

PAUL LEGAULT

An Interview with Tao Lin

Tao Lin's Gmail status is always: "busy." I like that. But it makes it difficult to Gmail-chat-interview him. But this happened. On Monday, February 16, 2009. And that interview is what's included here.

Tao Lin is a writer. He is the author of two books of poetry, *you are a little bit happier than i am* (Action Books, 2006) and *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy* (Melville House, 2008); one collection of short stories, *Bed* (Melville House, 2007); one novella, *Shoplifting from American Apparel* (Melville House, forthcoming); and two novels, *Eeeee Eee Eeee* (Melville House, 2007) and *Richard Yates* (Melville House, forthcoming). He also runs a press called *muumuu house*, and is the co-editor of Ass Hi Books.

Some people call him "controversial." Like when he auctioned off shares in the future royalties of his second novel. He is also, mostly, "nice." For a young writer (twenty-five), he's garnered a fair amount of prizes and publications, and an inordinate amount of hits on his blog. To boot (forgive the phrase), he is "attractive." His blog's name is: hehehehehehehehehehehe.com. Tao Lin lives in Brooklyn, New York.

- 11:15 PM **Tao:** i am ready
- 11:19 PM **Paul:** Hey
- 11:20 PM I mean: good.
Tao: i am ready, you don't have to do it now though
Paul: I'd like to. I mean we're doing it, right?
- 11:21 PM **Tao:** oh, okay
Paul: I guess this is part of it. I mean, I should ask a question.
Tao: go
- 11:22 PM **Paul:** Do you think there should be more anthropomorphized animals in literature? Like in Virginia Woolf's 'Flush'. Have you read it. It's from the point of view of a cocker spaniel.
- 11:23 PM **Tao:** yes, i liked 'flush'
Paul: Have you read Barbara Bush's novel from the point of view of a dog? I hear she wrote one as well.

- Tao:** yes, actually i just read that, i like that also
- Paul:** Of course.
- 11:24 PM I saw your bookmooch list. What do you think your bookmooch list says about you? I mean, I saw you wanted to read Joe Brainard.
- Tao:** i have read ‘i remember’ or something by him, i liked it and added more things by him on bookmooch
- 11:25 PM my bookmooch list shows i’m really smart
- 11:26 PM **Paul:** Do you think you’re thinking about that through your other online presences? Or moreso with that one?
- Tao:** i think my online presence shows i’m ‘really retarded’ to most people, to some people i probably seem ‘intelligent’
- 11:27 PM **Paul:** I like your page with the drawings of manatees in sweaters and other things. I remember mostly the manatee in a sweater.
- Who do you think looks really ‘smart’ online?
- 11:28 PM **Tao:** maybe ‘susan sontag’
i am reading her diaries and i like her
- Paul:** That is very literary of you to say. Do you think literature is more important than Haley Joel Osmen?
- 11:29 PM **Tao:** one would need to define a context and a goal for me to be willing to answer that
- 11:30 PM **Paul:** Let’s say the goal were world domination. And you could only use one weapon, given those choices. The choices of weapons being literature and H.J.O..
- Tao:** hm, i’m thinking
i guess literature
- 11:31 PM **Tao:** i could write things
and get fans
then when they trusted me i could tell them to do things
but the most fans i could get is like 5000 maybe
maybe i would choose HJO
yes, i think JHO
HJO
- Paul:** He is fierce
You need fierceness

End of excerpt. For the full interview, please see our print issue.