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Issue 21: "Ill Fever"

Dale Wisely, General Editor F. John Sharp, Fiction Editor
Cover art by Adam Stoves

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The Note

Howie Good
Brooklyn Copeland
CL Bledsoe
Cleo Fellers Kocol
Clifford Garstang
Danny Birchall
Christopher Woods
Corey Mesler
J.A. Tyler
William Hall
Found Image
David Kowalczyk
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Doug Draime
Heather Overby
Jill Sherman
John Haggerty
Kyle Hemmings
Tom Sheehan
Thomas Edwards

Contributors

The Note

The last thing done on these issues is the introductory note, traditionally titled "The Note," or some variation thereof. I've been stuck. The Midwest is under water, Tim Russert is dead and, instead of being merely lauded, which would be appropriate, he is being canonized. USA gas prices have Americans in a funk and Western Europeans engaging, I have to think, in a bit of "Oh, really..." We have a little election thing going on here that the press is running, and running into the ground. The evening news is hard to watch. More than usual.

I've been having a recurring nightmare. During my boyhood, our family home apparently rested under a common route for bird migration. Once, sometimes twice a year, we'd see massive rivers of birds flying over. Waiting and waiting for the end of the stream. So, I keep having this dream of being back at the house, watching the birds fly over and then noting that something doesn't look right and looking through binoculars and seeing that they're not birds but anvils. You know, like blacksmiths use. Except flying through the air.

Lately I've had numbers on my mind. I'm about midway through writing a series of 6 poems with 6 parts each. Don't know why. So, what about number 21? It's the legal drinking age in the USA and it's the atomic number of scandium. It's a gambling game and it's the name of the current century which, by the way, is feeling a bit like a gambling game itself.

My dog has had an acute onset of arthritis. I saw/heard Mark Doty read from his book *Dog Years* last year at the Harvard Bookstore. An exasperated man in the audience said, during the Q&A, that he couldn't understand why people buy a dog, have it for a handful of years, then grieve its loss, and then buy another dog. The ever-thoughtful Mark Doty responded, "The agreement to participate in this life is a pact with grief."

But, it's Friday as I write this. That's pretty good right there. I just had a really nice meal I made of southern style chicken & dumplings (canned biscuits + a couple pieces of chicken + vegetable broth) and my wife liked them, too. I had a really tasty orange for desert. Really good oranges serve as evidence of a benevolent God for people with even a half-way open mind. (I know, I know, its not conclusive. But it is at least circumstantial). And with orange in the foreground and orange in the background, I'll just add that I hope you enjoy Issue 21.

Dale

Howie Good

Falling

Hours later, they're still plugging in numbers,
the average annual rainfall in Paris,
the median length of supermarket lines,
working through the night
to calculate the rate of invisible decay,
how many energy drinks must be consumed
for the heart to regain feeling
and for the slow economy to turn around,
the speed at which I fall
from the metal roof into her arms,
the difference in velocity
if I close my eyes or leave them open.

Brooklyn Copeland

Dreams in Which I Confront You

Dear casual dabbler,
I wonder
what would happen

(if that dime-store bundle of raffia,
burlap and face paint

that you casually made my namesake,

shook out all its pins,
slipped through the crack in your sock drawer,

and made a few casual calls)

to your body.

CL Bledsoe

**Found Poem From a Letter to the Editor, Peninsula
Clarion, Kenai, AK**

It's time to stomp
out (a)
theists in
A
merica. The majority of
A
mericans would love
to see
(a)
theists kicked
out of
A
merica. If
you (don't) believe
in G
o
d, then get
out of this country.

The U
nite
d S
t a t
es is
based on having
(freedom
of religion, speech,
etc.,
which means you can be
(lieve
in God) any way
you want
(Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, etc.),
but you must be
(lieve.)

I (don't) (re)call freedom
(of religion)
(meaning no)
religion. Our currency
even says, ("In
God) We
Trust." So, to all
the (a)
theists
in America:
Get off of our country.

CL Bledsoe

Juneteenth in Austin

Crowd Kills Man After Car Hits Child
-Headline from an AP article

Tired of hearing news reports of elderly drivers slamming crowds of pedestrians, hit and run cowardice, SUVs forcing smaller cars into embankments, this group returning from a celebration of the news of freedom, saw a car hit a child in a parking garage, saw the driver step out, horrified, and lighted on him like sparrows on a powerline, determined (this day) to act, to not (this day) be cowards allowing, ignoring.

The passenger, poor David, a painter living with his sister, getting a ride home from a friend intercepted the mob, defended the driver (how would he get to work?) and was beaten to death, while the child, hurt but not badly, watched. None of them, cowards (this day). An embarrassment of heroes.

Cleo Fellers Kocol

The Flirtation

I sit on one side of a beaten brass tray,
he on the other. With delicacy he
pours tea in tiny cups, an emerald

flashing his pinky finger, a diamond
stud in his ear. We discuss heady
scents he uncorks for me alone.

Steam rises from mint tea served in
tiny cups, and heat surges from un-
spoken chasms of deep diversity. Late-
blooming flowers spice air warmed by

eye-strokes and words laced with innuendo.
We share a thousand and one dreams, the
canting floors of the ancient shop not unlike
the deck of a ship carrying us no where.

Clifford Garstang

No Sudden Moves

I'm trekking with Jake, six days out of Phokara, nearing Annapurna Sanctuary. He tears up hillsides, skates down dusty slopes, devours suspicious rice and lentils like a ravenous bear. He looks like a bear, with his bushy, brown beard, his burly shoulders and chest. As I follow behind, always behind, I wonder when the bear will turn on me, engulf me.

We've come to a ravine, bottomless from the looks of it, lined with jagged rock. Jake scampers across the plank-and-rope bridge, turns and waits. The sun seems close here, at over 10,000 feet, and although the air is cool, the world glows too bright – the ice fields above, the terraced valley in the distance – and I squint at the treacherous planks.

"Come on, Oliver," Jake calls. Part challenge, part impatience. We've been friends a long time. He drops his pack, wipes the sweat from his dark brow.

I step onto the bridge, as boldly as I dare, but I'm thinking of Jake, of close quarters in the huts we've shared, occasionally a single bed, linked, always breathing his scent. He must know how hard it is for me.

"Ollie," he shouts. "Be careful!"

The span sways even as I take the first step. There's wind here, it roars in the crevasse, catches my pack like a sail. I creep forward, gripping the slick rope.

Just a few feet remain. Jake is within reach, hands outstretched, and it's all I can do to keep myself from jumping into his arms.

Danny Birchall

Brakhage's Lens

Only when I saw his tree the tenth time twisting
in anamorphic fury, light whittled to its charcoal bones,
the sky torn open without sound or story,

photography's neurosis, relentless concentration
on the object's aspect, skewered in its plane,
the three reels discarded, failures, then I understood.

Christopher Woods

Neighbors

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Christopher Woods

Red Sun

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Corey Mesler

Naming

We were told we could name it whatever we liked. It was this power that brought us back and back. We were told the name did not have to signify, could be about anything. We chose names randomly. Then with great care. We chose them as if religions mattered. And, in the end, the names were all the same. Amen.

J. A. Tyler

Rocketing the Sky

The glass is cold. The glass sweats. Water tingles down a bottle. Collecting others in its path. Collecting weight. Rampaging in silence. Tumbling down. Circling water on a table. Ringing.

Square. Black around the edges. Thin and transparent. The light arcs. Stringing trajectories from ships at sea. Green and bright anger. Green and bright longing. Green and bright disgust. Exploding from a deck. Fuel packed and punching.

He drinks a beer. He drinks a beer and gnaws the end of a salami. He drinks a beer and gnaws the end of a salami and thinks about his brother. His brother isn't over there. His brother isn't obligated to anything. His brother runs a forklift in a warehouse. He thinks about how his brother drank all but three of his twelve pack.

It is a still shot. Buildings with cupolas. Tops like hats. White against darkness. Night vision shows green but standard film shows orange and yellow and fluming white. Green and orange and yellow and white. And they all hit targets beyond the buildings. Beyond their hats. Beyond the camera's reach. And up up up goes the smoke and the people and the pointedness.

From so far away points are irrelevant.

Here the beer sweats and water trips down the smooth curve of glass.

William Hall

Distant Silence

Sever me from occupation
and leave me to solitude
I want to remember
being a spider of consciousness
stringing links between pillars
and trapping dream beetles.

Image Found by Dale Wisely

**Top 9 Results, Google Image Search, of the Word
"Touch"**

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David Kowalczyk

Zihuatenejo

Mellow as a mango.
The women, ages nine to ninety,
always dressed in black.
Lavender breezes and waves
nestled on pearled sands.
Flames and flowers emerging
from the laughing surf.
Restless unicorns wandering the beach.
Instant love and never-ending sunsets.
The liquid hush of the jacaranda dawn.

David Kowalczyk

Getting Drunk with the Moon

Darkness upon the waters,
a plague upon the sky,
the tired old moon rides
low above the barren trees.

His edges remain intact.
In his life, he has touched
far too little.

When children ask him,
"What are nightmares made of?",
his reply is inevitably the same.

"Real fear takes imagination."

The sky becomes a field
of burning stones.

Jon Ballard

The Wars of Repetition

"You're confused," she says. But I'm not
And I know I'm not. "You're a thief,"
I say, sure I gave her a twenty and not
A ten. Her grin chides: prove it. I turn
To the woman behind me in line, but those
Blue bystander eyes just shut me down.

Sometimes the sour world and the crumpled
Soul converge, and sometimes it happens
In a party store when you're trying to buy
A soda and a paper, the headlines of
Which inform you that seven wars rage
Concurrently. "Get the manager," I say.

Adam Stoves

Tap Dance

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On Sense

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III Fever

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Feed

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Corner Boy

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Under Form

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Doug Draime

**They Found Him At 6AM In A Field Behind Paddy's Pub
His Eyes Glowing In The Fog**

It was his own shadow
in the waning moon
he attempted to trace
with his whiskey bottle,
obsessed with its
abrupt curves,
its unpredictable angles
its wavering line dancing
in the mist.

Heather Overby

Gift Plant

What'd you mean by it?

Heather Overby

The Street a Late Night Launderette

the world is in love with fabric softener,
and I am in love with you, pedestrian player,

and also you, bumbling bike messengers.
do none of you know what strange you are and how

you flit quick as summer in Glasgow?—ay, let's
hear it for the fateful day the mercury peaked at 78,
how the sky spilled frothy from front loading buildings,
how the broken meat lockers stopped and sighed all
together.

Jill Sherman

Valentine

My dad signs all of his emails "lol." He thinks it means "lots of love," but instead everything he says comes off sounding really sarcastic. It's hopelessly sweet the way only dad's can be.

I know that I should tell him. I also know that he's joined several Internet dating sites. I've even checked out his profile. He's calls himself a 'hopeless romantic' who's looking for 'that special someone.' He's even got a picture of my cancer-dead mother on there.

I can picture him getting to know a woman his age, and finally meeting her in person. Then, that night or the next day, he'll write her an email. He'll tell her how amazing their date was, how she looks even better in person, how he'd love to see her again.

lol,

Bob

P.S. LAMO!

John Haggerty

From "How to Be Happy"

C. Learn the Quivering Wu Li Fist Of Death

1. For the righteous warrior, the Quivering Wu Li Fist of Death creates invincible power

2. Invincible power is cool

- a) It must be used only for good
- b) And not to pick on the dorky kids

- (1) Even if it would make me cooler
- (2) I might be the dorkiest kid

c) I could use it to vanquish Jerry Moritzki

- (1) After I vanquished him, peace would return to the kingdom
- (2) The police would say it was OK, because everybody hates him

(a) And I used the Quivering Wu Li Fist of Death

- (i) Not a gun
- (ii) Or a knife
- (b) Which makes it OK

Kyle Hemmings

The Violinist's Complaint

Breaking the silence that tasted like cold Espresso,
he held up his hands, claiming they were ruined.
He confessed how he spent nights tuning his body,
a concerto for one. She imagined now
an original Amati, the ebony fingerboard,
the maple bridge, the rosewood tailpiece.
Never, she thought. He would only play to the
ideal of her and not a body, bereft of clefts.
Fondling a morning cruller, she felt the ennui of days
that would soon follow, lingering inside her
like a piece played adagissimo, felt her own body
as something useless, heavy, hollow.

Tom Sheehan

A Last Moment Caught

It comes again,
without prejudice,
in another millennium:

I know the weight of an M-1 rifle
on a web strap hanging on my shoulder,
the awed knowledge of a ponderous steel helmet
atop my head, press of a tight lace on one
boot, wrap of a leather watch band
on my wrist,

and who stood beside
me who stand no more.

Tom Sheehan

Proem

I say it all up front
and let the poem
carry it out.

The summaries
fall from my mouth;

We struggle.
We labor in many vineyards.
We look toward one light.

We made the hammer.
God made the rose.

Tom Sheehan

The Rare Earth and Other Flights

I'll know you from odd vantages:
uncounted time, heart-shaking tempests
against the incandescent eye, silent reach
of sequoias for partner in space, jangle of roots
no swifter than blood, October moth's struggle
at light, vulture toss incredibly high on
a cross-wind and tumble-wait, pain
yet to come, for what's lately done:
and an image in my ear soft as
a poem left in an old Latin
diary three tiers of lava
have taken to bed.

Thanks to Thomas Edwards, a video of whose kinetic sculpture, "Blame," appears on the web version of this issue at <http://www.righthandpointing.com/Issue21/edwardsvideo.html> .

Contributors

Howie Good, a journalism professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz, is the author of three poetry chapbooks, *Death of the Frog Prince* (2004) and *Heartland* (2007), both from FootHills Publishing, and *Strangers & Angels* (2007) from Scintillating Publications. He was recently nominated for the second time for a Pushcart Prize. Howie is a regular contributor to RHP. The poem in this issue is taken from his upcoming Right Hand Pointing e-chapbook, *Police & Questions*.

Brooklyn Copeland was born in Indianapolis in 1984. She has also lived in Florida and throughout Northern Europe. Her chapbook, *The Milk for Free* (2008) is available electronically from Scantly Clad Press. She co-edits Taiga Press, which includes the print journal *Taiga* and the Tundra Chapbook Series.

CL Bledsoe is the author of a forthcoming collection, *Anthem*. His most recent published collection is _____ (*want/need*). He is an editor for *Ghoti Magazine*.

Cleo Fellers Kocol recently read her poetry and presented her drama at the Steven Allen Theater in Hollywood, giving the same show in Honolulu, Roseville, and Washington, D.C. She writes a monthly column for the Sacramento Bee about poetry and poets. She has a poem in the new anthology wedding science and creativity, *RIFFING ON STRINGS*, a compilation of essays, stories, drama and poetry all based on string theory. The book is now available in bookstores and at Amazon.com on the interwebs.

Clifford Garstang used to be an international lawyer, but now he lives and writes in the Shenanodah Valley. His work has appeared in numerous literary magazines and he blogs at <http://perpetualfolly.blogspot.com>.

Danny Birchall lives in London, where he writes poetry and short fiction. His work has previously appeared in *nthposition* and *Mechanics Institute Review*.

Corey Mesler has published in numerous journals and anthologies. His novel, *Talk: A Novel in Dialogue*, was released in 2002. His second novel, *We Are Billion-Year-Old Carbon*, came out in January 2006. He has also published numerous chapbooks and one full-length poetry collection, *Some Identity Problems*. He has been nominated for a Pushcart numerous times, and one of his poems was chosen for Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*. With his wife, he runs Burke's Book Store in Memphis TN. He can be found at www.coreymesler.com.

Among other publications, **J. A. Tyler** has recent work in *Pindelyboz*, *Feathertale Review*, *Thieves Jargon*, *Underground Voices*, & *Word Riot*. His debut novella is forthcoming from Ghost Road Press in 2009. He is also founding editor of the online literary review *Mud Luscious*. Read more at www.aboutjat Tyler.com.

William Hall thinks his short attention span might be a byproduct of excess television during youth.

David Kowalczyk lives and writes in Tempe, Arizona. He has taught English in South Korea and Guatemala, as well as in several colleges in the USA, including Arizona State His work has appeared in five anthologies and over fifty magazines, including *Maryland Review*, *Bogg*, *St. Ann's Review*, and *California Quarterly*. He is the former editor of *Gentle Strength Quarterly*.

Jon Ballard's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Valparaiso Poetry Review*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Melee*, *Third Wednesday*, *Broadsided* and many others. He is the author of two chapbooks: *Lonesome* (Pudding House, 2007) and *Sad Town* (Maverick Duck Press, 2007). A third chapbook, *Trees Make You Think of Other Things*, is forthcoming from Foothills Publishing in 2008. A Michigan native, he currently lives in Mexico City, Mexico.

Adam Stoves' most recent work challenges the concept of contextualization. Relative to the way the mind categorizes and stores what a person might deem important, his work refers to subjects taken out of context, or out of "real time." These subjects are then mounted into subjective

environments. While stripping these images of associations based on context, he investigates the motion, action, and physicality with which individuals involve themselves in their surroundings. The equally ambiguous drawn forms accompanying the collaged photographs are responses to the figurative posing of the individual. These marks are an intuitive response to the relationship between the figure and its new surroundings. His process of redefining the figure and its location stems from questioning how individuals distance themselves from reality. The dichotomy between being physically present while the mind is disengaged is a common and ongoing theme in his work. He creates similar conditions as individuals are removed from a definitive place, and cast into a theoretical, and often fantastical, situation.

Doug Draime has been a presence in the 'underground' and small press since the late 1960's. He was part of the notorious Los Angeles poetry scene of the latter 20th century. He has a recent e-chapbook here on RHP, *Speed of Light*. Also recent: *Last May* (Kendra Steiner Editions). Forthcoming, *Dancing On The Skids* from Tainted Coffee Press. His diverse range of writing, including poems, short stories, and plays continue to appear in publications world wide. He lives in Oregon where he contributes frequently to these pages.

Heather Overby is currently an MFA candidate at Washington University in St. Louis. She lives down the street in University City with her two dogs. She is co-curator of the reading series Exploding Swan and has work forthcoming from *Best of Wicked Alice, 2007* and *Admit 2*.

Jill Sherman is a writer, editor, and amateur time traveler. She was last known to reside in Minneapolis, Minnesota, although we can't locate her in the present.

John Haggerty is a pale and emaciated man living in California, a place that does not shower affection on the pale and emaciated. On the plus side, he has a lovely and graceful wife and a curiously non-violent dog.

Kyle Hemmings recently finished his MFA degree in creative writing and loves to cook, bake, and usually burns

whatever her cooks or bakes. He lives in New Jersey and listens to The Beach Boys singing of an endless summer.

Tom Sheehan's *Epic Cures*, short stories from Press 53, won a 2006 IPPY Award. *A Collection of Friends*, Pocol Press, was nominated for Albrend Memoir Award. He has nine Pushcart and two Million Writer nominations, a Silver Rose Award from American Renaissance for the Twenty-first Century (ART) and the Georges Simenon Award for Excellence in Fiction. He served in 31st Infantry Regiment, Korea, 1951. He meets again soon for a lunch/gab session with pals, the ROMEOS, Retired Old Men Eating Out, 92/79/78. They've co-edited two books on their hometown of Saugus, MA, sold 3500 to date of 4500 printed. His pals will each have one martini, he'll have three beers, and the waitress will shine on them.

Thomas Edwards is a technological artist living in Los Angeles, CA. His work seeks to explore the interface between people and electronic machines, often by encouraging true interaction between them. Edwards was formally trained as an electrical engineer, worked in the Web and Internet streaming media industries, and currently works for a major television network on advanced broadcast video technology projects. His website is <http://www.t11s.com>