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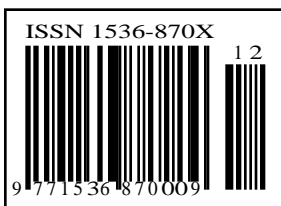
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WINTER 2005

FEATURING:

BRANDEL • BROATCH • CARTER
CHETWYND • DAY • ESTABROOK • GREEN
GREY • JACKLEY • JANZEN • JOSEPH
KINDRED • MARSHOCK • REYNOLDS
RUBIN



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No issues were published between 1997 and 2001.

wakka chikka wakka chikka

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Rhoda Janzen

Man and Venn

A man dropped out
of grad school when
the topic of a three-hour
seminar turned out to be,
Do Cats Plan? It seems

the man was indifferent
to cats and their putative
lists, their naïve optimisms,
their moments of ennui.
This man has since

failed at living. One might
not recognize his former
blade-thin brilliance in
his parabola of despair.
Given: the world opens

like an obsolescent
math book that refers
the reader to Figure 21-12,
where three or four
sky-blue puzzle pieces

snug the shaded area
of a Venn diagram—
the answers are
in the back of the book,
go on, just turn to the end.

Coal Cellar

Over there, in the corner. Shine your light
that way. Through that door. Watch your step.
Lumps of leftover coal. Years ago the furnace
was converted to gas. No one comes here now.
Careful. Look out for the cobwebs overhead.

This place is filled with them, up at the top,
one side to the other. Sometimes I think
if you poked a stick in here, it would be taken
from your hand, and disappear. But imagine—
when they were first built, they were clear.

A new web shows nothing. By definition
it's transparent. With time, with dust and grit
sifting down through the joists and floorboards,
it begins to change. To emerge, even in the dark,
as something substantial. Made tangible now.

What's left is fragile. But balanced. Layer
upon layer, one whorl leading back into another,
nothing to disturb the whole. Nothing to come near,
for months, years. All this patience, this industry
underground. These paths curving back to zero.

But not quite. Out of emptiness, physicists say,
particles can emerge. Statistically, perhaps,
they wait for the right moment. Quantum flux.
Even here, within this drifting, this silence,
something is still able to make connections.

Row 13, Friday the 13th, June 2003, flying from Stockholm to London on an Airbus A319, like a crowded train sliding through the sky. I can't imagine following all the emergency instructions, pull this, tighten that, blow into this tube, walk along here, jump out there. I still can't understand the reference to a "water landing," Jesus, in all the history of aviation has there ever been even one instance of a passenger jet making a "water landing"? Talk about euphemisms, fucking idiots. But I'm not complaining, at least it's not raining, they had a little white pillow to help support my crumbling lower back, and the little old brown woman sitting next to me who's obviously never even seen a seatbelt let alone try to snap one together hasn't yet sneezed on me or had to use the barf bag. Also, I'm superstitious, but not about the number 13 (at least not yet) so keep your fingers crossed that it will remain a good day, particularly during the landing over on runway 1-3.

Somonka for Helen

Today I watched your
hands in class—so small, secret
under the table.

I wonder if you saw me
holding mine to look like yours.

Your question is strange,
but it's not every day some-
one can make me laugh
about Nietzsche. Look closer—
I was holding mine like yours.

Mark Jackley

A Bowl of Beans Steaming in Winter

This pale light that travels
from the nearest star to kiss
the kitchen walls is all
the blessing you will need.

It is not a fugitive like
most of us who spend our lives
wondering what we came to
the store for.

Even so, it burns in you
as it burned in the soil
and fruit of the vine. It is proper
to bow your head,
much is nourished.

Telephone Pole

Bolted to its cross,
cables slump, fraught
with talk, clumsy, loving
stabs at something.
Quietly, it grows dark.

If resurrection comes,
perhaps we will be birds
perched on the wires,
without reason
rising into silence.

David Joseph

Field With Haystacks

It is almost night.
On a road with no lines,
I drive on in search
of the last gears of light
pulling down the horizon.

To the right, a house
with four windows falls
asleep in the tall grass.
A clump of trees hoist up
above a red chimney top.

I watch the smoke struggle
out of the brick, birthed
into the dark. Inside,
an upstairs light turns on,
windowing in a corner.

These are the long roads
that Hopper dreamed of
in lonesome brushstrokes—
roads that grow dark
beneath an owl's voice,

stretching into the distance
like a traveler's worries
footing across the plains
between a house and a field
with haystacks

The Lily Pond

It's hard to believe those lilies
can sit on water
with such patience.

It doesn't seem fair
that they can sway back
and forth on the surface

and never relinquish
their roots. Stingy
green-stemmed waders.

Great mother of the still
waters, lending us perfect
white flowers.

Ronda Broatch

In Night's Silence There is More Than Breath

Robert Service and Burns
and half-read Doig lie
open on your nightstand

sprawled exhausted
by my socks,
Oliver, Stafford, and Bly

Ojibwa birch bark
canoe moors under a picture
of trout flies

in a mug from MoMA
Yugoslav dinar
compounds only dust

hand enfolding hand
loaf of broken bread
Jesus comforts Peter

an early face by Picasso
graces a plate
fireworks in a vase

our infant children in frames
their tiny teeth
in the smallest Shaker box:

I feel them breathe with you
held in the glow
of a single lamp

It's as if I'd asked for this—

the rain beyond
 the bedroom walls
 wails like wind
speaks in spatters
 ticks and heavy drips

 and my car, coated
in road dust
 from the Upper
 Dungeness, now awash
and I've forgotten

 whether I left
 open the moon
roof, and so I clothe
 myself, well no
I don't—I go

down the stairs
 past my two cats,
 their bodies conceiving
a heat they have
 yet to understand

 and I stand
a moment at the door
 the gecko gazing
 rapt behind glass
darkness drawing us—

 and the rain
 bathing my naked legs
as I find the window (closed)
 is all I need
to return to sleep.

Timothy Green

White Noise

From the inexhaustible well of static
we pull up words to call ghosts, apparitions,

the unknown. The shower swirls with
voices. All the little dead girls know

all our names. The phantom flasher drops
his robe and we settle in to what we know—

form to formlessness, the past with its place
in the garden, where the first couple walked

like twins, hands entwined leaving each
one free to point, to cup an ear and say,

*Listen: How the wind whispers our secrets.
How a light rain will speak any language.*

Microcassette

At first it was a gift—the batteries not included,
but wrapped neatly in a smaller box, a matching
bow with the same generous loop of silver, its paper
the same gaudy green. *Try it out*, she told him,
and so he did. *Is this the way I sound?* he said.
Is this the way I sound? it told him, and then
he chuckled and learned the way he chuckled.
He found that tapes were cheap and began taping
everything. On his way to work he taped the car
radio, the transmission shifting gears. At lunch
it was the cafeteria; he taped the commotion and
spent each afternoon untangling conversations
from the squeaking chairs, the clattering trays.
Sometimes he recorded his wife in bed in secret,
and he hid those tapes in the garage. But what he
loved most was his own voice, not the sound itself,
but the newness of it, the mystery of a stranger
knowing every last detail. The red light flickered
for days, which broke perfectly into 90-minute
intervals he labeled with a ballpoint pen. Soon
he realized that it wasn't one voice in there,
in his chest, but a whole colony of tones and
inflections ready to rise up and serve its purpose.
What a noble thing, he told the microphone,

this army of voices always prepared. Words
to his wife in public were different in the bedroom.

Around men there was strength in Hello.
And maybe he mumbled more than he'd like,

and he wasn't proud of the bar voice, but singing-in-
the-shower voice often brought a tear to his eye.

His father voice grunted at the show of emotion.
How easily we slough the shell our character, he said

in the poet's voice, lifting an invisible glass of
sweet champagne—as if it were something to toast.

Sally Rosen Kindred

Lost

First the dream lost grass,
or maybe it was trees, the green edge to the thing
that kept it square. Then, I think,
the weather—a gray cloud drifting, not singing,

and then the corner, the place where street
kissed street. It was probably weeks before
I missed that, since it lent the dream no color,
only shape, an angle into which you

were set, your thumb on my neck trembling, promising
something, saying I won't. Here's what I think:
I was punished for wanting it back, your won't,
for doing anything to get it, even sleep,

so the dream took you too, or what it called you—
dandelion thumbs and the smell of wet slate,
dim words soaked into my neck
by thumbs and lips, I won't, a promise

removed one green thing at a time
so that the dream became just my body
and streetlight, a cold rain in my throat,
nothing that could reach into my lung

and touch what lies there, the girl you left
who sleeps only to forget, who sleeps
against my sleep. This I grieve most,
that she's lost to me. I wish her a corner,

your hands on her shoulders,
and a place to wake from memory,
a place that's warm and dry.

Cynthia Reynolds

Oculus

Claire sits at the kitchen table. The ring on her left hand, dull like a tin can. Unswallowed coffee, stagnant in the bottom of the cup. The stove burner, a cold coil. A luminescent plate, empty and waiting. The moon arrives as twilight fades, reminding Claire that light knows over a thousand ways to flee.

Patti Marshock

When John Came

When John came to pick up Katie
I was still in pajamas.
We slept late.

Messages ignored, on and off
machine lights blinked, I
poured coffee,

Chatted about humid weather,
traffic jams, girl's jeans,
toothbrushes

The pipes rattled, he spouted the
merits of fresh clear
spring water.

Mountain snow fell near their house
eight hours away. I
crossed my legs

Wrapped left over right, tightened
my foot on my calf.
The warm mug

In my cupped hands nearly empty.
Her filled canvas bag
dropped in flight.

The floor, concrete, foam and carpet,
wheezed. I stood blue-toed
barefoot mute

At the door, January air
shuffled in as they
gathered shoes.

John Grey

A Walk With a Four Year Old

There's no way to explain the dead cat-bird to the child.
I pull her away as she bends to pick it up.
High on telegraph poles, crows caw.

The bird is still soft-gray feathered, with head
complete and toy-like, thin legs tucked beneath its wings.
I jerk her out of curiosity like she's a sniffing terrier.

She grasps a smooth gray stone and that's no problem.
And a dandelion is plucked without thinking
how its death begins this moment in her hand.

But as we walk on, she turns her head,
sees three crows dance around the cat-bird corpse.
Gripping her hand hard, I stop her from running back to
chase them.

To her, it's like the bird is killed a second time.
First, the lifeless body. Then the raucous feast.
"No," I say, in answer to her guileless question,

"the crows did not eat Grandpa,"
though I remember how they shrieked that day,
how the hands of mourners pulled me clear.

Stan Sanvel Rubin

The Stain

All night, I lay with the dead
They had calm, peaceful faces

Their pasts sifted like dust through wiry bones
Their grasping fingers settled for nothing

Their sad grins became more dust
They stared at me as if they stared at no one

In the morning they were gone
And I was here

ii.

All night the dead lay around me
It was like a battlefield, only costlier

It was like a Hollowe'en movie
made of my dreams

The dead were spliced together like a movie of the dead
They didn't recognize

the stars that sighed into their sockets
or the slow ox of morning moving toward us

iii.

What is petrified is what was once flowing
What is flowing will stall like an eclipse

This is what made me falter in the morning,
reaching for coffee

This might have been called a vision, once

Richard Chetwynd

Geography

I am geography
Of geography.
I am four walls

On the floor
Beneath the ceiling
To get over.

I am a terrible time
For terrible times.
Dogs mark me

DMZ. I am here
To be marked
With marks of here.

Holly Day

Pillow Fight

I wake up and it means I'm not dead. Sunlight. Dried flowers. Frost fingers cross the windowpane and I am alive, fuck you, fuck you one more day. I say fuck you, good morning, and I'm alive.

Feet and I glide the floor the kitchen, effortlessly, I'm flying. Ooo, I'm a ghost. No, I'm awake. Cereal. Coffee. Pulsing in my veins, hangover, at least he didn't spend the night. Goodbye common sense. Hello mister penis. If only the memories would leave as easily as the words do.

Feel free to look through my underwear drawer. Hello strange man, strange men in my roomy room room. Feel free to try to guess how much change is in the jar on my dresser. Chew toys in my bathroom and no dog in the apartment? I could be a wacko. Better watch out! Where does the poetry fit in? Will I write about this? Will I write about this?

I'm awake and it means I'm not dead. Aspirin. Orange juice. Sunlight. Crow's feet grow as I watch in the mirror my eyes my eyes I am alive, fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, I say fuck you, good morning, I am alive. The end.

Contributors

Erin Brandel's poetry has appeared in *The Freehand Press*, *The Grinnell Review*, and in *Palimpsest: Yale Literary and Arts Magazine*. She holds a Master's Degree in German Literature from Yale University.

Ronda Broatch lives in Kingston, Washington, with her family and other wildlife. Her work has appeared in *The Atlanta Review*, *Pontoon*, and *Ligature*, with pieces forthcoming in *Literary Salt*, *Calyx*, and *Tiferet*. Her poem "Grace Baking" was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her chapbook, *Some Other Eden*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press in 2005.

Jared Carter has published three books of poems with the Cleveland State University Poetry Center, most recently *Les Barricades Mystérieuses* (1999). Recent online work has appeared at *Melic Review*, *Plum Ruby Review*, *Astropoetica*, and *Animal Liberation Front*. His web site may be visited at *Jared Carter Poetry* <<http://jaredcarter.com/>>. A selection of his poems appears at *Poetry X* <<http://poetry.poetryx.com/poets/7/>>. He lives in Indianapolis.

Richard Chetwynd splits his time between Torun, Poland, where he lives with his wife, and Boston, Massachusetts, where his wife lives with him. He teaches creative writing and literature at Emerson College.

Holly Day's poetry, fiction, and nonfiction have most recently appeared in *Canadian Woman Studies*, *Skyway News*, and *Ruah*. She currently works as a reporter and a writing instructor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and lives with her two children and husband.

Michael Estabrook is a Marketing Communications Manager for a tiny division of a gigantic billions-of-dollars company, and reports that going into an office every day can be excruciating.

Timothy Green has been the Assistant Poetry Editor at *RATTLE* for about a half-year now.

John Grey's latest book is *What Else Is There* from Main Street Rag. He has been published recently in *AGNI*, *Drexel Online Review*, *South Carolina Review* and *Big Muddy*.

Mark Jackley is a business writer by day and poet as often as time allows. His work has appeared recently in *Poesy*, *The Tulane Review*, *California Quarterly* and *The Paumanok Review*.

Rhoda Janzen teaches creative writing and English at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. She has contributed poems to many literary journals, including *The Yale Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, and *The American Literary Review*.

David Joseph is a graduate of the University of Southern California's Professional Writing Program. He is a recipient of the William Prall Prize and the Kerr Fellowship, and his poetry has been published in *Doubletake Magazine*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*, *Southern California Anthology*, and *RATTLE*.

Sally Rosen Kindred teaches poetry writing on-line to high school students through the Johns Hopkins University Center for Talented Youth. She holds an MFA from the University of Maryland, and her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in journals including *Poetry Northwest*, *Poet Lore*, *Plainsongs*, and *Poetry Motel*.

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Cynthia Reynolds lives in Kentucky. She edits the online journal *kaleidowhirl* <<http://home.alltel.net/ellablue/>>, and her work has recently appeared in *Pebble Lake Review* and *Lily*.

Stan Sanvel Rubin lives on the Olympic Peninsula. He has work forthcoming in *32 Poems*, *The Iowa Review*, *Hubbub*, *Harpur Palate*, and *Great River Review*. His fourth collection, *Five Colors*, was published in August by CustomWords. His essay-reviews appear regularly in *Water~Stone Review*.

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<i>The Alsop Review</i>	<http://www.alsopreview.com>
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