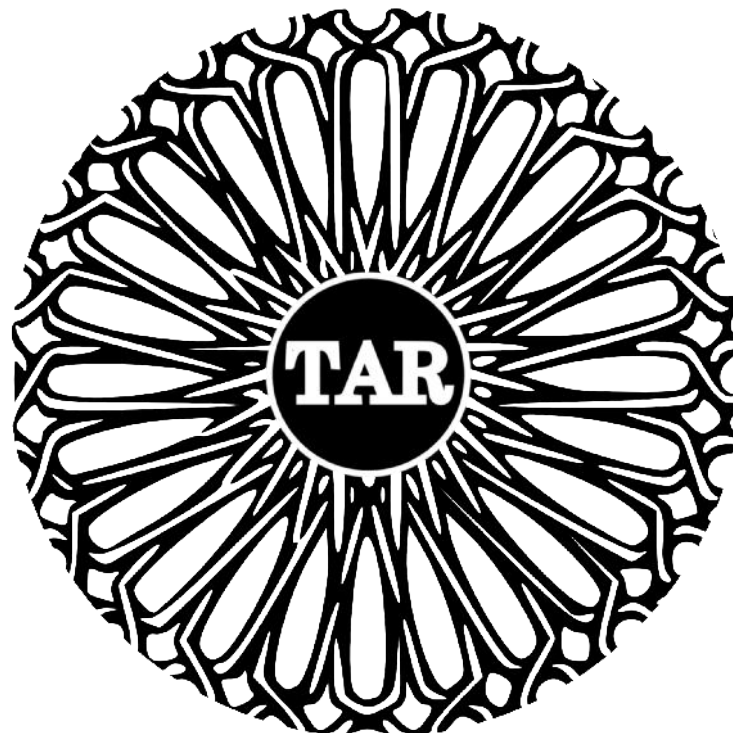
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* * *

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