



- - - Address to the readers - - -

P.K.: It is a dark winter's night sometime in early November 2020. I am in Edinburgh, thinking to myself that there is no good reason for anyone to be living this far north. I wade through the various notepads, Tupperware boxes and other crap on my desk, to clear out a little space so that I can punch out these stolid little thoughts; form and bust this tiny epistolary nut of a paragraph. Though in all seriousness, at the end of this week, Arbor's first edition will be published and the pursuit begins there. All I know is that this is only the beginning. Already, I can begin to sense the reactions of my dear friends across the world, equal parts apprehension and wanderlust, as they read these words and heed to the call. May God bless and keep you always.

For the chaps



*"Sit by the lantern,
watch as the years turn
Slowly bringing truth
for every child to learn*

*And the magpie meadow
darkens gently blue now
As the family sit,
their faces lit,
by ember fire"*

—
Vashti Bunyan



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A Note on Chap Profiling by Pink Kudu

“dox”

/dɒks/

verb **INFORMAL**

gerund or present participle: doxing

1. *search for and publish private or identifying information about (a particular individual) on the internet, typically with malicious intent. "hackers and online vigilantes routinely dox both public and private figures"*

In the autumn of 2016, I distinctly remember my form tutor, a Ms Tulip, addressing the class and telling us, that “In preparation for your UCAS applications, you should all consider turning your social media settings to private”. This was of course seen as a way of evading the scrutiny posed by leering admissions officers, who were rumoured to check the online presence of prospective students for any compromising information. I myself was never totally convinced of such claims, but at any rate, in an attempt to keep my ailing professional/academic life separate from the autistic vitriol I occasionally share online, I have, like many others, always written and posted under various noms de plume. Pseudonymity is nothing new of course, it has only taken on new forms in the internet age, and us chaps here at Arbor, like to navigate these cyber-spatial waters with a prudent dose of caution. And so, this is why some of the individuals introduced in this issue will be named using pre-existing aliases, many of which originated in a recent literary work of mine titled “The Mole Club”.

But.

Having said all that, I am a direct fellow, instinctive and incapable of hiding my most pressing neuroses. Arbor will strike you if anything for it’s crudeness, candour, lack of measured judgement or self-restraint, that is simply not the way we do things. Consider Arbor the enfant terrible of virtual periodicals, a magpie nest, a treasure trove of bizarre and life-affirming items brought to you by it’s many accomplices. I am James, and these are my friends. Most of all, let us be honest with ourselves.

Aidan Clark: The Young Hegelian – Essays on Knausgaard and Hitler



Figure 1 – Aidan Clark (on the left), pictured here with fellow chap Khaya, on a hill somewhere near Edinburgh.

Chap Profile:
Aidan Clark, Montreal
Known in the Mole Club as Quentin Clarke

Bio: One of the finest people I know. Strong penchant for cashmere sweaters, Mozart arias and German idealism. Blog and Instagram – @hegelsh

Before he was forced to abruptly retreat back to Canada, Aidan lived in Edinburgh, for a little under a year. We met at debating society, a society both of us only ever bothered attending once. The evening I met him, we immediately had one of the most sublime conversations I've ever experienced. Favourite sayings of his include, – "If I may make a Hegelian point here." – "This is not some sort of emancipatory gesture we're talking about" – "That's the radical perspicacity of Marxist thought for you" – "Back in Canada eh" – "I had the most wonderful dinner with Ruda* yesterday" – "I think we should go to tasty".**

***Ruda – Frank Ruda, lecturer in Philosophy at Dundee University and contemporary of Slavoj Zizek. Aidan, over the course of his time in Edinburgh, met with Ruda a number of times. It was never clear to us who was grooming who in their philosophical liaison. Aidan continues to correspond with Ruda and hopes to interview him for one of our future editions.**

****Tasty Noodle is a Chinese Restaurant near George Square in Edinburgh.**

Together, Aidan and I, frequented Edinburgh's intellectual hotspots, namely The Filmhouse, The Usher Hall and several different unnamed Molly Houses. He introduced me to Knausgaard, King of the Contemporary memoir, and insisted I read Nabokov's Speak Memory, a sacred chap text. I can't thank him enough, and miss him dearly. Here he is to speak for himself.

Aidan's Riposte: Angels always speak German

Did I leave Edinburgh, or was I forced out? We'll never really know. By the time the philosophy department found out what I was up to, they were keen on my departure. One day, while contemplating sainthood and eating currywurst in the David Hume Tower, the ghost of Hegel appeared to me. He looked me in the eye, brushed away my first-year logic proofs, and said

Die Weltgeschichte ist nicht der Boden des Glücks. Die Perioden des Glücks sind leere Blätter in ihr.

I took this to mean that my life was not likely to be a happy one. If I pursued philosophy it could not be here, that no place was fit for its discovery, and no intellectual culture existed which could sustain true philosophical research.

In realizing this I became melancholic. Hegel had given me a first-class ticket to take the train up to Dundee, and so I took the train, passing through the lochs, in darkness, as my time in Edinburgh came to its strange close. In Dundee was Frank, to whom I repeated Hegel's final words to me, and in reply to which Frank reminded me that, on Hegel's deathbed, he claimed that only one man had understood him and that even they hadn't really. I gave Frank a copy of Knausgaard's Min Kamp and told him not to start any revolutions without me.

The morning of my flight home to Canada, I met my fellow memoirists at Tasty Noodle: E, K, and J. I told them to divvy up my books as they saw fit, but to make sure that they were to burn whatever writing of mine I left over. I told them that all of us were likely to write a memoir of our time here, but that we couldn't predict when we would do so. On my flight home, I tried to write, but I couldn't. Whatever it was that had happened I was already beginning to forget, and so, like Knausgaard, I wrote instead about what was around me at the time and hoped the rest would follow.

Item #1 - What is the purpose of looking back by Aidan Clark

A.C.: What is the purpose of looking back? I am not looking for meaning. If there is something behind Knausgaard, it is that one is not looking for this kind of meaning. Freud understood this, because his point was that you go back precisely to realize that there was nothing you had missed, that there was nothing there. What keeps you stuck, the effective meaning of a trauma, is nothing but being forced to sustain a kind of interpretation about the world, about our past life, that is not only wrong, but impossible. And this impossible is Freud's, and Lacan's, concern. For them the unconscious is not some repository *over there*, as it was for Jung, rather it is the very means of sustaining the impossibility of a meaning about your life. It is a way of not *looking directly* at it. This is what Zizek calls the

sublime object,

because it has to do with sustaining the impossible, the noumenal crack, which pierces through only in intense experiences. I can sustain a view of my life so long as I avoid direct contact with it, with that part of my life and that view itself. It sustains some practice of life, which is itself a ritual, a temporary moment of meaning, and which is only capable of arising on the basis of a misunderstanding about one's life, about meaning itself, which one sustains in the sublime condition of your unrecognition. It is the unconscious, which is not something you do not know, which a trauma sustains; it is

erscheinung; a shining through

which is the underlying sense of the world's openness to meaning, to symbolization, which a trauma evokes. In a trauma, for Freud, as Zizek describes, a trauma is not something violent which has occurred to you in your past; that is a memory, while a trauma is always created retroactively. In Lacan's first seminar, he begins with this crucial quality of retroaction and remembrance, which he takes as the starting point for Freud. The moment of trauma for Freud is not the violent sexual encounter, but the loved one's kiss *after*, which evokes the trauma of the encounter. This trauma, however, is nothing but the knowledge of the sudden shift of the meaning of this kiss, from its being something comforting to something disturbing. This shift in signification gestures towards the *open wound* of signification, of the openness of the world to signification, of signifiability.

This signifiability is an indescribable limit that can only be experienced in a *shift*. In turn, what is signification, in the end, but the attempt to close this open wound, to close the openness, to force a *kiss to be a kiss*? What is the unconscious but the sense of this crack in appearance, this openness to meaning. To *shine through* is the unconscious as *the* traumatic experience itself, not what contains the trauma. In turn, it is the sublime quality of our non-knowledge which attempts to avoid the unconscious. We can sustain the possibility of a closing, functional signification only if we do not look at it.

For Freud, in his analysis of Viennese culture, which is the same culture, it must be said, from which Wittgenstein arose, comes down, *not* to the sense in which something was repressed about the Viennese, but that they had given an impossible answer to the nature of sexuality. Their cultural symbols themselves could not avoid, in their symbolic fixations, *repeating* the crack, which was not something hidden, but the vitality of an answer, of an interpretation of the nature of sexuality which shone through. In their clothing, which, if you ever see a photo of a wealthy Viennese family assembled, the boys, girls, and women assembled in white, while the men are bearded and all in dark suits, you cannot help but see as the quality of what was so difficult about this was contained in the fact that so very clear an answer about the nature of sexuality was being given, whose signification, in clothing, could not help but be reminded of its *crack*, of a certain part of the closure of this very symbolic culture that was forcibly unsaid, of the fact that it was *giving an answer* in the first place.

Freud would have never suggested that this was something you could ever discover, because you were only ever trying to show that the crack was the very impossibility of this kind of secret, or underlying, meaning, which the closure of signification forcibly tried to remove. When Z (and Zupancic) describe Freud's point before Viennese society, it is not to remark that sexuality exists, but, rather, to ask the more frightening question: what is this *sex* of which you speak? It is right to understand that, for Freud, there was something troubling about the clothing, about the symbols, which so clearly evoked a sexual interpretation without ever acknowledging it had given such an interpretation, because sexuality, like other things, were part of the *order of things*, about which one knew but never spoke.

Freud's deeper point lay, not in the fact that what he was most concerned with was that Viennese society was very sexual, but, on the contrary, that they had done something impossible, which was to give an interpretation, a meaning, whose expression itself became a kind of fixation, a theatre. Indeed, the entirety of Viennese society, of its socio-cultural framework, was to sustain this impossibility, by creating the symbolic framework which was only possible on the condition of the existence of this underlying meaning. This meaning was nothing but that women are *this* and men are *that*, and nothing frightened Freud more than these kinds of interpretations. He wanted to show that the essential structure of trauma was the absence of meaning followed by its explosive cover-up. It was the absence of meaning that implied the forage of symbolic closure, and the boundlessness of cultural symbols. And the essential absence of meaning was nothing but a *crack*, an '*awry look*', which was exposed through the traumatic shift of the signification of a thing, of an experience, of a kiss. It was this openness within *das Ding* that was covered up for Freud, and the sublime character of Viennese society was nothing but an elaborate way of covering up this openness, for which the suffocating closure of their significations was, for Freud, the ultimate hint.

To recount a personal history is then deflationary for Freud, for it is a question of release, of a release from a mistaken meaning. But it implies, and this is the sublime quality, realizing the *erscheinung* of the elaborate symptomatic structure of the meaning from which you are being released. It is only in our interaction with this appearance that the crack can even appear, because we cannot put into words this failure. This meaning is impossible, but its impossibility is never directly apprehended. The symbols we produce express this impossibility, not by giving it conditions, say, expressing something that cannot be expressed, but by assuming the possibility of symbolic closure in itself and, in effect, *acting out*, or performing, this *close*.

We may not be able to live this impossible meaning directly, but we can live out what it would imply if it were possible. It is almost impossible to even state the conditions of this view, because it functions in the same way those propositions regarding 'force' in Hertz do, or as they do in Wittgenstein, where once one has gone back

and these painful contradictions are removed...the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease asking illegitimate questions.

The dreamwork, the symbolic structure of the symptom, does not relate a meaning; but neither can they name the underlying impossibility of the closure of *das ding*. This crack is the unconscious. There is, in turn, no direct sense in which I can say a fiction, because we could not say in what way a fiction does not cover up the close. The meaning about our lives which we are constrained to, which functions like a broken interpretation, can only be dissolved in the discovering the form of its performance. This is the symptom, which is a temporary seizure of the human being in meaning, which enjoys at his/her expense. There is no underlying meaning to the symptom, which sustains its seizure

Knausgaard then has few options. Language, in turn, cannot even point out its own fictional quality, because this closure is only mediable as a performance. The closure is therefore always already a performance, a sublime avoidance of meaning which grounds its own impossible articulation. Knausgaard is past, however, even this moment of dissolution; he is convinced of Freud, so he seeks no denial of him. He passes through his own memories without according them meaning, but he speaks, while the meaning of his own words *escapes him*, because he cannot articulate the fictional conditions of his own performance. His own memory and even his own vision of himself as he experienced

it in the actual moment itself is unable to avoid the sense in which he is unable to say anything about who he is. His language is not an impossible performance, but the impossibility of seizing the underlying impossibility of meaning. So he says nothing, and one understands how this nothing is mediated by the very lesson of Freud. They *share* in a limit. This silence is the absence of Freud, the absence of that needing to resist him which only ever serves to invite him further in, because, as Freud said,

we realized that the very means of warding off the thing would become infected the very thing they had tried to ward off

In turn, we do not say nothing because we have nothing to say, but because the very thing which language cannot say is already excluded from it. This sense of dissolution is where Knausgaard begins, where a great deal of twenty-century analysis ends, and where remembrance falls into a kind of forgetting. We return, though we cannot say in what way we have misunderstood our own lives, to recall the words we did use and to loose them to their own impossibility. But, Knausgaard goes one step further, because he has done this, so he simply begins to say things, about then, about now, realizing what he could have done then, or should have said. This time the question of form is everything, because the mistakes of his past have no substantial content, they are just failures of expression, of exceeded limits taken too seriously. And in that clearing, where the air is fresher, with a renewed sense of the mystery that had provoked his first and nascent misunderstandings, he writes.

By /our guy/, Aidan Clark

*Aidan is currently trying to
work out how he can get from:*



**here*



*** to here*

Video of Aidan telling Slavoj to read Dominic Cumming's blog:
google drive link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-zvE-odGSY4ypvp7Y7IFOmomI1smAN2T/view?usp=sharing>



Quentin Scobie: The Leeds Madman - Interview, Baby Alex and More

I_n_t_e_r_v_i_e_w

P.K speaking: Of late, there have been few things for which I have been more grateful than what appears to be the beginnings of a friendship with Quentin Scobie, a man for whom I have always had the utmost admiration and respect. I see him as a remarkable tour de force. In May of this year Stu Jameson (fellow co-founder of Arbor) and I conducted an hour long interview with the rascal, via Discord. Later in the summer, we followed up with Q and visited him at his Horsforth estate and residence. In one of the upcoming issues, Stu and I, will give a full-ish account of our congenial rencontre with the old boy. In the meanwhile, here is a link to the mp3 file of the full interview. I should add, that upon completion of the interview, Quentin requested (with regards to the distribution of the audio file), that we don't play things by the book. Quentin, if you're reading this, I hope you consider this to be an obscure enough place to have left the file.

The Interview: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kdxpBPWy6j9fkSNFRu2_p2fqwDhuYzWV/view?usp=sharing



When we visited Quentin's Leeds mansion, we climbed up a black spiralled staircase into the attic where he films his videos. It was impossible not to notice it, but there were papers strewn all across the floor. A curious goon, I quickly enquired as to the nature of said papers. He told us they were for a book he was writing. The book was of course, *Baby Alex*. He told us he was writing it with a woman, the woman was of course Roz Counelis. He explained the nature of the love triangle with Alex as the third personage and unsuspecting subject of the whole thing.

We were intrigued, and he let us read the opening passage, the part with the donkey dicks. I noticed an epigraph Q included by Sam Riviere, Edinburgh University's poet in residence. Now, this is yet another man I hope to track down, being as we are here at Arbor, literary headhunters of sorts. Q had been mentored by him in the past, though as of yet neither Q nor I have received any emails back from him. We shall wait to see what happens, but my sense is that we'll get a hold of him pretty soon. As you'll soon find out dear readers, I have my ways.

Q, you won't be surprised to hear, has read and thoroughly enjoyed the "Mole Club". After all, one cannot claim to be keeping abreast of contemporary British literature without having read it. I am still in the process of writing a full length study of The Book Club's *Baby Alex*, the marvellous novel, that is itself already a sublime study. The full text will most likely appear here as a google drive pdf in one of Arbor's next issues. In the meantime, I would like to draw your attention to the short review of the book I posted via you tube, and would also strongly recommend you read the reviews posted in the comments, one of which is by the noted serial commenter MrCool Mug.

Links:

Short review of *Baby Alex*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHZrvMhhiZ8>

The Book Club - *Baby Alex*: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Baby-Alex-Book-Club/dp/B08KHDJQZW>

Picture of Quentin's Dick/
scene of him fighting James
Cooper



P_a_s_t

The Mole Club - Pink Kudu
(Novel: Summer 2020 published by Arbor Press)
Available here on PDF and Mobi:

PDF

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1O64VKntF4Pu2VRifX5qGfwZoi4rGZq54/view?usp=sharing>

MOBI

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y_dq-7j_2ycdcs-GNCioIxS_1cBiadd-/view?usp=sharing

Physical copies available Winter 2020

Pink's Trio - Pink Kudu
(Short Story Collection: Spring 2020 published by Arbor Press)

PDF

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kDJZW6eHDkoHh3vmOM67FOjn7zBCHxWy/view?usp=sharing>

Physical copies available if you email me at pinkkudu@icloud.com

S_c_h_e_d_u_l_e_d

Los Buenos Términos - Fernanda Sandoval: English translation by Pink Kudu
(Poetry Collection: Winter 2020)

Small Talk - Ryan Moore
(Novel: 2020/2021)

lethe - Aidan Clark
(Proustian memoirs: Winter 2020)

Piombino - Pink Kudu
(Documentary: Winter 2020)
Clips and trailers available here
<https://www.instagram.com/pinkkudu/?hl=en>

A co-authored collection of short stories by RIP VAN and Pink Kudu
2020/2021

Upcoming Arbor Events/Chap Summits

Party at Q mansion: Garrulous Chap Summit bordering on total debauchery at Quentin's Leeds Mansion (Winter 2020), will be great fun, a meeting of minds.

Email the chaps for details via pinkkudu@icloud.com

Or DM Arbor's instagram and twitter pages

<https://www.instagram.com/arbor/?hl=en>

<https://twitter.com/ARBOR20K>

Arbor film club

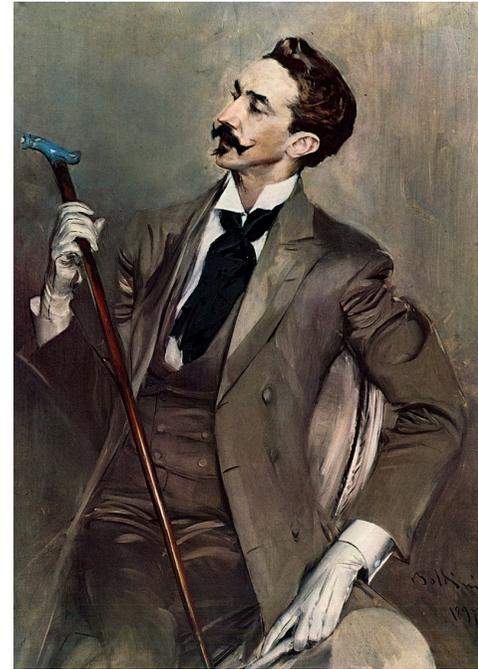
Look, if you live in London, Edinburgh, anywhere in the UK it's worth getting in touch with Arbor, cinemas are shut, this is a chance to set up a series of pop-up temporary guerrilla screenings of some choice films, same contact details as above. WhatsApp 07947139233, if you live in the UK, otherwise France, see my man parmigianno, monsieur Gilles, Canada, Aidan, US, RIP VAN and Ethan Traum. If you live in Italy, I'll see you next summer.

Premiere of Pink Kudu's Piombino - Flat in Edinburgh.

Again, send me a message if you're interested.

Walk to the pyramids - 1st Jan 2021 more on this soon

Arbor's travelling circus UK tour (Springtide 2021), rounded off with march on Foyle's,



“wimmin”

/'wimm/

noun

plural noun: wimmin

1. non-standard spelling of ‘women’ adopted by some feminists to avoid the word ending *-men*.

P.K. Speaking:

This is an extract from a diary entry of mine written in September 2020 -

“The strangest thing happened yesterday. A Mexican girl began a correspondence with me via the pink kudu instagram account. She had read the Mole Club. What we essentially had here, was fan-mail, imagine that, the greasy slimy misogynist cunt Carlo Thomas (The Mole Club’s protagonist) had piqued the interest of a woman?! a self-proclaimed radical feminist at that, unthinkable, unthinkable. Anyway it appeared she had read most of the Mole Club by this stage, and so I suggested a video call. It was an odd situation, she seemed keen and agreed to the suggestion. We planned on discussing Wittgenstein’s incomprehensible Tractatus and the thematic undercurrents of one another’s major works, ‘Los Buenos Términos’ and ‘The Mole Club’ respectively. ‘Los Buenos Términos’ being a collection of poems written by the maiden in question, in her native Spanish. It’s title, loosely translated as “The Good Terms’ is a pun of sorts. Términos meaning both ‘terms’ and ‘terminology’ in Spanish, therefore the phrase ‘Los Buenos Términos’ can be read as both ‘the correct terminology’ in reference to the poets lexical choices and ‘The Good Terms’ as in “being on good terms/all is well”.

I could never have foreseen what awaited me on the call. The call (which lasted approximately 2 hours), was a sublime conversation, of a quality and perspicacity that I hadn’t experienced since my first few rencontres with a

certain Aidan “Quentin” Clark, rencontres that took place almost a year ago.

The conversation penetrated and clasped the exact tensions that created the novel, those that plague the life of Carlo Thomas, it’s protagonist.

It was everything that I could’ve wished for in a discussion. Sharing experiences, me trying to understand what it is like to be her, and her trying to understand what it is like to be me, sacred literary compassion. Getting to the very crux of our worries, to synthesise, explicate, map out, represent, and outline the most troubling concerns in our lives. We considered the balance between how much one ought to compromise who they are in order to be loved and how (if at all) this manifests itself differently in men and women.

Fer made the observation that the mole club’s degenerate young autists’ way of descending into squalor totally neglecting their appearances, was a kind of male lesbian politik.

My introduction to the collection (which is scheduled to be released by Arbor Press in December of this year), will expand on Fernanda and mine’s literary liaison. For now, I present to you, Fernanda’s comment on the matter, as well as a handful of selected poems from the ‘Los Buenos Términos’ collection, written by Fer, translated into English by me.

Item #1

Recibo tu voz
 y el país no es más complejo
 que una taza de cereal
 masa blanda ondas en la leche
 tibia al estar expuesta
 afuera
 entre tus dientes
 vuelve el calor
 a la materia
 y no es humo
 ni tierra
 ni polvo
 una bocanada de aire
 primigenio
 una masa blanda
 fue lo oseo
 una transferencia de calor
 alea lo cursi
 a mis huesos
 crujientes de calcio
 leche cuajada en un
 incendio al abrir la boca
 un vaho rancio
 mi oración a medias
 emites un sonido
 un vector curvo
 en raicillas
 más aristas
 circulan y avanzan
 ondas en un eco
 termina
 donde el vacío
 resulta
 imperceptible para mí

I receive your voice
 and the country is no more complex
 than a bowl of cereal
 a soft dough ripples in the milk
 tepid from being left
 outside
 between your teeth
 the warmth returns
 to the matter
 and there is no smoke
 or earth
 or dust
 a mouthful of air
 primal
 a soft dough
 it was the bone
 a transfer of heat
 ties the vulgarity
 to my bones
 crispy with calcium
 the milk curdled in
 a fire and as the mouth opened
 a rancid mist emerged
 my half sentences
 emit a sound
 a curved vector
 in rootlets
 more edges
 surround and advance
 waves in an echo
 end
 where the emptiness
 is imperceptible to me

Item #2

la línea entre
 un roce y un golpe se
 mide en ardor

el golpe de
 mi padre en mi muslo
 calla mi hocico

a los veintiuno
 mordiendo de vuelta
 le callo el suyo

hija rata hila
 y traga el manifiesto
 de la violencia

niña planta ata
 a tu lóbulo frontal
 la virtud en ser

eco

soy un sonido muerto
 sirvo útil hasta
 rendirme ante ti
 mutilo mis piernas
 en cortes horizontales
 cortes finos carne
 de una planta seca
 florecen dientes de leche

The line between
 a caress and a blow
 is measured by it's vigour

the time my dad
 hit my thigh
 I shut my trap

aged 21
 biting him in retaliation
 I shut his

spin daughter rat
 and swallow the manifestation
 of violence

plant girl
 tied to your frontal lobe
 is the virtue of being

echo

I'm a dead sound
 I'm useful until
 I surrender before you
 I slice my legs
 In horizontal cuts
 thin cuts of meat
 from out of a withering plant
 there flower baby teeth

Item #3

El país se transmite
por televisión
en pantallas planas
caricaturas
y ruido blanco
el eco de una
fiebre excita
mis palabras
un episodio lineal
la oración anclada
en tu garganta convulsiva
oscila la quietud
en tu miedo de niña
blanca pálida nívea a
la violencia de la lengua
resbalando por tu oído
sin un ancla en la marea
se hunde en la nada
cae tensa al abismo
la niña rata
agrisada de marrón
tu piel colinda entre
lo cursi y lo cortés

The nation is broadcast
via tv
in flat screens
cartoons
and white noise
the echo of a
fever excites
my words
a linear episode
the sentence anchored
in your convulsive/throbbing throat
stillness oscillates
your girlish fear
white pallid snowy
from the violence of your tongue
slipping from your ear
without an anchor in the tide
it sinks into nothingness
falling tensely into the abyss
the ratty girl
a greyish brown
your skin adjoins
the vulgar and the gracious

Item #4

hay un vacío que corre y
crece en mi espina cada metro de
mi cuerpo reduce su diámetro al
contacto con tu puño helado de
vainilla trago por la fiebre en la
garganta aprendí no hay golpe en
el silencio si no tiemblo no oro y
no se riega mi plantita exige ardor
en la oración un mantra balbuceo
antes de volverme humo pues
nunca llegué a la televisión ni a
medir distancia en las partes que
mordieron los varones
comiendome las piernas mutiladas
cargan su voltaje cardíaco en
frecuencias vibrando por sus
huesos es mi carne tu cruz y tu
deleite en mi saliva tu lengua
resiste el filamento conductor de
mi conjuro sin molares

There is an emptiness that runs and
spreads through my spine, every inch
of my body flinches and reduces in
size on contact with your gelid fist,
cold like the vanilla ice cream that I
swallow when I have a sore throat. I
learnt that there are no blows in the
silence, if I don't tremble I don't pray,
and my plantlet doesn't get watered, it
demands conviction in the the prayer,
a babbling mantra before I turn to
smoke. Well, I never made it on tv, not
even half-way, In the parts where the
men bit me, eating my mutilated legs,
charging their cardiac voltage, in
frequencies that vibrate through their
bones, is my flesh your cross and your
delight. In my saliva your tongue
resists the conducting filament of my
toothless incantation.

Fernanda Sandoval is a Mexican poet and filmmaker, living in Monterrey. Her work currently receives partial funding from the Mexican government.



Fernanda's reply (She insists that she reply in Spanish, and that there be no English translation accompanying it): Los buenos términos es un trabajo emocional, no solo en el sentido que viene enraizado desde de mis sentires, sino también que es el propio "marco teórico" (por decirlo de alguna manera porque honestamente para este punto no me interesa teoría alguna que no consista en la exploración de las emociones como forma de conocimiento) que trabajé junto con mi terapeuta, Edna, a quien esta colección está dedicada. Porque no puede haber compasión literaria si una no se lee a sí misma y va atisbando aquello que la consciencia puede sostener después de que todo lo demás se le ha escapado entre los dedos, y con ello me refiero a todas las percepciones sensoriales del día a día que quedan fuera de la narrativa principal del yo. Al final, nos queda la crudeza que podemos (o no) entregarle al otro, cortarnos la lengua como presente para quien nos lee. Y, en mayor medida, eso fue lo que me impulsó a vincular con James mientras leía The Mole Club pues, a pesar de que Carlo no es el hombre con más "perspectiva de género", vi mi propia cruda vulnerabilidad en la suya, en el ansia de vincular, en buscar el calor donde sea que se nos escape. Y esa es la temática principal del poemario: te hablo, ven, te daré todo mi calor, mi energía, mi líbido, mi pulsión de muerte y también el cero absoluto, tómalo, aquí estoy.

Cabe destacar, pienso en la traducción del autor como una pieza propia de él, que cobró vida independiente de mí y que no podría existir de ninguna otra manera, porque las palabras son las que ha absorbido así como las que le han hecho sentido. Esto no hace uno ni otro menos o más valioso, sino complementarios. Ahora pienso que no habría forma que solo exista el poemario sin la re-interpretación y re-elaboración que James ha hecho, y por la cual estoy infinitamente agradecida. Tronó la tacha.

Las palabras nunca son nuestras, por eso una se corta la lengua sin desprenderla pues un apéndice no sirve para tratar de entender nuestra enteridad (si es que es posible vislumbrar tal cosa). Una se corta la lengua para mutilarse el habla, esperando de alguna manera la sangre permee las oraciones con el fin de transmitir algún significado interno, aunque esto parezca inútil porque puede parecer que el lenguaje limita la emoción, añade aristas incompletas a una abstracción, como cuando no cerrabas bien la figura en PaintMS y al momento de aplicar el relleno el color se esparcía por todo lo blanco de la página. Y puede que sea así, pues decimos más de manera inconsciente que lo que nuestras palabras buscan definir con límites porosos pero el punto es seguir hablando, expandirse y quizá así llegar a saber quien es una (si ya lo saben, que bien por ustedes, yo aún no) aunque siempre se nos escape el agua entre los dedos. Le agradezco a Arbor también el espacio para expandir el calor. Ojalá lo puedan sentir en sus gargantas.

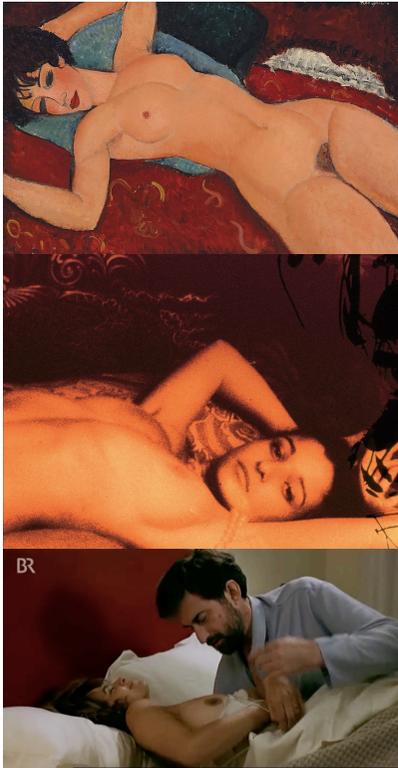
*Las amo,
Fer.*

Tiddies - A conversation overheard in Pisa

The idea for this next segment, came about as a consequence of hearing the following conversation.

Setting the scene: This conversation took place in August of this year, by a swimming pool in San Giuliano Terme, a comune a few miles north of Pisa, between friends of my cousin. Parallel text as always.

Sai, c'era uno con cui ero nel partito, che aveva conosciuto Berlusconi. La prima cosa che gli aveva detto era, 'Ma si scopava, do' ve la fova?'
'Berlusconi era proprio malato, non pensava a nient' altro oltre scopare. Alla fine é una malattia'



You know, there was this guy in the party, who'd met Berlusconi. Apparently the first thing Berlusconi said to them was "Are we gonna fuck or what?, where's the pussy?'

'He was properly ill that guy, he couldn't think of anything else other than puss, at the end of the day it's an illness.'

Arbor's Finest Auto-Fiction - Powerful passages from Arbor's belletristic bumboys

This is perhaps the segment of the magazine of which I am most proud. I present to you, two pieces by good friends of mine, introduced in the profiles below. And a third shorter piece, which is an extract from the Mole Club.

Chap profile:

RIP VAN, St Louis, Mo
Twitter: @XRipVanX
<https://twitter.com/XRipVanX>



I first read the opening pages of RIP VAN's small talk in the summer of 2019. Around the time RIP VAN and I first began our correspondence. I was struck at once by the thoughtfulness of the work and the craftsmanship of it. A bubbly depiction of

the American heartland. I hope the valued readers of Arbor can enjoy it as much as I did.

Here is chapter 1 of RIPVAN's 'Small Talk'. Small Talk will be serialised, with one chapter released in each of the upcoming arbor issues.

Note to reader: You may need to zoom in on your pdf document.

Chap profile:

Elias Trout, Boston, MA
Known in the mole club as Ethan Traum
Twitter: https://twitter.com/cornpop_faust
Email: elitrou60@gmail.com



I met the great Elias Trout through the enigmatic Aidan, in the fall of last year. Although I always like to imagine him as a silver trout in his native yellow Indiana cornfields, he currently resides in Boston, MS. An accomplished historian, with a particular interest in the formation of Israel, he has also recently penned a handful of delightful literary texts. The following is the second half of his short story "I'm not doing enough". A link to the

full story is also available below here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c0isB0ChhZZqrLjPC3ZRxr3QbmKXHnI5/view?usp=sharing>

Under the geese and pigeons, passing between the lively pines and oak, the truck rolls into view. The grill reveals itself at the peak of a hill, tires dipping and diving over rough country roads along a creek bed.

"Like I was saying, that concert was badass man, no joke. It must have been 1972 or 1973" Benny steers the truck with one hand, the other gripping his coffee cup, sporadically jabbing the air as usual.

"Yeah man, no joke. Pink Floyd at the Kiel Auditorium. Nobody was there. Nobody even knew who they were yet. This was..."

"Was before Dark Side of The Moon? Yeah, I know. You said that earlier..." I dart back with subtle annoyance.

"Yeah man, it was badass. Tickets were only 3\$ believe it or not, front row seats, okay?" Bing! Bing! Bing! An alarm goes off in the truck. We are running low on gas.

"Man, I hope we have enough gas to get back to the lot. I don't feel like walking back in these bum-fuck woods, do you?"

"Everything will be okay, okay? Don't worry about it, no joke".

We pull into the gravel driveway of the auto shop, white dust wafting. Benny steps out, saying "Wait here for a bit, I gotta do some paperwork real quick" and then walks up a tiny hill to the main office, a plywood shed with business signs nailed to it. What a class act.

I wait a few minutes for him to come back, but in Benny fashion, he's taking forever. I decide to get out and enjoy the cold breeze, the scenery. Fingers dancing through the strings of a harp, so crystal clear, clean. It feels as if every noise is washing down the hour glass to create some ambient mosaic, water down the sink. And then from behind comes a splitting sound, a cracking branch of Silver Maple, where it tumbles into the grass within a barbwire fence.

A horse cries "Nayyy, Nayyy" Its eyes pitch black with a graying mane stretched down its back. I watch the horse graze beside a worn out barn. The metal tarnished from decades of sun and rain. Is there such thing as wild horses anymore?

For a moment, I feel truly happy watching the old horse standing in this small prairie. Nature appears so innocent -Hopeless, yet so pure. Complete silence overcame. My shoes lose traction suddenly on top of the gravel road. Life seems so simple being out in the countryside with its shallow creeks and prairies separating the wooden vastness. I feel like I am in my own world, but why is that?

"Everything will be okay, okay?... " I thought

"EMAIL! EMAIL!" Grandpa screams at his cordless phone in a fit of aggravation "TECH SUPPORT! TECH SUPPORT! OPERATOR!"

"Welcome to Spectrum tech support. How may I help you?"

"Hi, my name is McCoy Lydian. I am trying to pay my bills online and can't figure out how to do anything" He exhales, veins pulsating at his temple, all confidence strained.

"How old are you Benny? You're lookin' like you're getting close to retirement." I say, keeping quiet while grandpa is on the phone.

"63" he replies.

"I'm probably gonna' work 'til I die, fuck retirement, Okay? In all sincerity, Retirement ain't everything it's cracked up to be, it ain't that great." He reaches into his desk drawer and takes another bite off of his sandwich.

"HELLO! HELLO?! Oh, god dammit! The fucking phone died, son of a bitch!" Grandpa slams the phone down "This is gonna' be the death of me, fuck it. I'll just call em' back later"

"Yeah man, no joke. I've been in retirement before. All I did was lawn work and trimmed trees. I've trimmed trees that haven't been trimmed in fifty years. I was bored outta' my fuckin' mind"

"Oh, I know. Fuck, I couldn't sit around the house all day either and plus you need money to retire, ain't that right, Benny?" Grandpa says.

"Fuckin' right, man, no joke"

"Fuck, you are getting old. You might need to get a colonoscopy here pretty soon, Benny."

"Oh fuck, man. I don't know about all that." He starts to smile.

Grandpa carries on "The old man who use to paint all of my brother's classic cars told me one time he got a colonoscopy and the doctor filmed it and told him he could have the video on DVD and take it home with him."

"Old Man Walter, Right?" I ask

"Yeah, Walter was his name. So anyways, he tells all of his buddies to come over the next day for lunch to watch the video! Fuck, I just about puked when he told me that. Boy was he a crazy son of a bitch."

With a stone cold face, Benny replies "Oh fuck no, oh fuck no, I don't plan on doing that anytime soon, in all sincerity of course."

"Well, when you do get one, just make sure you ask the doctor for an extra large lens on the camera!"

Laughter echoes out from the desolate office, the sun easing away.

Parts II and III of Elias Trout's I'm not doing enough

I'm Not Doing Enough!

"A wave of anger washed over me; I was angry with myself and about my age at the time, that ludicrous lyrical age, when a man is too great a riddle to himself to tackle riddles outside himself and when other people (no matter how he loves them) are mere walking mirrors in which he is amazed to find the images of his own feelings, his own emotions, his own values."

-Milan Kundera

Since Jacob had arrived in his student living arrangement on his university's campus, he had attempted to listen to three symphonies and restart *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (a venture which Jacob had twice before tried to enjoy, though he had never made it to Part II). Beginning to reckon with the profundity of the world's instability away from his parents' home again, Jacob had taken a penchant to classical western tastes, an utter reversal from his recent objective to politicize (through diversity) his bookshelf and musical (oligarchic streaming service) library. Though he had very much enjoyed the openings of symphonies and the excitement of reading the first chapter of certain Weberian texts, Jacob lost attention after his initial expeditions into these works.

He figured that his wandering mind—not uninterested, merely investigating elsewhere—might generously be described as undergoing a sort of unconventional meditation during these hours. Jacob enjoyed the relaxed quality to these leisurely pursuits, that is, before they began to feel forced. His brain, marked through his generationally typical relationship to his phone, needed quicker, more immediate stimulation in order to distract from the optimized walls closing in around young people (the walls closed in around everyone, but our souls can only truly accept certain shocks if we believe in our heart that we shall bear witness to them before the moment of our death). The world's instability, however, had recently begun to seep *outward* through his phone, whereas before Jacob had channeled his anxiety *into* the device in order to cope outside of the thing. In accordance, he had taken a self-deceived and renewed liking to the western canon.

In his mind, this inattentive meditative reflex set Jacob apart from the very European aristocracy he was trying to emulate: Jacob thought that through emulation he might be able to tap into past historical spirits—that's why so many artists are eccentrics. The young man imagined that the listeners of the past would have enjoyed setting a Streichquartett on their record player *solely* for its musical genius. Despite recognizing the value to his contemporary 'meditative' relationship to archaic western aesthetics, he soon rejected his fetishization of symphonies and Max Weber entirely. "No point emulating if it isn't all in." Jacob mused on the particularity of time, place, and self (as inscribed by social markers) between himself and the caricature of an Austrian noble—fuck it, a member of the Viennese bourgeoisie during the Belle Époque.

Not once during his periodic obsessions surrounding himself with a romanticized westernism had Jacob ever doubted the barbarity of the European model. But he had begun to think that this depravity exists and has existed among all peoples in this world. Europe merely continues to perfect the execution of these human evils, but they are human evils. "The oppressor must be treated as human if we are to escape binaries of power; oppressive tendencies exist within every human," he thought. Jacob's meditation was not necessarily lesser than past spirits' leisurely habits, but each periods' differing relationship to the western canon must surely reveal some nature of their respective conditions. "Difference today means quantity, I just want it to mean *difference!*"

Yet Jacob did not consider the difference between campus life and returning to live with his parents for the duration of his final year of university to be worthy of this latter, perhaps we should call it qualitative, notion of difference—one was unconditionally *better*. Nevertheless, the writing was on the wall and his university would surely close prematurely like many other American colleges. Unprepared to go back to the generational battlefield that was his parents' provincial Midwestern home, Jacob began to make nebulous preparations to live with his brother in Florida if he had to vacate his student living in the near future. It would be a hard sell for the two siblings to convince their parents and older brother of the idea, considering Florida's particularly egregious handling of the pandemic.

Unfortunately, the contingency plan faced a number of logistical obstacles as well, not least of which was the decrepit, golden 2006 Odyssey which Jacob had taken from his parents' house to his university in Massachusetts. Something called the rear bushings had been torn, weathered from years of corrosion and sharp turns. Although the car had felt wobbly somewhere in Ohio, Jacob only seriously began to worry when the caution light for the battery finally flared up fifteen minutes from his university. The cogs at the university's Department of Community Living were no help. Fearing that the car's engine would die at any minute, Jacob was turned away when he tried to collect his dormitory key one hour before his scheduled move-in time. 60 minutes later, he was informed that he was not permitted to be on campus at all: on an electronic health assessment which students had to complete on a daily basis upon arriving to campus, Jacob had indicated that he had had a sore throat within the last 10 days. He had been tested the same day the symptom began, however, and received a negative a few days later—all before he had driven to Massachusetts in the first place. Ever submissive to the technocratic process, Jacob tried to answer the questionnaire truthfully and felt sure that the university would be accommodating to his perfectly understandable circumstances if he could just speak to someone once he arrived on campus. The cogs charged with handing out room keys, however, were not people and briskly asked Jacob to leave the campus premises in his deathly car full of most of the boy's worldly possessions.

A friend from the area helped Jacob take a few of these belongings into her own bruised, black truck once he had taken his Odyssey to an overpriced car shop in a nearby, wealthy suburb of Boston. After moving into his student living arrangement and quarantining in place, Jacob finally managed to pick up his seasoned van from the repair shop a few days later. Since repairing the car's wobbling at this shop would cost more than Jacob could receive from selling the vehicle, he drove back to his new home in the still-pathetic Honda all while flaunting a brand new alternator—"Boy does that car purr when she starts," Jacob happily observed. He would be unable to move himself from Massachusetts to his brother's apartment in Florida on a pristine engine alone, however, so Jacob had called every automobile shop in town to search for better prices (Jacob stifled two deep, self-recursive shames when he thought of his high school friends witnessing this sort of endeavor, as they would have surely attributed Jacob's thriftiness to his Jewish character). He finally placed his bets with a good-natured man named Doug at a trustworthy auto shop.

After he got off the phone with Doug, Jacob crossed the commuter rail to take a walk with a close friend, Cassie, whose student apartment complex ran along the Charles. The apartment, in all of its surely Brutalist-inspired architectural glory, stood abreast and slightly atop the beautiful woods which ran along the iconic river. Jacob thought of a course he had once taken about Oscar Niemeyer. Architecture has long embraced the evocation of biologically reductive representations of the 'feminine' and 'masculine' (yonic and phallic gestures), but Jacob had never seen such homoerotic artistic forays in a place of living until he had first discovered these strange student apartments his first year enrolled in university. [The joke is thus: Jacob was thinking about tops and bottoms; tops and bottoms are not exclusive to lesbian design.]

He did not voice the observation to his friends at the time because the boy feared he would seem obsessed with lesbian sex or eroticism, and in turn viewed as some typical heterosexual pig. In truth, Jacob greatly appreciated the artistic venture for its aesthetic implications. Only now, in his final year at university, he voiced as much to Cassie, who couldn't help but agree. The conversation moved from the phallic nature of a certain statue outside one of their dining halls, to a remark upon the phallic design of rockets and war (although Jacob wondered if mushroom clouds were considered more yonic or phallic and decided that he could be convinced either way, really), and finally landed upon the topic of Israel. The deal normalizing relations between the UAE and Israel appeared liable to fall apart. The two students would reach a fundamental division in worldview as they disputed the morality, strategy, and future of the Israeli project. Jacob always left Cassie with a feeling of sincere camaraderie and love, although the political impasse between the two defined a certain piece of their relationship. "Conflict follows each one of us, all the time," Jacob concluded after he left the hinterlands of Cassie's apartment, whose aura now resembled a proud and beautiful feudal estate.

As the pair left the river and headed back to their respective student apartments, Cassie remarked upon the Saudi-Iraqi Jump. She informed him that scientists had long overestimated the timing of the natural disaster; the eruption would not begin in April 2022, but had begun that very day. Movements in the earth's core would shoot the two countries upward and they would land atop the Union Jack around 9 Eastern, horrifyingly and poetically reversing the previously unchallenged course of events whereby the West and western Capital inserted itself elsewhere across the world. If the entire globe was not necessarily entangled in this reversal, it would not be so cathartic. Moreover, when there is direct conflict waged between peripheral countries and the West, so often it is conjured up and also benefited *exclusively* by non-western national elites. Only by this divine, disastrous force of nature would *peoples* from the Middle East be inflicting a direct, karmic vengeance upon the hubris-filled western states, Cassie related. "The Saudis and Iraqis"—the peoples, not the oil magnates who are indistinguishable from the Waltons—"will finally be able to make the West listen," Cassie said, maybe jokingly. "But is dying the only way that oppressed people can break the system that oppresses them?" Cassie lamented that so many western haters-of-the-West wished upon the West's destruction and only then came to support peoples oppressed by the West. If only empathy came first.

The following morning, Jacob donned a brightly colored floral shirt and called a friend, a Brit named Josef, who had much to say about the Saudi-Iraqi jump. Having returned to his home in London from his Scottish university in March, Josef had left behind his notoriously tasteful library at his northerly abode. After the Middle Eastern land mass had so unexpectedly and prematurely ruptured, scientists estimated that what used to be Saudi Arabia and Iraq would shortly fall upon the entirety of the United Kingdom north of Liverpool. Insistent that he retrieve his intellectual property, Josef took the first LNER train to Edinburgh with the intention to return to London before the mass struck home. His family's pleas fell on deaf ears and Josef had undergone the journey northward just as the whole of Scotland was clamoring to find safety to their south. Poorer Scots were being denied entry, triggering a major humanitarian disaster inflicted by an especially transparent *domestic* class warfare. Whitehall's barbarism would imprint itself on the European psyche and later reverberated across the once-thought-to-be-impenetrable modern stalemate within western and central European social democracies in the years to come; the fascistic tendencies already brewing in many of these countries—Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria—would each lurch further rightward in the following months.

It was clear that Josef would not have had time to return to London before the calamity struck. A piece of him revealed in his impending and fatalistic death, were it not for the fact that the land shelf, once again rebuking the global scientific consensus, had instead landed atop all of southern England, Ireland, and much of continental western Europe. The glorious tale of Josef's would-be tragedy now appeared in the likeness of a cowardly draft-dodger.

"Your death wish seems to have saved you," Jacob remarked. Though his family had perished in the disaster, Josef was perfectly collected during their chat, content even. At this moment in the call, our protagonist could not help but notice that Josef had held and stroked one of his beloved books (a signed, leather-bound copy of *The Gate of Angels*) while relaying his family's tragic fate. The motion reminded Jacob of a parent nurturing their child.

"Few will be able to guess how sad one had to be in order to resuscitate Carthage," said Jacob, ineloquently inserting a Flaubert quote into the conversation, just as his friend unknowingly intimated a confession of guilt.

"What the hell does that even mean, mate?" Josef was indignant, though he never lost his amiable affect. "By the way, I like your t shirt, it's very happy."

"Something to strive towards," said Jacob.

After the expected pleasantries and goodbyes, Jacob mused over his most recent sexual partner, who had once made a similar remark about the floral shirt. In his two most recent romances, Jacob was informed by each partner that they had suffered from a debilitating depression until only a few weeks before the start of each affair. He found it odd that both of these women had found some semblance of normality in their lives just before the pandemic permeated the United States and laid waste to the happiness of so many others, like Jacob himself.

The first of these women had taken issue with Jacob's colloquial use of the term "depression," to which he acquiesced when he remembered with pain how his generation used to toss around "bipolar" as a joking descriptor. Mental illness should perhaps be referred to as a 'malady of the soul' (this is what Goethe says, in any case). When we think of the 'mental' today, we picture somewhere between 'mind' and 'body,' though our treatments for mental illness become disproportionately biological. The word 'medicalization' itself implies that modern medicine cannot conceive of care in any capacity outside of the 'body.' Or so this lover had impressed upon Jacob at the time. He didn't have the right experience to comment upon such things.

The more recent of the two flings had been initiated in the midst of the pandemic. Jacob passionately discussed Baudrillard with a local judge at a Juneteenth barbecue until she was subsumed by a small gaggle of reporters from quaint little news outlets. Odysseus and sirens. Resigning himself to the company of the judge's daughter, Stella, it was soon made clear that she had seductive designs for our own Homeric figure. Complaining to her about his parents, Stella told him that "If we were boomers, we probably would have done all the same things." This clarity haunted Jacob, who decided at that moment to embrace this romance and attempt to pry more wisdom from her throughout their bizarre stint.

In the right circumstance, she could engage in quite interesting discussion. On most occasions together, however, their dialogue was mostly mindless, never straying far from the subject of her jaded work experience. If she had not made it seem as though she took glee from the very profession which so clearly drained her spiritual vivacity, Jacob thought that he might have even looked forward to these strange erotic encounters. He often felt the need to apologize for his absent behavior at the end of these meetings. His head felt empty when he was tired, or perhaps it was the other way around.

* * *

This hollowness-of-mind had only worsened the struggle to complete the few readings assigned to Jacob before the start of his classes. One such course prompted a “reading reflection,” though he was finding reflection of any sort to be difficult, as this would have necessitated Jacob to unearth some pearl of wisdom from beneath the immediacy of any number of present disasters. “How in hell can I reflect on the Geohistoricity of Contemporaneity when the Iraqi people have been wiped out?”

It always could have been worse. Apparently the Iraqi land mass, among the three chief countries in question, had been hit hardest by the tragedy. “At least it landed where it did,” Cassie texted the following day. “I read that if the land mass hit just 50 miles or so further west, it would have set off a massive tectonic shift.” The degree of collective urgency felt on platforms like Twitter (perhaps the *nature* of this urgency) was not nearly enough to prepare the world for what had really occurred. Jacob wondered if any historical reckoning could ever retroactively account for this present misarticulation. He felt that even attempting to reflect on one’s own present circumstances, on such present disasters, would be insincere—to try to understand that which should not. Perhaps we should do our best to experience things without reflection. And so we are left with a fundamental *in*articulation, though this is perhaps more sincere than *mis*articulating (it is harder to say which is the preferable, or more productive reaction).

Like any of his peers, Jacob was wont to cope with this deadlock through sex, drugs, and other nefarious behavior. The essential feature—quite clearly to all—was dissociation. His favorite walk led through a cement path alongside the Charles, only fifteen minutes or so from the university’s campus, lined with sporadic benches. From across the water, one could observe the garish lights and wine-drunk laughter emanating from a gentrified restaurant, spectacularly named “Margaritas.” Jacob had once seen a drunken man resist arrest outside of this establishment (this was before he had given much thought to policing). “What do they have to laugh about right now?” a friend once rhetorically asked, sitting five, not six, feet apart from Jacob on one of the path’s benches. Jacob had then tried and failed to articulate a rather complicated point about these drunken, laughing restaurant patrons. In short: coping is meant to give us the strength to endure. These howling restaurant goers were not enduring, but forgetting. Admittedly, Jacob didn’t wish for others’ pain and was glad to know that some people were capable of holding on to happiness (if that’s what this was) even during times like these; we must compartmentalize in this way in order to bear certain sufferings. Yet Jacob could not sympathize with the brunch-type crowd who had decided to ‘support their local business’ in this manner, mask-less and intoxicated, surely, from their own self-deceit intermixed with the overpriced margs.

And so it was likewise the case that Jacob might drink, smoke, or guzzle coffee in order to complete academic work. Contemplating the gravity of his present conditions and a general epochal deterioration, it was this behavior—coping—combined with a destructive tuna casserole that Jacob had made himself for dinner which began to uproot his once-settled stomach. “It’s all gone. Everything is gone,” Jacob said to himself. The futility of graduate school, of academic research, of maintaining the myth that a young person could still find a meaningful profession in this world—the future promised to Jacob no longer existed. It is one of life’s oddities that something rationally known may still elude a spiritual reckoning for so very long. On such an occasion like this, the revelation is all the more tragic when intellect and psyche finally align.

He fell to the ground: “No!” Jacob croaked. “No! No! I’m going to die! I’m going to die some day!” Freud wrote that our unconscious is most malleable when we do not prepare our conscious for imminent shock. “I won’t vomit,” Jacob told himself. He succumbed after a few minutes, lurching tuna, arak, and dubiousness. Later that night, in a drunken haze, he attributed his upset stomach to the Coronavirus. “Young people *do* get Corona, and how fitting that it was triggered merely by thinking about the failures of this world!” Throughout the night, Jacob would neurotically assure himself of this truth. “Perhaps we can conjure something real if enough people believe it to be true. An egregore, just like the Futurists, yes, yes...”

* * *

9.7.20. Nothing was stolen from me. I need the fiction of this theft to reconcile the fact that this supposed future never existed. Untroubled is Jacob’s abode!

Extract from the mole club; some memoirs of mine. The particular scene described here, took place in February of this year, during my brief convalescence in a sanatorium. “There were 12 of us on the ward in total, each with our own room number. I remember all the ward residents very vividly and, on the whole, rather fondly. In room 1, by the entrance to the ward, there was Charles; born to ‘emotionally absent post-war parents’ (his own words), he was a very nice, kind gentlemen, tallish with combed brown hair, rather voluminous for a man of his age, though admittedly receding slightly. Being older than most of the residents (he was probably in his late 50s) he would often act as a senior figure, an old-head in whom one could always confide. Most evenings he’d excuse himself at 9 sharp so as to make a call to one of the many ex-residents with whom he’d continued to keep in touch - he had been on the ward longer than anyone else (5-6 weeks) and had evidently made numerous friendships over this time. ‘I’m expecting a sizeable severance package’ he said to me one afternoon as he lay supine on a sofa in general lounge. ‘I’m not concerned with the pay so much, but my being fired from the job is how I ended up here’ he continued. Usually, as in Charles’ here case, people would tell you how they came to be at the hospital on their own accord, but some of the more unapologetic characters

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liked to go for a direct ‘What are you in for?’-type approach, as though we were inmates in a prison and our admissions were criminal charges, to which I’d always duly answer given that such lines of questioning were always friendly and never uncomfortable. In fact, it’ll come as no surprise to you, that being a man of letters with a taste for certain literary extravagances, I liked to embellish my own story, just a little, not in the usual self-deprecating way, but with some creative panache if you see what I mean, to really bring the story to life. For example, one lunch (we would eat together in the dining room), I was sat opposite Fiona (room 8), carving up a succulent slice of ham and applying a handsome dollop of redcurrant jelly, when she asked me ‘What are you here for?’

To this I promptly replied ‘I was in the middle of shaving my head in my grandparents’ attic when the police arrived and I was immediately apprehended’. This story is entirely true, I am not some sort of sick liar, I’m a nice honest fellow. *A brief aside* It is important here that I mention for the sake of any future readers unfamiliar with my oeuvre that in this particular memoir which you are reading (Volumes 2 of 6) I have

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omitted certain details in the series of events that led to my hospitalisation. As a consequence of this, certain events, such as the one to which I was alluding to in conversation with Fiona are not included in this particular volume. For those of you intrigued by my more scandalous side, volumes 4 and 5 do a much better job of fleshing out the more sensationalist elements of my emotional collapse and have become the darling of tabloid journalists. So as I was saying, I did not lie, though as you can probably tell, I rather deliberately chose to recall the most animated moment in the series of events that led to my admission. ‘wow that’s the most hilarious story I’ve heard so far in this place’ Fiona said.”

Contact and special thanks to Monsieur Gilles

Monsieur Gilles, Grenoble France.
Insta: <https://www.instagram.com/parmigiano66/>

Arbor's chief designer, Monsieur Gilles,
kindly designed this issue's cover. More
from him to come in future issues.



Contact:

Email: pinkkudu@icloud.com

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/arbor/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ARBOR20K>

**We are accepting future submissions all the time,
and we'd like to get in touch with you.**

