MEET THE COVER ARTIST

Shoshana Kertesz
"Hannah Arendt"

Shoshana Kertesz was born in Budapest, Hungary. She wanted to be a painter since age four. Based on her artistic talent she was placed in an elementary school class that had special art education for the gifted. After that she studied visual arts at the Montazs Art School for four years. Her teachers were Jozsef Baska and Katalin Renyi. In 2003 Shoshana left Hungary and moved to Jerusalem, Israel. She continued to exhibit her artwork throughout Hungary and Israel. The works from this period show an orientation toward biblical and Jewish subjects. In her biblical paintings she uses strong expressions of solemnity and seriousness on the faces to convey the drama of the moment. "I am not concentrating solely on the story itself but mostly on the spiritual response that the story evokes in me". Her more recent works include realistic portraits of great artists, writers, poets, musicians. "I choose my subjects not just based on whom I admire but whom I can identify myself with on certain levels. For me it is also a psychological study, to make a thorough research on my subject`s personality, to dig as deep as possible into their art and to live and breathe who they are in order to bring out the most realistic expression and reflection of their inner and outer being as well as -consciously or not- my own.

We achieve the best results in art when we totally identify ourselves with what we want to express. For example if I paint an earring I shouldn`t just look at an actual earring and copy it on the canvas but I have to `feel` the earring as if that earring is the only thing that exists in the world at that moment.

For me painting is communication and self expression without words but I want people to feel free to interpret my art as they will. They can see themselves in them. Just like giving birth to a child, it is inside you and it is your own flesh and blood but after you give birth, the child will start to live its own life. I feel that after the painting comes out of my innermost being I do not want to control how it affects people and what they should see in it.

My paintings are figurative. My favorite medium is oil and my style ranges from expressionism to realism."

Shoshana Kertesz moved to Brooklyn, New York on February 2010. She has had many opportunities to show her work throughout the United States. Her next solo exhibition is going to take place between the 1st of March and the 10th of April, 2011 in the Hanna Studio Gallery at Ringwood, NJ. Her works can be found on her website: WWW.SHOSHANAKERTESZ.COM

L.E.S. Review

Spring 2011

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ode 2

you say "the sun is coming on the moon's face."
I laugh because words are irrelevant to that kind of beauty,
that kind of beauty is inhuman,
and what I really want to do is look up your skirt.

the city lights shout back at the stars. here's something:

I imagine spiral galaxies as clumsy drunks,
planets as coughs and nebulas as sighs,
time and space as unneeded complications to the untroubled now,
and also I imagine what you look like naked.

seeing you with your clothes off would feel like putting my hand into flour,
by which I mean I would like it.

in my grandmother's pool,
at the house she hasn't lived at in years,
I would keep my eyes open underwater until they stung
so the sky would turn purple behind the overgrown orange tree.

we do what it takes to see something extraordinary.

later I'll be on a rooftop
in a city loud with light,
trying to look up your skirt.

but right now I'm in a pool as the purple fades from the sky.
I can smell chlorine and only chlorine.
the sky is as round and clear and blue as the water I'm in,
and all water everywhere. no, bluer.

ode

your balcony is a piece of shit.
effervescent
is not a word anyone would use to describe your shitty balcony
or anything else.
no one uses the word effervescent.

my forehead is the base camp of a mountain of hair.
your eyes are the color of gutter water.
gutter water after someone washes their car,
when the soap turns the water effervescent.

I like it,
but what I don't like is your shitty balcony.
your balcony is a piece of shit and also it's cold out here.

Chad Faries was raised mostly in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, but lived in 24 houses by the time he was 10 years old. These experiences are chronicled in his forthcoming memoir, *And Then We Moved* (Emergency Press February, 2011) . His poetry collection, *The Border Will Be Soon,* was the winner of the Emergency Press open book competition in 2005. He has been published in *Exquisite Corpse, Southeast Review, New American Writing, Barrow Street, The Hawaii Review, Afterimage, Post Road,* and others. He has a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and was a Fulbright Fellow in Budapest. he is an Asst. Professor at Savannah State University where he also hosts a theme based storytelling and music program on WHCJ 90.3 . He now owns a house in Thunderbolt, GA but lives abroad and gets lost on his motorcycle whenever he can. More info can be found at www.chadfaries.com.

Field Trip

Postcard 1

In Munich women parade
their bodies from open car doors
that salute the passersby with a stiff
arm. Within the salute, a white kiss
cadence and a potential capitalistic thrust
into the womb of body-politic. In the distance
a train orgasms as its driving wheel grinds
on the track in true ecstasy.

Postcard 2:
Hungarian Plain from the Train

Garbage-burn--table-tennis--panel--egret--Chris-lazy-eyed--graffiti

Basin--flood--boot-prints----picnic----------lovers----------lovers

Beer----storage----storage----lovers----green----green----pale-green

river-silt----blue-metal-roof----green-metal----Small----------panel

bog----railroad-track-scribble---------dirt-pile----------combine-parts

freight-train-----orchards----------beer-drink----------sack-carry

bridge----------rubble----------electrical-poles-rubble----------rubble

sunflowers---------sunflower----------foreign-girl-sunflowers.

Postcard 3

Tongue the first petal on
a hino azalea when
wind smashes its
lips on the heat of
your throat and breaks
it all down. We are

ones in nights that
palpitate and make
breeze from this,
the blowing of
vowels, deep, and we
may fight for a
seat at the table.

Postcard 4

In Romania
cart horses have
swollen and knotted
knees flayed
open like eyelids.
They wink
with every broken
step while their
true eyes
tell me
what I don't
want to hear.

Postcard 5

Sun-done heel
click and matches.
A thumb pressed into
the sweet
of your knee.

Nudge, tremble
sin in the whole
of sewer-grate bug-love
and beetle-free

I flutter and migrate
past reason
as the thigh of a crescent
moon flexes at the horizon.

The stars are pushing
darkness and wild dogs

will never know.

Ripple the folds of their
wild curtain call
to our hotel radiance
shore where we meddle in

Joseph Fink recently edited A Commonplace Book of the Weird: The Untold Stories of H.P. Lovecraft, in which writers from all over the country tackled the unused ideas left behind by the master of weird fiction. See more information at commonplacebooks.com. He also does other things with his life.

digression

there's this brick wall where no two bricks are the same size,
within which there's a window with a perfect map of the world in finger prints,
below which there's a heater coughing up the first dust of winter,
and on top of which there's two jackets, one scarf, and three gloves.

anyway, I saw a van flip over on 26th street
and it reminded me of you.

At fourteen, I learned the important double standard
that mothers are not afforded the luxury
of falling apart.
Since the age of seventeen
I have wanted mine to leave you.
Did I think that I could love her better
than the only man I have ever seen try?
Who says an Oedipus complex
was only designed for a son?
You have not loved my mother in the way that she deserves.
Nor have I.
She is too good for this world and
we are not worthy of her affections.
You and I
are just two cowards,
afraid of how close we become
when we are not sober.
Because we only hold hands
through the necks of wine glasses.
At twenty-three, I see it in her face.
She is searching for you in my tearful apologies.
And the echo of vomit
that you never gave her the satisfaction of hearing
sounds like relief.
She knows her daughter still suffers from the morning after condition
to which by the age of eighteen you were already immune.
Dad, did it all start
because of some cruel nun's preschool torture?
Or underneath your condescending cabinet makers veneer
did you suffer like me?
Did you grow up feeling ugly?
Did you know that no one would ever love you
for the boring person that you were
so you grabbed the neck of a bottle
and searched to the bottom for the person
you were supposed to be.
I have grown out of your shoulders
and into your liver.
Because our personalities
are as clotted as a Bloody Mary
left out overnight.
Is it wrong that the one thing I am proud to say I inherit from you
is the one thing that has ripped our family apart?
And as much as I should
think of all that
when I reach for a drink
instead,
I just think of you and wonder
if this is the closest we will ever get
to the word
love.

the perverse headlock

of passion. It was
just that and some
Russians singing,
and your naughty
silence. It is time

for this tea and that,
a thousand lost and pathetic
kiss-winks. What happened
is just that.

Postcard 6

Wonder sums its numbers
In backstreets and oozes
Into sewer grates.
There is a solution somewhere
Deep. And questing can't crack
A code or bend a bar.

But clicks of heals
and the smell of powder
in a sex gun longing
perpetuate the moon to wax
and wane like the soft
mounds of manicured hair

on early summer flesh.

Justin Dean Thomas is a NYC-based singer/songwriter/poet/actor. Born in Boston, MA, Thomas is related to Jack Kerouac through Cleo Surprenant. He dropped out of school at age 14 and spent the next few years hitchhiking and freewheeling across the United States. Upon moving back to South Boston, he worked various jobs – from landscaping, masonry, construction, busking, drug-running, and freelance writing to modeling and acting. Living up and down the East Coast, Thomas had built a small fan base and decided to parlay that energy into New York where he now resides and continues to write and perform both solo and with the downtown rock n roll band "The Bowery Riots" (www.theboweryriots.com). His influences span from classics like Byron and Yeats to Jim Carroll and Bukowski, taking many cues from American Rhythm and Blues, Gospel, and Folk music as well. www.justindeanthomas.tumblr.com

What Lies Beneath the Tongue

What stars can't tell the day, they scream to the night, and Pierce The window brazenly which bleeds from it it's light. What time tells no bones, it whispers slightest death and rides upon the smoke, which dances on a breath.

What the bottle tells the drunkard, as it sings him to his sleep, and echoes from the inside as its ghost takes from him heat. What wicked kings tell no one, as their villages burn till the dawn, and angels clasp their ears, as the demons sing their songs.

What infidels tell their lovers, On dying december days, Brings us to the river where her body forever lays. What the singapore sailors last words were, as they lay with knives in back, only sea and ship know as they hug the crimson deck

What David told His son, he told not to his wife. What soloman gave sheba, he gave not to his son, And it burned from the temple and lies within its crumbs.

Angela Cobb is a spoken-word poet and stand-up comedian. A 2009 graduate of the State University of New York, College at Oneonta, Cobb was a member of the school's poetry slam team. The team took second place in the 2009 ACUI Regional competition and went on to compete at the national level at the College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational (CUPSI). As a comedian, Cobb's self-deprecating jokes and likable personality embrace life's awkward absurdity. Cobb has performed at venues such as Broadway Comedy Club, New York Comedy Club, and Laugh Lounge. More recently, she was an on-screen participant in "Why Stand-Up?" a documentary film by Frank Vignola. Her poetry is an attempt to flesh out personal insecurities by way of humor and honesty. Cobb currently resides in Brooklyn, New York.

Conifer Park

When I was five years old and had my first loose tooth,
you took out a bottle of Jack Daniels,
smudged some on your index finger,
rubbed it on my gums,
as if to re-christen me:
"Angela,
you are my daughter.
And even though in the future
you will try to shake this fact
like the bump on your nose which I have given you
every time,
every time you reach for a drink,
you will know."
Alcoholism
does not always come with wife beatings and yellings
and furniture over-turned,
public humiliation outbursts at PTA functions.
No,
some of us didn't grow up
that simple.
When you slept your way through my childhood,
drowning in snores,
waking up only for the fun stuff,
Merry Christmas drum sets
and tickets to see wrestling at Nassau Coliseum.
When you poured Budweiser
into a cartoon canteen
to sneak it into the theme park at Disney,
were you not an alcoholic?
They told us then, that Conifer Park
was "a residential chemical dependency treatment facility,
situated on thirty-two wooded acres,
offering a beautiful, tranquil setting
conducive to recovery."
I ask you now:
where was mom's beautiful, tranquil setting?
Where were her wood acres?
When you chose to give up,
her own mother dying of cancer,
and you recovered just
in time to be by her side at the funeral
like a good husband.

Bulletin

The radio says they escaped last night;
two convicts unbuckled from their past,
rising like flies from a rotten rind of fruit.

It is not dawn when I stand
and look out the window at the clearing.
I think about the men in prison,

where every rising sun is a red mouth
that begs, howling vowels.
Even stars prick the sky's open wound

with fricatives of threat.
The fisted haft is determined
but it's a desperate blade.

They stab toward release,
fugitives in the whirling wooded dark,
speeding toward all fresh intentions.

Each dreams his clean slate.
Somewhere near, a woman
delivers papers, hauling her life

through the world like a tired bitch
drags its whelp.
I sit in a kitchen facing east,

risen from a bed that won't swallow me yet.
The hall smells of coffee.
On the counter in glass bowls thaw shanks of beef.

But I know as the men pass her,
one feels intention melt
like fat on his hot tongue.

Outside husks and grasses shiver in a sudden gust,
whines of hounds fill the fields,
which empty again.

Tamryn Spruill is a graduate student in the MFA Creative Writing program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. Her chapbook of poetry, *Apotheosis* (Word Nerd Editorial Press), was published in 2009. Her fiction can be found in *The Medulla Review.*

woeful masturbation

jeans around knees,
fingers working on wetness:
memories of old days
jutting in and out of a
mind caved beneath
asphalts of regret.

honey

drizzled

on

flesh

and

a

tongue:

on,

in,

everywhere.

you:

on,

in,

everything.

and i come:

my

letters tumbling

from

blue skies

in

snowflake

patterns,

coming to rest on littered highways.

fingers dried on denim,
an afterthought
after thoughts of fingers on wetness
that are not my own.

Cesca Janece Waterfield is a songwriter and writer currently living in Virginia. She is the author of *Bartab: An Afterhours Ballad* (Two-Handed Engine Press, ISBN: 978-0-9820020-0-1). She is Founder and Editor of EveInHand.net. Visit Cesca.net or twohandedengine.net.

East Village Song

...the gentrification of swaths of New York is hardly new. But when the changes are chronicled in one place, their pace is staggering. - New York Times, October 28, 2007

From Port Authority we glide at dawn
To Avenue A with a flask of scotch,
Clocking progress that will flatten ere long
Gritty sidewalks pocked with chewing gum shot.
We hold against a superficial fix -
If you love me, baby, I could just
Shush the bulldozers with songs brewing blue,
Return St. Ann, a prodigal repaired
To matriarchal crown from NYU.
Even saints struggle in revolving air.
We love against greed's despicable tricks -
If you hold me baby, I could just
Dance along Bowery with dusk-strange things
Cradling a bottle shaped like a whore,
Ruby red waltzing through the snow and fringe,
One curling dollar between Tompkins Square.
We love against privation's lowing ache -
If you hold me, baby, I could just
Sing voodoo luck to a rapturous crowd
The buzz in the club, the hum in our veins.
Punjabi driver says tomorrow's bound.
Like mortal streets, all good things will change.
We hold against time's fading wick -
If you love me, baby, I could just

Jesi Bender is a NYC-based poet and painter currently residing in the L.E.S. She graduated with her B.A. in English and Fine Art from Cornell University and is currently interning at the Metropolitan Museum of Art while finishing her M.S. in Library Science (with a concentration in Archival Work) from Pratt. Her chapbook Glossolalia (MFG/Imprint 2010) and other work can be seen on www.jesibender.com.

Jesi Belle waits for the hounds

To Yonah

Jesi Belle waits for the hounds,
With coal round her eyes
And tint on her lips,
Or for a dove released from the sea,
Like breath from a mouth -
And she patiently sits.

By the window, the soft glow
Of a halo of red burns
The whore sits and hopes for
Her monomaniacal sailor
Away hunting that thing in the sea
That remains an elusive captor –

It's that something some deep men feel eating inside them
(Inside the man is a fish inside a fish inside a man)
He knows she's something that the people do not condone
The cold white of her skin opaquely shimmers like bone
And him, living only "on half a heart and a half lung"
So the woman who loves him sits all alone

In a room cross the water,
Drinking stolen kosher wine
She realizes **this is done** –
Dogs barking in the distance
A vengeful people grow closer,
The people made in His image have won.

The sky is orange as teeth cut through,
The blood runs so sweet (the wine).
Easily erased - though it had been rough
asking, 'Who's G-d *isn't* a giant phallus?'
And silencing the prophetic tongues
Who told her that love wasn't enough.

Now - where is the heart, the core of her flesh?
All I see are her arms, her legs and her head.
They wanted it this way,
As far as I can tell,
So no one would ever be able to say;
"This, this was Jesi Belle".

Mark Anthony Vigo was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. He has spent many a summer on The Lower East Side growing up as a kid in the 80's. It was here that he picked up "Down These Mean Streets", the first book that he just picked up because he wanted to read it! Vigo currently resides in Williamsburg and is married with three children. He graduated from Brooklyn Tech H.S. and did a few years of college. Vigo currently works as a construction foreman for a general contracting firm based in NYC. His love for poetry began when he joined his cousin's DJ/Rap group – Vigo was a b-boy and he used to rock the mic!!! As he got older, his perspective changed, but his love for words has always remained.

My Voice

10/10/10

My voice at times,
Barely rises above a whisper,
But not for lack of something to say,
Listen closely when I speak,
And you can hear what I am feeling,
Through my words,
I'll take you there,

Through my doubts,
Through my sorrows,
Through my anger,
Through my joy!

My life experience,
and what it means to me,
about how things used to be,
from a time when I was growing fast,
Then, more than just a boy.

From ages 6 to 13,
No father at home,
due to incarceration,
And before that,
he was just a rolling stone,
like the song says,
"wherever he laid his hat, was his home",
but when he did hang around,
It was cool though,
ya know,

Out to Coney Island,
Even those road trips to the upstate,
to the 7-Lakes,
I didn't get as much time with him,
as I probably would've loved!
But whenever he was around,
it was just great!

Because he always hooked us up,
And Christmastime was always the shit!

But life,
can be just Life sometimes,
And sometimes the script gets flipped,

Hear my voice,
Feel what I feel,
Cut me,
And ink flows to the page,
You thought you might have hurt me,
You are sadly mistaken,
All you've done,
Is engaged my rage!
A rage so furious,
So focused,
So complete,
A rage so blinding,
Brings out the Armeggedon in me,
Its not a place,
I'd like to find myself,
Because I may do something I will regret,
So don't test me to my limits fool,
Cause I'll snap your friggin' neck!

Hear my voice,
See what I see,
The plight of those unfortunate souls,
Vilified, brutalized, gentrified, marginalized,
And all through no fault,
Of their own,

Predatory people come from all walks of life,
From the sheisty real estate brokers,
to "Chacho",
from the bodega,
who starts jackin' up the price,

As soon, as he sees,
a hipster or two,
"Cha-ching! Cha-ching! Cha-ching!"
is all he hears while looking at you,

But "Chacho" it's me, Yo!
You've known me for life,
Si, es la verdad,
but now for that milk,
you must pay the new & improved,
gentrified price!

Damn! It's like that Yo!

Ambrose Thompson is a public librarian for the New York Public Library working in the Lower East Side at the Tompkins Square Branch. Starting with Shel Silverstein, I fell in love with poetry. As I grew up my tastes turned to Wordsworth and Blake and from there jumped around to taste and experience all forms. Writing poetry is a form of meditation for me. Forcing the mind to quiet down and listen opens up awareness to experience the world around me.

Senryu #1
immortalized name
remind me to memory
self identity

Senryu #2
breathe in to exhale
breathe in deep my last exhale
reciprocity

Senryu #3
sound of midnight snow
all the world talking lowly
boundaries erode

Richard Murphy's credits include the 2008 Gival Press Poetry Award for my book-length manuscript "Voyeur;" a first book *The Apple in the Monkey Tree*; chapbooks *Great Grandfather*, *Family Secret*, *Hunting and Pecking*, and *Phoems for Mobile Vices, Rescue Lines*; poems in *Rolling Stone, Poetry, Grand Street, Trespass, The View from Here, New Letters, Pank, Segue, Big Bridge, EOAGH, Fact-Simile, foam:e*, and *Confrontation*; and essays in *The International Journal of the Humanities, Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning, Reconfigurations: A Journal for Poetics Poetry / Literature and Culture, Fringe,* and *Journal of Ecocriticism*. Derek Walcott has remarked for the cover of my book *Voyeur*: "Mr. Murphy is a very careful craftsman in his work, a patient and testing intelligence, one of those writers who knows precisely what he wants his style to achieve. His poetry is quiet but packed, carefully wrought, not surrealistically wild, and its range not limited but deliberately narrow. It takes aim." I live in Marblehead, MA and teach writing at VCU.

Toward Hues

The crow flies
while the lollygagging pierces
deep into adulthood
where point A long gave way to ellipsis

Sí! Mi panito, It's like that!
And just so you know,
the rent's just quadrupled,
on your one-window,
one-bedroom flat!

Hear my voice,
look at my face,
when I speak,
my words,
take flight.
Released into the air,
a soul laid bare,
burdenless,
feeling so light.
But the moment,
sweet,
as,
it is fleeting,
is over,
much,
much,
too soon,
my voice,
the instrument,
provides the music,
for my words,
as my search,
for the next moment,
resumes....

William Cordiero has worked as a NYC Teaching Fellow, a staff writer at the theater magazine offoffonline, and an assistant editor of *Epoch*. He has an MFA in poetry from Cornell, where he is currently a Ph.D. candidate studying 18th century British literature. Cordiero is also the co-founder of Brooklyn Playwrights Collective and have had several plays produced in regional and off-off-Broadway venues, including a libretto performed at the Johnson Museum of Art. For the past two years he has been the Artist-in-Residence at Risley Residential College. His poems have been published in journals such as *Brooklyn Review*, *lafovea*, *Baltimore Review*, *Dirt*, and *Paradigm*, and are forthcoming in *Sentence* and *Word for/Word*.

Ars Poetica: A Cento

But if the air
Is suddenly thickened or infected, we are
Forced to attend to our breathing with new vigilance,
And the whole thing is set off and
Rooted
In life by a series of marvelous touches: it rides
On the air, as is reasonable,
A curious mixture of theatrical styles and conventions.

We have seen how our means of vertical support
May, for the sake of economy
Both of space and material, be gathered, a measure of irony
Versus emotional directness, into a hunger for a reality
Deeper than everyday life—or nonsense, since
What Grützmacher made accessible was not
The great works but his falsifications of them, which
Might entertain you a whole afternoon with housewifery.
To assume
False names and false identities—how much of life is devoted
To maintaining these pretenses! The crucial turn-
About,
Of course, had already occurred
Before the introduction

Of a special editorial function. —And film
Has proved to be more informative than anecdotal statements: the whole
World is passed through the filter of the culture industry.

It is possible for an individual to label himself
As a pervert simply
Because he lacks basic knowledge of what normal behavior really is; the beginner
Should approach style
Warily: pictures and letters are really blood-relations,
And just as lines are moved in the initial stages
In order

to extend
Surfaces, to multiply internal frequencies, and to recalibrate amplitudes,
Surfaces and volumes too are set in motion ...
Vagueness, then, is less an effect than a precondition—not so much from its life as from its afterlife.
Explore the imagery at length and observe its permutations.

Lisa A. Flowers is a freelance writer, vocalist, poet, and film critic. Raised in Los Angeles and Portland, OR, she is the founder and editor of Vulgar Marsala Press. Her poetry has appeared in *The Cortland Review*, *elimae*, and other magazines and online journals. Her poetry collection *diatomhero* is forthcoming in January of 2011. She currently resides in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia but will soon be relocating to Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Visit her on the web here http://lisaaflowers.blogspot.com/ or herehttp://lisaaflowersonlinework.blogspot.com/

JERRICA'S CHILDHOOD

Came out into adulthood
A shiny black pup
From between the thighs of dog years.

Someone went ahead at the speed of light
Came back; said: "I didn't see
Your face in the world past the age of 8"
Her guardian angel
Put Jerrica's fate under anesthesia; while it was out
Grafted some skin from her childhood
Onto the rest of her life...
Which sped ahead, having swallowed its future in a balloon
It hoped wouldn't burst
By the time she could get to a bathroom at, age, say, 75-
Or another respectable autumn year.

UNTITLED

Not much point in karma
When you don't know what you're being punished for;
Somehow it strips the sweetness from just desserts

Or nothing to fear but fear itself
As the Youth Who Went Forth To Learn What Fear Was

Would drag a dead man into bed with him,
Then get petulant when the stranger used his revival

To demonstrate what "chemistry" can do
When it gets into a corpse on a soft Southern night.

And it sort of does. But
It doesn't
When nothing makes any sense
When I don't know have a face or taste
Or smell or a look. What's your look?
Why did you choose to look the way you look?
Did you choose the way you look? I did

I've always chosen my looks
For several reasons
I have a history of looks
First it was the boots, then it was
The hair, once it was platinum blonde
Twice it was black
Always for a good reason
I once read that people born on
July twenty second have a fluctuating
Vocational identity. I really do
My personality doesn't exist
My personality is formed by
Many different things I like
Depending on the way
I wake up. If I wake up
With my left foot, I don't
Like anything. Not even
My identity. Just to give you an
Example right now I'm watching
A documentary about Johnny Cash
And before I was watching an
Elvis documentary and I really thought
I wanted to have a pompadour

I hope this was an interesting poem
Was it? Was it?
"No, I didn't like your poem"
"I thought it was pretentious"
"but I'm kind of pretentious myself
So I shouldn't say anything"
All I really, really, really care about
Is the hair around my nipples
The Sun coming down
Another day is gone
It will get dark and there will be
No more possibilities available
For Today. Hopefully I made some Art
Something

Matthue Roth is the author of Losers (http//www.amazon.com/dp/0545068932?tag=215live365-20), a novel about Russian Jewish geeks, as well as three other books. His screenplay "1/20" was just made into a feature film. He lives in Brooklyn and keeps a secret diary at www.matthue.com.

SMOKE

She would've smoked right under the
blood-red sky of a no-smoking sign,
but she didn't smoke.

The most she could manage
was eating on the morning train,
but hell,
this was New York.
Everybody ate.

She had grown up a
Hasidic Jew.
They had rules for everything.

She settled for turning the lights off on Shabbos,
not washing her hands
before she broke bread,
and making out with herself
feverishly, all over the mirror
before going to bed.

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OF HUMAN SACRFICE & SACRIFICAL DESCENT INTO HELL: legit copy / MS 47158h
Paper ink draft / November

here in Mexico we find Chaley Chastitellez in McTlán after escaping
the treachery of creamy sunltit Xochitl Flores / who sd
to our knight "gud bai" after
his quote/unquote Great Refusal
& after many months after our fair Xochitl threw him down
& came kissy kiss kiss
facedown upon him
devouring him & ripping
open his pecho / qué pachanga /
scratching to hell his legs & arms
& screaming ¡ Santiago !
¡ Santiago ! & dispatching
him thoroughly
even despite his fair swordplay
then blackening his slowing
heart w/ copalsmoke
wrapped in nopales

& now first stop / here / in Death's abode Chaley
finds himself presented w/ one of La Muerte's
jovencita emissary agents:
& look: looking good for this pink pearl
of perfection appears painful /
her hair striped agate
clotted w/ blood into braids
never combed or parted
& her chocolatl eyes of pure stars
make no mistake freeze to the bone
& have the sun's seeing
& they sing rain / rain
& she swells him w/ embalmed songs
& up above: sagging moon / thick & pregnant

then she sez "no temas donde vayas
"que has de morir
"donde debes . . .
"powerfully sacred / & when it FILLS OUR WORLD /
"yea
"like rayos of luz thru & thru"
& "hasta que tomé la píldora se me quitó el dolor"

but her florid speech spoken to no one in particular—mind
Chaley hadn't sufficient Spanish to do w/ her & anyway
/ no smell
& behold—¡Chaley Chastitellez!—

That happen to look good together
I want to kill you
"I want to touch you"
"Who's your father?"
"Where's your mother?"
What don't you drink some
Chamomile tea and relax?
Thank you

I have had this black handkerchief
For about eight years
It has been with me through
The worst and the best
As they say
I'm probably ten years older
Than that guy over there
This is messed up
I'll be twenty years old
In ten years
When the golden age is happening
I'll be the same age as
The subject of my dream
With hanging tits
It was very comforting as well as
Special to be able to touch and
Be friends with such an icon of
The nineties films

All I'm trying to do is
To keep myself busy so they don't
Suspect I'm depressed. So they think
I'm doing "just fine"
Like the rest. Like the ones
Who sit in restaurants and smile
Yes, I know the reason why I feel
Threatened by your happiness
And your coolness is because I wish
I was happy like you. But I know
You can't be that happy
Why pretend? Or maybe you're
Only trying to be "just fine", aren't you?
Maybe I have to try harder
To be happy, I mean, like right now
I'm trying to be
A talented poet. What for?
I don't know. I'm just trying because
I'm supposed to
My father is a poet too
It is the only thing that balances
His nerves out. I thought
Maybe it balances mine too

POEM

That was us today
A couple of handsome
Guys on the corner of Orchard
And Broome. I don't like
This resource
Consisting on naming
The streets
Just so this can sound
More engaging. But it is
Where we were standing

Our acquaintance was inside
The clothing store
It was sunny
The air is cold now so the sun felt good
It made us all look crisp and elegant
Like in one of those situations
In which people look crisp and elegant
But I didn't care at all
It all makes me feel bored
I know it's a self defensive reaction
Caused by disappointment
She is probably very lonely
Nobody called for her birthday
So she calls. She knows its
The fall of the American empire
It's the end of the world
I'm writing for nothing. Just
To keep up with all this art
Around me. All over
Everywhere
Call me an impostor
Call me a liar. What's so honest
About what you do?
Tell me what's your mission
In this world? In this life?
In this city? In this decadent
New York in which we live
All I can do is to keep on writing
To feel decent, mature, responsible,
Active, handsome, energetic
What a nice coat. "I like your coat".
I likes your shoes. "I want your shoes"
"I want your coat"
It's not a coat. It's an illusion
Two pieces of cheap old fabric

truchas yr name ¡ stinks ! sudden overwhelming stench
more than
carrion in Tucson in July—
more than dead salmon filling dry creekbeds
in Alaska in August—& he sickens & groans / folds
& darkness twists in him
like a river—weighing him down . . .
& he contemplates again to go—yeah again—to leave
his hated & O so heated AZtlán . . .
—which he later does—claro—
but he continues on pulling himself along
dragging along some whitemud & on
passing this jovencita
voicing one gutteral grassy ass & smiling & suddently he strolls [sic ¿ ?]
further into his despondent baroque hallucination McTlanuense
until he reaches
that forested juncture [¿?]
& these cosmic trees—
fat & furbarked / w/ sky branches—
& he sits beneath one's shadows
which shines specks of stars & finds
a smoking mirror—he looks at his face
& this mirror cracks / & his face wrinkles
& he sees himself as puro viejo / face like a battered stone
& so he instantly sleeps—
later wakes—¿in his dream?
& he walks . . . [margin: "& he wakes &c"]
gritos de dolores sounding
in his ears . . . death to gachupines &c [margin: "&c &c"]
& so he squats on a slab of unrefined copper to rest . . .
his hands leaning on this ore lump
& yonder AZtlán shining in the distance
he looking down from some height in space
of time / & as for space of space he's there where
his gaze lands
which as he sees & considers
effects tears to rush
into his eyes—
cold sobs cut his throat—
er / O . . . constructed tears
of smeared centuries gone
dripping down his
face & sorrowfully falling to stone
& piercing his heart—
& as he wipes his face shadows
linger where his hands rest
/
& he wakes / ¿into another dream?
& who else but one-armed Álvaro Obregón
appears to him

& he looks up: banners reading “imposition / resistance / adaptation /
“transformation”
“sound concepts güey” Obry sez then “¿where you goin?”
& immediately Chaley responds “to a place
“of red daylight—to find some wisdom”
“. . .” sez Obregón his mouth full of frozen blood
& Chaley wakes again—[¿ ?]
& again Obregón tho this time missing the opposite arm
“¿red daylight?”
“¿know it?”
“don’t know” sez Obry—“but have a plug of this pulqazo—just fer ye”
“well I won’t sey no” & he sips the brew from a yellow popote
sweet wine & sweeter still yet
& instantly / bien pedo / perfectamente drunk he falls
/ faints / on calle & dreams—sleeps—his snores
echo for miles in these canyons
& he ¿wakes? ¿dreams of waking?
& finds only silence—pure
& an empty rusted town of concrete
& rebar . . .
& a new peak—btwn Popocatépetl & Iztaccíhuatl
& snow slowly descends
his face whitemudcaked . . .
& surrounded by carcasses
of books—pages lost among the dead
& that weight oppresses him—so he weeps
for these books—then
sings & his tears again endlessly cold
& long sighs issue deep from his guts
until he sleeps—
& he wakes—¿or dreams?—
to a beach—& there a hulk of serpents
formed into a raft—
& directly he reaches into his pocket
& produces his MTA Metrocard
which he promptly presents to the largest snake’s
mouth / which it sucks & it slides
an entry for Chaley & he boards
& he sails into that diamond ocean
this boat gliding on burning waters
into that land of burning daylight—
on the rim of the great sea
& his face reflects in ocean

Andrew Topel has been known to be brief.

