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The Obligations

Kate Schapira

To start from the house of choice
you must keep your hands to yourself, palms up and creased.
You must keep how eagerly you incur debt:
the mustiness of “must,” the strait lace.

You must make good on your present offers first,
embracing, flinging yourself down on them
like a wet mattress left out in the field.
Your imprint must not be enough.

*

1

Tulips feather out into the sun and stamens darken above shawls
of leaves while the person in the bed—is he shivering? Scratching?
Is the TV on, the window open, the tissue rigid, has she been in
this morning? What of her contract—

—I unlock the neighbors’ door as promised—
—his contraction—
—books on survival roof the bedside table. Pulley the
blind, as promised, leverage the window—
—the gap in their coverage—
—nudge the jug to the roof-edge. Cantilever out. Cool
tops of mint and basil but no one could live up here, the sun is
coming to drive out this water—
—in the secret brief and moving part, known for raunch and

danger, I seed a future of care where I'm obliged and must cease. I
walked right into it. Children, whose house is this?

*

The sunshine, waxed, sieved, like a young open glance.
You must come to light. Your immediate ancestors are
renovating the bathroom.
One of them needs three new teeth and a new phone.
You must listen to the negotiations.
One of them holds in an organ pocket all the other has told her.
To care for her you must distribute this but you mustn't stop
there.
You must not stop at all.

2

*

The woman squatting down as if compelled—
—in debt as a pavilion, heavy pack, dry crossing—
—has been married for years to the person in the bed,
whose liver has been replaced. A whole meat liver alive—
—forgive me if I'm startled by this. The woman listening
is my mother. She's how I know this story and come to think
of it. Of him as "the person in the bed" although he may not be
palmed down anymore.

*

Cramp, cutoff point, potted plant, recovery.
The sunset making nothing. Eyeing, you must look away.

You must cut your side open.
Must ferment. There's no one here.
Orange slabs of light fill before they're stopped.
The mandate, lodged. Do you have anyone waiting? You must.
Naïve on your license: your red heart, your liver, can be called
upon.
The craving the body knows and the craving the story knows.
The craving it's deaf to until one day, until suddenly.

*

You're not the same all the time.
So you must add to the time.
All instantly response and flinch and weave.
You must not understand the cell ballet.
Think of the weak now. You must think about them so much.

3

*

The rigor bells ringing iron, clapper and tongue, can't be edited or
lit. Where are we in the Mercator projection like dividing cells of
seas—

—floating in debt to peel grinning from the branches of this
world. I want to learn the best, irreducible care of this world. I in-
vite. The chunk of asphalt I've been feeling behind my face in this
world, as if pleasure were failed garbage and attention to be paid. I
balk at inviting, stand on the trading ground feeling the nightlines
stretch out.



Pots full of delicious smelling concoctions sizzled, steamed, and burbled over the fires, 2013



Happy Birthday, Allison! as Josefina, 2014

from L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU ET LES POÈTES / THE NEW SPIRIT AND THE POETS

*Richard Kostelanetz translating the French of Guillaume Apollinaire
(1917-1918) (b. Wilhelm Albert Włodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowicki)*

L'esprit nouveau qui dominera le monde entier ne s'est fait jour dans la poésie nulle part comme en France. La forte discipline intellectuelle que se sont imposée de tout temps les Français leur permet, à eux et à ceux qui leur appartiennent spirituellement, d'avoir une conception de la vie, des Arts et des Lettres qui, sans être la simple constatation de l'Antiquité, ne soit pas non plus un pendant du beau décor romantique.

- 6 The New Spirit that will dominate world poetry has emerged in French poetry as nowhere else. The strong intellectual discipline so customarily French allows certain French poets, as well as their spiritual allies, to have a heightened sense of Arts and Letters, all without echoing antiquity or the currently prevailing sentiments for romantic beauty.

The New Spirit soon to dominate world poetry has emerged in France as in poetry nowhere else. The strong intellectual discipline indigenously French has allowed certain French poets, as well as their literary allies, to have a heightened sense of Arts and Letters, all without echoing antiquity or recent ideals of romantic beauty.

L'esprit nouveau qui s'annonce prétend avant tout hériter des classiques un solide bon sens, un esprit critique assuré, des vues d'ensemble sur l'univers et dans l'âme humaine, et le sens du devoir qui dépouille les sentiments et en limite ou plutôt en contient les manifestations.

This New Spirit claims primarily to inherit from the classics some sound common sense, critical thinking, a universe perspective, the human soul, and a sense of duty that reveals our feelings and limits (or rather contains) their examples.

Il prétend encore hériter des romantiques une curiosité qui le pousse à explorer tous les domaines propres à fournir une matière littéraire qui permette d'exalter la vie sous quelque forme qu'elle se présente.

7

It still claims to inherit romantic curiosity that drives him to explore all the areas likely to provide a literary material that allows to exalt life in whatever form it presents itself.

From romantic curiosity comes the drive to explore anything likely to provide literary inspiration and therefore to exalt life in unfamiliar ways.

Explorer la vérité, la chercher, aussi bien dans le domaine ethnique, par exemple, que dans celui de l'imagination, voilà les principaux caractères de cet esprit nouveau.

To explore the truth, seeking more in the ethnic domain than in the imagination, become the main characters of this New Spirit.

Cette tendance du reste a toujours eu ses représentants audacieux qui l'ignoraient; il y a longtemps qu'elle se forme, qu'elle est en marche.

This trend remains has always had its bold representatives who did not know, and there has long it is formed, it is running.

This persisting trend has always had its bold advocates who, though previously unaware of it, discovered that it was long developing.

8

Cependant, c'est la première fois qu'elle se présente consciente d'elle-même. C'est que, jusqu'à maintenant, le domaine littéraire était circonscrit dans d'étroites limites. On écrivait en prose ou l'on écrivait en vers. En ce qui concerne la prose, des règles grammaticales en fixaient la forme.

However, this is the first time she has conscient itself. Is that, until now, the literary field was confined within narrow limits. They wrote in prose or verse you wrote. Regarding the prose, grammatical rules staring form.

However, not until now has this New Spirit become fully conscious of itself. Until now, the literary world was stuck within narrow limits where an author wrote in prose or verse. Especially in the writing of prose, grammatical rules ruled.

Pour ce qui est de la Poésie, la versification rimée en était la loi unique, qui subissait des assauts périodiques, mais que rien n'entamait.

In terms of poetry, rhymed verse was the only law which suffered periodic attacks, but nothing was beginning.

Within the world of poetry, only rhymed verse suffered periodic attacks, though it was never vulnerable.

Le vers libre donna un libre essor au lyrisme; mais il n'était qu'une étape des explorations qu'on pouvait faire dans le domaine de la forme.

Free verse gave free rein to lyricism, but it was only one step explorations could be done in the field of the form.

9

While free verse liberated lyricism, this was only one direction toward exploring new possibilities of form.

Les recherches dans la forme ont repris désormais une grande importance. Elle est légitime.

Research in the form have now taken a great importance. It is legitimate.

Poetic investigations into alternatives have become more important and legitimate.

Comment cette recherche n'intéresserait-elle pas le poète, elle qui peut déterminer de nouvelles découvertes dans la pensée et dans le lyrisme?

How this research it not interest the poet, she can determine new discoveries in thought and lyricism?

How can such investigations not interest poets predisposed to new discoveries in thought and lyrical expression?

Translator's Note

Richard Kostelanetz

From KOSTI'S KOSTRO (late 2014)

Wanting to honor a precursor called by his closest friends Kostro, much as I've been called Kosti, I produced an essay at once incorporating his major text (for me), both in French and a "machine" English translation so rough that readers should consult the original French immediately above it. Some English paragraphs I rewrote as I would my own prose to be more meaningful, making this an experiment in translation and retranslation interwoven one paragraph at a time.

In memory of Guillermo de Torre (1900-1974), poet and critical literary historian, who first wrote about Kostro in 1921, later publishing *Criticos E Historiadores de Arte Guillaume Apollinaire* (1946); and Roger Shattuck (1923-2005), whose *The Banquet Years* (1958), read around 1961, introduced Kostro to me.

Typographical Portraits

Richard Kostelanetz

H.L. MENCKEN

12



Edith Wharton

13

E.E. CUMMINGS

Ezra Pound

14

W. E. B. DUBOIS



The Turquoise Slippers, 2014



Allison Saves the Day as Josefina, 2014

Chemical Reactions

Piotr Gwiazda translating the Polish of Grzegorz Wróblewski

Waterproof shoe spray! First, it helped us
get rid of spiders.

The little monsters fell from the window,
coiled and disoriented.

Meanwhile I, their temporary master,
cried with joy.

Minimalism

Piotr Gwiazda translating the Polish of Grzegorz Wróblewski

Amidst the sorrow

of war

she found the road

to hope

(In theaters

Friday)

Campers

Piotr Gwiazda translating the Polish of Grzegorz Wróblewski

Tell your child
about the risks
of substance abuse.

Tell your child
about the crimes
of backroom financiers.

Tell your child
how marijuana
impairs learning skills.

Family life is a challenge.
12% of campers
choose tents.

\$

Piotr Gwiazda translating the Polish of Grzegorz Wróblewski

The sun leans to the west

The wind ceases

at dusk

(How is the dollar doing?)



Meet Allison as Kirsten Larson, 1854, 2011



*"In these lonely circumstances, she fought the wilderness with her own imagination,
skill, common sense and determination," from Pioneer Women,
Voices from the Kansas Frontier, 2011*

Booked Bilinguality

Alex Henry

words like people may
be used or users too*.
your bigs, your smalls,
your elephantines and bijoux.
subtle,
subminimal,
sublime.

take the larger than life
locution; celebrity heaped in stockpiles of
reserve. starlike for an
asterisk. the common man's
preeminence; trailer parks of articles and
prose. the ex-con back in precinct
cuffed to prefix or conjunction still are people*.
through&throux.

1 to l[mn]80

Alex Henry

the issue of your nth degree is unresolved in
spinning one fell swooped one-eighty, frontside snapped 180.
spinning one fell swooped one-eighty, frontside snapped 180.
the issue of your nth degree is unresolved in

better the slow

turn by six

counts thirty apiece.

six haphazard lacunae.

nuanced breathily habitual

likewise spawns impairment.

ever restricted TH.

casu marzu Man

Alex Henry

The young Man's over-the-table
manners prove as difficult to gag
or to muzzle as his under-the-table
mannerisms are to properly yoke.

Get a boy to eat with his lips sealed
where it promises him no convenience
and further, where neither his god nor the laws
of your Administration condemn him otherwise...
 if you should manage to feed new shape
 to even his rawest, most primal calibrations,
you will see that the few, small things
which do escape his lips
have already been digested.



*Just then a deep growl echoed through the forest.
Something huge broke from the shadows, 2012*



Changes for Allison as Kirsten, 2014

Killemoff

Kaj Tanaka

I

I stayed late at the Pine Ridge dormitories again last night. I've been sleeping with an AmeriCorps volunteer who works there named Sonya—she is from New Hampshire, she runs some of the extra curricular programing, she has this warm voice, and she is kind. Volunteering on the Indian reservation completely overwhelms her. We ate dinner quietly in her tiny room so no one would notice I was there. We could hear the children downstairs screaming.

28

On my way home that night, the reservation looked like it had been set in an aquarium tank. Everything was deep blue in the night, and the lights were soft and foggy in the frost. The sickle moon hung like the sword of Damocles over my car, and I was moving at speed, and I lost all sense of time.

When I got back to my little room in the trailer where I live, I tried to read. I am reading a book by Roberto Bolaño. I keep losing track of the plot because I am unable to see past the imagery. The night is a wall, and the trees are people et cetera—there are discarded bodies of women, raped and buried in unmarked holes. I am always distracted these days. It is difficult for me to complete a thought, even.

Last night I could hear Farah, our school librarian, talking through the wall of the trailer. All of us volunteers live together, and we get

to know each other that way. I could not help but listen to her last night. I think she was talking to her boyfriend back in Seattle, where she comes from. I'm ashamed to say it, but I recorded her with my laptop. I don't know why I did it, but I have the recording saved in my iTunes. She says at one point:

"I organize books, that's it—but they treat me like a welcome mat here. It's just Indians, you know—it's this whole place—nothing like El Salvador. They're brats at this school—ha, the parents too, probably. They have iPods here—yeah exactly, you get it—yeah, but with actual roofs."

Farah went to El Salvador on a church mission trip a few months before she came to the reservation. During our training sessions when we arrived it was all she talked about.

She went on for a long time last night about how good people have it here, and how it was better in EL Salvador because it was worse. She has this image of noble, long-suffering poor people with faces like the labels on fair trade coffee bags.

I recorded Farah for almost an hour before she hung up. After that, I lay awake in the dark listening to the wind blow through the crack beneath my window.

This morning, I found Farah in the library making a poster for her afternoon class. It was a map of El Salvador on yellow butcher paper, mounted on the strip of poster board. Above the map she pasted a panoramic printed from the internet—it was a picture of a city skyline dusted with heavy red smog and cars and ragged busses, and if you looked closely you could see the brown-skinned children squatting in gutters like dogs.

II

At Manderson Day School, where I am a bus driver, they burn all of their trash in an open pit. They do it behind the playground next to the field where the football team practices. It happens everywhere on the reservation in similar pits near similar playgrounds. It's legal to burn trash here because of tribal law, so all of the nearby white counties give the Indian schools money to burn their garbage. Everyone benefits, you could say. They burn it at night now, at least in Manderson, because the parents complained about what the fumes might do to their children. In the early evenings, you can see the flames in the darkness.

30

Today, I found another big wasps' nest under one of the wooden benches outside the school, and I sprayed it with the stuff they sell in cans for killing wasps. They came stumbling out of the hive, sick with the stuff, tangled up in it. I crushed each one of them under my boot so as not to prolong their agony. They say that these swarms of wasps are a plague, that they are a sign of the times. We have been killing them every day for weeks now. We have put a sizable dent in their population. The plan is that, eventually, there will be no more wasps left on the reservation.

Yesterday, while I was driving the school bus through Wounded Knee housing, some boys on horses threw rocks at us as we passed. They have done this before, but this time they broke one of the windows. The children came alive like birds. Someone was hurt—this small boy, and all of the blood—his own blood—it seemed to terrify him. Some other kids were crying too, just because they were afraid. I wasn't sure what it meant.

I'd suspected nothing that morning—we ate breakfast pizza in the school gymnasium while someone read the morning announcements over the intercom, the sagebrush and the tall grass stood as straight and unfeeling as they ever did. The ditches on either side of the road were as pathetic and trash-covered as ever. The sky was soaring cold. Everything that day was beyond my deserving.

There was blood on the seat of the school bus and on the floor, and these boys on their horses outside, they were laughing because they didn't realize what they had done. I radioed dispatch for help. The woman on the other end said that she was on the line with 911. They wanted some specific information about the boy, so I pushed back through the writhing mass of children to look. It was getting dark outside, and through the window, the faint moon shone over the reservation like a vagrant woman. The boy had small pieces of glass embedded in his shoulder—and in the darkness, for a moment, I thought it was a wing.



The cabin burned like a giant bonfire, sending sparks up into the cold air, 2012



"Then there was complete silence. there was no wind and the very stillness seemed somehow ominous and oppressive," from Alberta Homestead, Chronicle of a Pioneer Family, 2011

Theory of the Preceding

Andrew Cantrell

34

The south edge is a rift at the lake-bluff exposures where tonight far locusts beat its grayish bands to sere and airy scars for formally it is everywhere scarps but tonight it is both and it is also gravel and wing drone that is it's a tolled sour-grass a-hum and offertory and this range too that we've found where the Lake Michigan bluff exposures are not clearly back-formations of the oldest till of names but rather as blood high in oak and sycamore they are now defined as a minimum of two or a rift or a ghosting twitch of an animal other in trailing pose for really this range is a bluff exposure of the grate of the wax-slow flow of years around Lake Michigan's basin or it's how across from us the harbors are in most places sandier with hushed tokens of wealth wound down and winnowed in rushed and tidal rows or how the theory of the preceding may be found in the most noteworthy characteristics of its making as if of this evening or rather its dun oil fanning maritime skies of which we may say it's a glacial description of this place as if it were a gravid old and planetary distance plus its geological age precisely where the draft and draw of wind-deft sails at Lake Michigan bluffs may act as an exposure of the latter-day in summer lake-spray of the here-and-now where a difference is or may be presumed to be dabbed shut now sunless and run and the lake's now a lacking sum undone in the total of this.

Lacustrine

Andrew Cantrell

For much of the struggle how the beginning and the air may be a match with the victor and its shills until property-owners still the historian who has an epoch as one angel in the lacustrine sediment and sand of southeastern Wisconsin and for whom all others stare along an anywhere oak-lined and sodden with creek-beds but who by no other words can now be defined formally as the subjects which are historical and tailored to the life-work of the bluff and the single formation the useless formation.

How It's

Andrew Cantrell

Aged and high these and others as much as rock or as pinkish strata stripe the class struggle south and down from oak savannas in the north to sand or gravel deposited southwestward. See how they act and or as others act on the oak forests and creek formations of the new calendar. How there's present in width from a state highway southwestern and inland until it is reached by flowing ice a haven member from the Holy Hill material. How in red sediment and subsequently in oak forests and along the creeks lie formations of sand and others both forward and fine-grained. How we are an average only whereas the edge of the till is of massive origin. How exposed in the state of geological surveys some difference may be located in the sum total of this.

Haecceity

Andrew Cantrell

This process of bottoming out of the here-and-now grows quickly sky-high by a conformism of now-sorted till in the ice and action of glacial divisions. Except the method of what's tilled out independently will instead be re-traced as it is host to a reality that can envision a further set of ore or minerals picked which may vary from various clays to looks. A sum over histories and no mere historicism.



"The odor from the sick woman seemed to attract the wolves, and they grew bolder and bolder," from Pioneer Women, Voices from the Kansas Frontier, 2013



Meet Allison as Samantha Parkington, 1904, 2013

The Kind Young Man with the Shy Smile

Jen Ashburn

WOMEN America much power says
 in have he
driving his van over red-clay roads
 carefully the of Laos

 have power
Woman much
his uncle in Hawaii
 who lives told him

 IF man
 a
hits the police come
 his wife will Woman
have
 power

The van driver to drive these roads
 whom I paid

has

a wife

a pregnant wife a four-year-old

and daughter

He nice me the men are nice me
 is to All in Laos to

41

He drives carefully talks rice
 and about harvesting
 with his
 family

He waits patiently I take photos
 while and think
 this who his wife?

Is a man hits

He waits patiently I take Pia Vat temple
while photos of

destroyed 1968
which we (Americans) in except

Buddha statue charred black
for a stubborn a resilient

42 ask wife

I cannot about his

Why don't marry over noodles
you he asks

In Laos alone

you cannot live he says In Laos

family

is

everything.

How to Catch a Baby Elephant

Jen Ashburn

You will need:

1 Jungle

1 Family of elephants, with calf

4-8 Men

Guns

Spears

44

Pay off the local officials. Enter the jungle like a prowling cat. Circle the elephants at their favorite mud hole, where the calf will roll in the ochre water with a turtle-lipped smile, and his mother and aunties will brush, with their trunks, his face and chin in affection. Taking care not to harm the calf, shoot the mother. Shoot the aunties. Take the calf to a camp and enclose him in a cage slightly smaller than his body. Ignore his bleating mourning cries. Begin training. Jab his young skin with spears. Do this while he is in his cage, and he will think he is small and weak. If you are successful, he will believe this forever. Like any animal, any child. If you are not successful, he will eventually break his chains, eat the crops of a nearby farm and be shot. When this occurs, reenter the jungle and capture

Here Are Their Names

Jen Ashburn

At the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, Washington DC

It is a long, low line, cut into the earth. And here is life: a squirrel pausing on a loping branch, earthworms behind the black marble pushing through clay, ants scavenging the turf. A grandmother talks to a little girl. She begins: "There was a terrible war" and then slides into Spanish. I understand *mucha gente* and *los nombres*, and create the conversation in my head. Many people died. Here are the names. These men are not your great uncles or grandfathers. You are lucky. Yours made it back, or didn't go. Yet see how many names? It was a terrible war.

No, that is not what she says. Instead, I imagine she explains that all war is terrible and this one was fought 9,000 miles away. And the girl's great uncle fought in it and made it back alive, but a lot of boys didn't and here are their names. Or maybe the great uncle didn't make it back and the grandmother says, "You have a great uncle, my brother, who died in that war." "Why did they fight?" the little girl asks and the grandmother says—

No. This is still not right.

It is a long, low line burning in our earth. It hurts.
Yet—the grass, the squirrels, the trees, the little girl—



Jessie made clothes for the household. She was working on a new dress for Grandmary, but she stopped as Samantha came through the door, 2012



*This is the colored part of town," Nellie answered. "You mean she has to live here?"
Samantha asked, 2014*

A Cabin in the Woods

Ty Cronkhite

I couldn't tell you whether I've been on this train for five hours or five days. The snow never melts and the train never stops. Nobody speaks my language. This is about as remote as I'd like to get.

Vodka? I understand that and yes please thank you now would be fine. Later would be fine too. Look at the snow, I say, and a boy stares at me the way boys stare at foreigners. I'm deep into this and I'm not getting out anytime soon. Thousands of miles away from where I came and thousands away from where I'm going.

48

The boy stares. Titanium-dioxide, I say, you know, white paint. Your country looks like it. I want to jump off this train, but the chilled Vodka is warm in my stomach. And this boy is my friend.

He talks to me into the night. Into the afternoon, I don't know. Night passes same as day here, I never know what is what. I can't understand what he says, and he knows it, but he likes to talk. I'm not sure if he is asking about my life in America or my wife in America, or anything even close to that. I tell him I never had much luck with women, but that is all about to change. The train grinds to a halt.

They've run out of money. That's the word here. It happens, I'm told. The train just stops and when there's enough money it starts again. When I complain they charge me for more Vodka. I buy a bottle and pass it around the compartment and now there is a line at the toilet.

I look at the picture of my new bride, as beautiful as any of the women on this train. Two hundred and sixty thousand Rubles, a little more than twelve hundred dollars. That and the cost of her passage. Could have booked a flight straight to Irkutsk, but I thought a train ride would be romantic, give us some time to get to know each other on the way back and save money too. I close my eyes and imagine her waiting on the boarding platform, sitting on a suitcase that holds her life. Waiting.

I would have more money, too, if I wouldn't have kicked in the extra sixty thousand Rubles for the fertility guarantee. More vodka and the boy's drivel is replaced by the attendant, blonde-haired, blue eyed. She's been relieved of her position, indefinitely or until the train starts moving again. She has family in Irkutsk, and a tattoo she's not afraid to show me.

49

We have sex in the luggage car and I think again of my wife sitting on her suitcase. I return to my seat to take a nap. I try to sleep until the train starts moving again but I can only manage about forty-five minutes. The train doesn't move. My friend joins me again. She pretends I am her rich American boyfriend and I go along with it. I try to pay for something warm, but they don't have anything except chilled vodka and they won't change my ten dollar bill because it's too old, nineteen ninety-five. For a moment, I think I am happy with this Russian girl falling asleep on my shoulder. I lean back, her head slides down my chest onto my lap and she dreams about titanium-dioxide horses while I run my fingers through her oily hair.

We wake up with frozen breath, bleary eyed, still together. The compartment has emptied and we can see people waiting outside, some with luggage, some without. We walk on the rubber legs of sleep. The door is open and the air is crisp.

The snow along the length of the train has been trampled as attendants run back and forth dragging Samsonite this way and that. They are not working for the Trans-Siberian Railroad any longer, they just need money to get home. Twelve hundred rubles for my clothes and Litka is happy to take my nineteen ninety-five series ten dollar bill but he doesn't have change. I wave him along and he returns with a broken shell of the suitcase I got on the train with. Some of the clothes in it are mine, some are not. My friend, she stares at the white underwear size fifty-five and I grin sheepishly, shrug my shoulders. She laughs and I pause because it sounds like Rachmaninoff.

Taxicab, a distant voice and the faint rumblings of a small combustion engine over the rhythm of the train. Yes, I'll share the ride and that means I will pay as well, but I know that. The car wasn't designed for this and can only make a few furtive movements toward us before digging out each time.

Thirty five more miles he says. Every ten miles he says thirty-five and could you help me dig this out, it'll only take a minute. She has a certain style with throwing snow that renders me lazy and thoughtful. Our driver likes to drive and he treats every curve with starved passion because they are rare. He's disappointed when we get to the main highway, but he thinks of the dollars in his pocket and makes plans to change them. The speedometer wavers between thirty and ninety. I twist my head to the blue sky and wonder how this place ever gets snow.

He demands more money. My friend refuses categorically and the hand in my pocket melts around a twenty dollar bill. The com-mies really had no sense of aesthetics, I say. Then for the next ten miles our driver can speak only of football. Football? He fades back for a pass, the car drives itself. Yes, he says and shakes his head violently as he plays air guitar. The car drives itself into a bank of snow. Rock and roll – you could help me dig this car out? He hands my friend the shovel.

Close to Irkutsk. I'm holding her hand like a prom date. What's your name? Wigger, she says and I don't think that sounds Russian. Wigger? She shakes her head, no time to explain through the language barrier. She knows only phrases of arrival and departure.

We stop in front of the station in Irkutsk. Our driver counts his money and shakes his head. I give him a five and he opens the trunk. I give him a twenty and he throws my suitcase on the ground. Rock and roll, he says and drives away. Wigger touches me with her lips moist in the dry air, then walks me to the boarding platform and points me to my wife. She's certain of the one, and somehow she's right. I introduce myself.

"Thanks for the ride," Wigger says. My wife is like her picture and to hold her is warm.

"Thanks for the ride," I say.

“My papers?”

Yes, of course. I pull a bundle from my coat pocket and hand it to my new bride. Is there someplace to eat around here? I thought we could get something to eat and find a hotel for tonight. I catch a glimpse of Wigger still standing behind me and I wonder what she’s doing.

“Your wallet.”

“What about my wallet?”

“Give me your wallet.”

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I pull out my Washington driver’s license and hand it to her, thinking she wants identification. She grabs the wallet out of my hand instead. She opens her suitcase and a life-size blow up sex doll unfolds, then falls onto the floor.

“Your wife.”

I turn to look at Wigger, searching her face for an explanation. Happy honeymoon, she says in English as she kicks me in the shin with a black, steel-toed work boot. My wife shoves the metal suitcase into my face and follows Wigger across the crowded platform. I stand up, grab the naked doll and run after them, but the doll is heavier than I imagined and difficult to carry.

I get to the parking lot in time to watch my beautiful wife jump on the back of a Ducati right behind Wigger. They disappear behind a bus and the sound of the noisy two-stroke fades away. The blue sky is gone and snow is falling.

I sit on the curb, look at the doll more closely. A tag tied to her wrist tells me her name is Babette and she can fulfill my wildest fantasies. She is anatomically correct in every detail, crafted in Switzerland by a reputable company dealing in the latest erotic therapies. Unlike her less expensive imitations, she has been constructed of a material similar in color and texture to real skin. Stuffed, not inflatable as I first thought. She's put together very nicely, but hardly worth the twelve hundred dollars I paid for that bitch who stole my wallet.

She has something written on her breasts in black permanent marker: Ural Mountains. She's got a fucking map drawn on her, with roads and names of places and towns and lakes and rivers, here's Irkutsk right here, south of the Ural Mountains, but it should be North. I turn her upside down and squint my eyes.

53

There is a red line from Irkutsk straight down lake Baykal to a location next to the shore, about forty miles past Babette's navel and marked with a red X.

Several people stare at Babette splayed out on the ticket counter. "I need to get here." I point to the red x under her mound of fake pubic hair. "How do I get here?" The ticketing agent seems disturbed, she speaks very loudly and quickly, pointing to me like I'm some kind of freak. Some people in line behind me are staring.

“Listen, I’m not a head-case. My wife gave me this and it’s got a map on it, see! She’s a real joker, you know?” Babette sits up on the counter and everyone can see she’s got a map drawn on her torso. They seem to understand that I’m not crazy, but the ticket agent is still in distress and the manager is helping me.

“Listen, just forget it,” I say to the manager, “Just point me to a copy machine.”

“I’ll show you,” he says, happy to drag me away from anything he’s responsible for. He takes me to an office with a few people sitting at small metal desks and points to a copy machine. I wrestle Babette onto the copy machine, close the lid on her back and press the copy button. Nothing happens. I check her position and slam the lid shut, which causes her to go into convulsions and say nasty things. I can’t find a switch to turn this feature off, and the batteries are behind a plastic panel in the small of her back, held in place by four phillips head screws. She falls onto the floor and stops convulsing, talking only when bumped.

I’m informed by a security guard that the copy machine is not for public use, and anyway it’s broken. He points to the power cord, unplugged and laying on the wooden floor. I pick Babette up and she says “Hey, big boy.”

The security guard motions to the doors in the front of the building.

Must be around midnight. The lights of Irkutsk bright in the distance, reflecting on the smooth white surface of the frozen lake. I'm standing by a well-worn track used by truckers heading up the lake toward Sosnovka and Kurbulik. In the winter months, the locals tell me, the trucks prefer driving straight up the lake to using roadways.

I've seen two trucks pass in clouds of blowing snow. This third one sounds like it might stop, the big diesel blowing black smoke as the driver shifts down through the gears.

"Tee chtoh, sloni svalyeelseh??"

I can feel the warmth inside the truck.

"I don't speak Russian."

"Where are you going?"

"North."

I climb into the cab, dragging Babette behind me. The driver is old and bent into his seat.

He is wearing glasses with thick lenses and frames made out of baling wire. There's something weird about his eyes – maybe it's just the glasses.

"Thanks for stopping."

His hand finds the shifter and he grinds it into gear. The truck shudders violently as it starts to move again and I can't get my door shut until he shows me the rubber cord that holds it in place. I try to stuff Babette onto the floor, but she doesn't want to bend the way I want her to.

"OOOoh, I like it rough!" she says. I step on her head with my foot.

"Give it to me, baby!" she says.

"Who's your friend?"

"Her? She, well my wife, I mean the doll's not my wife. My wife gave me the doll. Look there's a map. She gave me this doll with this map on it so I could find her later. She's real pretty."

"Uhuh."

56

"It's like an adventure, a honeymoon adventure. I need to find this place, up the lake about a hundred miles."

He leans over to look at the doll, real close, so his nose is touching her. The truck veers to the left, but there's nothing to hit for at least a half mile so I keep my mouth shut.

"Babushka's cabin." he says. He puts his nose back on the windshield and corrects his course. He's got one bad eye, a wandering eye. I think I'm looking him in the eye and it ends up being the wrong one. The real one's watching the road, but I think he's half blind in that one because we keep losing the trail so he starts driving in a huge S pattern from shore to shore until he finds the tracks again in the patchy fog.

“Old grandmother lived there twenty years ago. Froze to death try’in to catch a fish one winter. Old trucker found her there, still has her fishin’ pole.”

“Who lives there now?”

“No one. Vacant.”

I can’t see through the windshield anymore. The defrost clears a small hole in the driver’s side window, where he has rigged a second plexiglass window about two inches from the glass.

“Might be snowed in. Will be tomorrow fer’ sure if it ain’t already.”

“I gotta get there tonight.”

I feel like sleeping. I shift my weight, lay my head against the window.

57

“I am so wet!” Babette says.

“Do you need a towel?”

“No, uh, no thanks. She just talks. She just says things like that. I’m getting used to it.”

#

“Straight up through those trees, not too far. About fifty paces. I can’t get you any closer.”

“Right, thanks.”

I fall out the door. Babette follows me and the truck sends a column of black smoke into the air as it moves on. The frozen carcass of a chicken falls off the truck and lands in the snow a few feet away from us. I can see a faint flickering light in the distance.

#

58

The chicken under my arm is colder than the wind. There is a cabin in the clearing just ahead, three snowmobiles parked in front. I look for the Ducatti and it makes me wonder about my sanity. Who would drive a motorcycle to a place like this? I feel good about thinking this. Insane people don't question themselves. They don't question their sanity.

“You drive me crazy!” Babette says.

The three snowmobilers seem friendly enough. They are dressed in wool and cotton fibers. I'm surprised when the short one swings a lead pipe at me. It doesn't hurt very much. I feel myself falling. I hear them tearing Babette. She thinks they like her.

I see Russian currency swirling in the wind and snow. Laughter. The sound of three snowmobiles fading and then silence.

Babette is deflated, slumped in a distorted heap of erotic tatters on the wood-frame couch. The fire turns to embers, the wood is gone, and snow covers the plexiglass windows. I lift her carefully to the floor, and kick the arm of the couch. It creaks and I can tell it will give way with enough effort. I think about my wife, my money. My face is hot, blood is burning and I want to scream.

The couch splinters. Babette stares into the fire. You bitch. You whore. I throw the splintered wood into the fire. Worthless piece of cheap ass rubber swiss cheese. The wooden legs give with little effort and are placed on the fire with gentle rage. Flung. Cheesy twelve hundred-dollar garbage don't look at me like that.

Babette looks better stuffed and patched but I wonder if it would have been better to destroy the table first. We stare blankly into the fire and I feel romance. I put my arm around Babette and remember I forgot to call and report my credit cards stolen.

Meet Allison, an American Girl

Allison Welch

Artist Statement

I am retelling the stories of the American Girl dolls through self-portraiture. I painstakingly sew, weave, knit, and embroider all of my costumes so I may exactly mimic the style and patterning of the American Girl doll versions. I collaborate with historic museums and locations around the country in order to access rooms, houses, and grounds that are historically accurate to the characters' stories I make this series because I am drawn to the complexity of the historic American Girl collection.

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In revisiting the books I read as a child, I have discovered thorough research summarized in the form of dolls, dresses, accessories, and simple plots, all appropriate for children around the age of eight. While the roles of women and girls in American history become simplified in these texts, they remain true to the eras represented by the characters. Building upon the strong formula of the American Girl novellas (every character has an introductory book, a lesson, a birthday, a day she saves, a surprise, and a growing-up story), I reenact similar scenes as different characters to measure the shifts in our country's perspectives of domesticity. If I look at the way the American Girls interact with cooking, public rooms, their bedrooms, the façade of their homes, chores, mending and making, lessons, religious traditions, and pastimes, I begin to understand the way in which women have lived in the past.



Meet Allison as Josefina Montoya, 1824, 2013

Contributors

Jen Ashburn recently completed her MFA at Chatham University in poetry and creative nonfiction. She has work published or forthcoming in *Grey Sparrow*; *Pretty Owl Poetry*; *Anak Sastra*; *The Poet's Billow*; *Puff Puff Prose, Poetry and a Play Vol. II*; and the anthology *Make Mine Words* (Trinity University Press). She lives in Pittsburgh.

Andrew Cantrell has recent work appearing or forthcoming in *SPECS*, *Arsenic Lobster*, *Beecher's Magazine*, *Emergency INDEX*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *Posit*, *Lana Turner*, *Upstairs at Duroc*, *AlteredScale*, *Pocket Litter*, and *Otoliths*. He lives in Chicago where he works as a union organizer, does things with words, and co-curates PSA Projects, an itinerant, experimental screening series. He recently completed a residency in Literary Arts at the Banff Centre.

Ty Cronkhite lives in a tent in the National Forest somewhere east of Albuquerque while he teaches English classes at the University of New Mexico and works toward an advanced degree in English Literature. He has published or is about to publish short stories and poems in spaces like *Doe-se-Doe*, *the Xavier Review*, *The Stray Branch*, *millers pond*, and *Four Ties Literary Review*.

Piotr Gwiazda is the author of two critical studies, *James Merrill and W.H. Auden* (2007) and *US Poetry in the Age of Empire* (forthcoming). He has also published two books of poetry, *Gagarin Street* (2005) and *Mes-sages* (2012). His translation of Grzegorz Wróblewski's *Kopenhaga* appeared in 2013. He is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

Rooted in the study of English and Government as an undergraduate in the heart of our nation's capitol, **Alex C. Henry's** starry-eyed dreams of a life in politics crashed and burned with countless other, like-minded interns in the white marble halls of the House of Representatives. Re-kindled in the former field, Henry's first, piercing foray into the sphere of the written word resulted in an unusual debut piece: *Cataphora: A Novel of Poesies Real & Imagined*, which all at once endeavored to break the mold of mainstream fiction. Succeeding to a much smaller end, this 80,000 word "experiment" quickly earned top prize in a competition of the Arts at Georgetown University. Since then, Henry's writing has taken him across the board of artistic expression, from stage plays never to see the light of day, to gut-wrenchingly succinct grocery lists, published to the broad readership of a refrigerator door. Today, you may find him typing away his youth at any old [comfortably underpopulated] coffee house on Long Island, New York, with an eye (however bloodshot) towards the next great American Novel — his one, final plea to the expansion of the human condition — thank you, Congress.

Individual entries on **Richard Kostelanetz's** work in several fields appear in various editions of *Readers Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers*, *Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Contemporary Poets*, *Contemporary Novelists*, *Postmodern Fiction*, *Webster's Dictionary of American Writers*, *The HarperCollins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, *Directory of American Scholars*, *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in American Art*, NNDB.com, Wikipedia.com, and Britannica.com, among other distinguished directories. Otherwise, he survives in New York, where he was born, unemployed and thus overworked.

Kate Schapira lives in Providence, RI, where she writes, teaches, co-runs the Publicly Complex Reading Series, and offers [Climate Anxiety Counseling](#). She's the author of four full-length books of poetry, most recently [The Soft Place](#) (Horse Less Press), and her 10th chapbook, *The Motions*, will be out this fall with [above/ground press](#).

Kaj Tanaka received his MFA from the University of Arkansas. His fiction has appeared in *Wigleaf*, *PANK* and *Knee Jerk*. His website is [Other Real People](#).

Allison Welch received her first American Girl doll, Molly McIntire, when she was nine. She received her BFA in photography from UW-Madison when she was twenty-two, her MFA from the University of Iowa when she was twenty-six, and notice that she would be one of the 100 photographers to attend Center's Review Santa Fe 2014 this past June. She has been in a good amount of shows -- both nationally and internationally -- for her age. You can meet her at [meetallison.com](#)

Grzegorz Wróblewski was born in 1962 in Gdańsk and grew up in Warsaw. Since 1985 he has lived in Copenhagen. He has published eleven volumes of poetry and three collections of short prose pieces in Poland; three books of poetry, a book of poetic prose, and an experimental novel in Denmark (translations); and selected poems in Bosnia-Herzegovina. He has also published a selection of plays. English translations of Wróblewski's poetry appear in several books and chapbooks, including *Our Flying Objects: Selected Poems* (Equipage, 2007), *A Marzipan Factory: New and Selected Poems* (Otoliths, 2010), *Kopenhagen* (Zephyr Press, 2013), and *Let's Go Back to the Mainland* (Červená Barva Press, 2014).

Anomalous Press

launched in March of 2011 as a non-profit press dedicated to the diffusion of writing in the forms it can take. Its backbone is an editorial collective from different backgrounds and geographies that keep an eye out for compelling projects that, in any number of ways, challenge expectations of what writing and reading should be.

Anomalous has its sights set on publishing literary text, advancing audio forms and creation, and supporting all sorts of alternative realities of the near future. The online publication is available in both visual and audio forms on various platforms. In March of 2013, Anomalous launched its first round of print chapbooks, available at <http://www.anomalouspress.org/chapbooks.php>

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