

# Outcast Press

## **'Falling leaves & flightless Birds'**

**Perry Gasteiger  
Christine Naprava  
Virginia Bach Folger  
HLR  
J. Rohr  
Gina Marie Bernard  
Katy Naylor  
Lynn-Cee Faulk  
Christopher Owens  
Richard Leise  
Joe Haward**

**EDITOR & DESIGN  
Amy-Jean Muller**

**INTERVIEW  
WITH  
SCOTT CUMMING**

**POETRY  
VOL. 2**



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### **CAUTION:**

**Please note: This Transgressive collection carries a strong discretionary notice with various trigger and content warnings on all work in the edition.**

**This notice serves as a broad warning on all poetry as these will not be detailed on each piece.**

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

After a successful launch last month, it's a pleasure to introduce you to 'Falling Leaves and Flightless Birds.' Outcast Press introduced voting for Volume 1 where the winning poet would be interviewed in Volume 2. It was a pleasure to award Scott Cumming as the winner of Volume 1 for his poem, "Blood on Snow." At the end of this issue, we interviewed Scott about his writing, process, and work.



Much like Volume 1, 'Falling Leaves and Flightless Birds' aims to create a relationship between the poetry to allow a narrative to emerge around the common themes, experiences, and ideas. This Volume came together through the introspection of the spaces we occupy and those things which attach to our memory. Upon review, it was clear that nature and home, all formed part of a symbolic relationship that pushed either towards or away from pain and trauma.

For this issue, the narrative of 'Falling Leaves and Flightless Birds' tracks a story of a world reflecting the speaker's own exploitation in its fragility. Things seem to crumble as a reminder that hopelessness is inevitable, and we are drawn into parts of ourselves where even the most beautiful things are lost. The world seems to be eroded by bleakness as nature reflects our vulnerability back to us.

I would like to thank and introduce the following writers who have offered brave accounts of the world in all its ugliness even

**through the reflection that nature is in fact our mirror. You have created this work. These are Your voices.**

**Thank you to the following contributors:**

**Perry Gasteiger is a queer, non-binary poet and writer from Waterloo, Ontario. Their work tends to lean towards a Post-Modern Gothic sensibility with an interest in the mundane darkness of our everyday world using juxtaposition between the real and the abstract, the beautiful and the deformed, the congruent and the disordered. Perry's work explores issues surrounding trauma, mental illness, and how these twist perceptions of the human condition. Their work aims to see the easily unnoticeable in an evocative and empathetic way.**

**Christine Naprava is a writer from southern New Jersey. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Studio One, Soundings East, Punk Noir Magazine, Literary Yard, The Daily Drunk, Anti-Heroin Chic, Sledgehammer Lit, and the Lunch Break Zine. She tweets @CNaprava and Instagrams @cnaprava**

**Virginia Bach Folger lives in an 1888 Victorian house in Schenectady, New York, where she writes from the second storey room in the turret. She has also worked as a gas station attendant, claims adjuster, and corporate learning and development manager. Her poetry has been published or is forthcoming in Concho River Review, Adanna, and Constellations.**

**HLR (she/her) writes poetry and short prose about living with chronic mental illness, trauma, and grief. Her work has been published by or is forthcoming with SCAB Magazine, Sledgehammer Lit, and Emerge Literary Journal. She is the author of prose poetry collection History of Present Complaint (Close to the Bone) and**

micro-chap **Portrait of the Poet as a Hot Mess** (Ghost City Press). HLR lives in north London where she was born and raised. Twitter: @HLRwriter / [www.treacleheart.com](http://www.treacleheart.com)

J. Rohr is a Chicago native with a taste for history and wandering the city at odd hours. In order to deal with the more corrosive aspects of everyday life, he writes the blog [www.honestyisnotcontagious.com](http://www.honestyisnotcontagious.com) and makes music in the band Beerfinger. His Twitter babble can be found @JackBlankHSH.

Gina Marie Bernard is a heavily tattooed trans woman. She lives in Bemidji, Minnesota. Her daughters, Maddie and Parker, share her heart. Her work has been nominated for Best of the Net, Best Small Fictions, Best Micro-Fictions, and The Pushcart. @vixen1724

Katy Naylor lives by the sea, in a little town on the south coast of England, where she finds the haunting song of the sirens of an evening makes up for the fact that she has to continually guard her chips against seagulls. She writes poetry and interactive fiction and has a habit of splattering her heart straight onto the page. This month, Katy is published in The Bear Creek Gazette and Outcast Press. She also writes daily short poetry and microfic which can be found at @voidskrawl

Lynn-Cee Faulk has been obsessed with reading and writing for as long as they could read and write. Reading supplied a window to the world outside of their small farming community in South Georgia and a road map to a way of being other than what their disordered upbringing provided. They still believe in the power of the written word to change lives. As a writer, poetry was their first love. Their publications include: Confessions: Micropoetry on Love, Loss, and Longing, A Pound of Pale Winter Blues, and Blood on the Vine.

**Christopher Owens: Influenced by post punk and industrial music, and evolving out of a hidden desire to create anything, Christopher Owens exist in that moment between conscience and the sub conscience. And, after all, the two years leading up to the apocalypse needs a soundtrack. Published in Belfast, as well as authoring reviews for The Pensive Quill, Metal Ireland, Chordblossom and The Quietus.**

**Richard Leise recently accepted The Perry Morgan Fellowship in Creative Writing and the David Scott Sutelan Memorial Scholarship from Old Dominion University. While completing a MFA, he has a novel out on submission, and is finishing a collection of short stories. His work may be found in numerous publications, and was recently awarded Pushcart Prize and Best Small Fictions nominations.**

**Joe Haward is the author of two nonfiction books that explore the intersection between humanity, faith, film, and culture. As a horror writer, freelance journalist, and book reviewer, his work has appeared across multiple sites, and in various anthologies and publications, including Byline Times, Cinnabar Moth Publishing, Ghost Orchid Press, Horror Oasis, and Outcast Press. You can find him on Twitter @RevJoeHaward.**

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## NEW LEAVES – PERRY GASTEIGER

**I love new leaves**

**& the smell of blood as life tumbles forward  
tearing into the world from heaving wombs  
umbilical cords wrapped around slender neck  
as young lungs struggle to take their first breath**

**& cherry blossoms opening in fragrant spring  
impatient heads crowning through fragile buds  
bursting forth in brutal inception, thin seals  
wrenched open with ignorant disregard**

**& red stains upon pink skin, tender and screaming  
as fresh air rakes its nails along naked nerves,**

**the remnants of a torn vessel cling to raw flesh  
glistening in the carnage left in the wake of  
creation**

**& sweet sap bleeding through cracked bark  
flowing free through valleys gouged into faces  
of unwavering trunks, splitting as new growth  
forces its way into the world, green and sticky**

**& the violence and beauty of becoming,  
witnessing sight of a child  
ripped from the stomach of its mother  
leaving her stretched and hollow and bloody**

**there really is nothing more stunning than new  
leaves.**

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## BOY, 6, SURVIVES KITCHEN FIRE – CHRISTINE NAPRAVA

I could've let the child  
light himself on fire,  
light the whole kitchen on fire,  
light his brother on fire,  
light me on fire,  
light the whole apartment on fire,  
but his mother, Mary Ann, was a good lay  
and that was back when I still believed  
that a good lay meant a lot more  
than a lot of the things that meant anything to me.  
Nothing meant anything to me then.

After Mary Ann deemed me not a hero and kicked me out,  
I moved down the coast.

More like inched.

I settled eventually because my feet hurt  
and began nailing the woman who cut my paychecks.  
She had a baby daughter and no apartment.  
She lived with her identical twin and soon-to-be-dead father.

*I've never slept around before, she told me.*

*This isn't sleeping around, I told her back, You're only sleeping with me.*

*But I feel like you've slept with a lot of women, so in a way, it's like I'm sleeping with all those women too.*

Women didn't say things like that then.

At least not the women I slept with.

My women didn't think that deeply.

My women didn't think that far.

Now my step-daughter says things like that to the men she sleeps with.

Her mom and I are still married.

We've only separated about fifty times.

I don't think a lot these days,

but lately, I've been thinking:

*What if I had let the kid light himself on fire.*

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## FEEDING – VIRGINIA BACH FOLGER

On the shelf feeder, plump  
black sunflower  
seed, for the jays,  
a songbird mix  
with cherries, raisins,  
peanuts for the cardinals,  
then add  
just a bit of cracked  
corn for the doves.

Into the hanging  
feeder go tiny niger  
seeds to attract the yellow  
goldfinches, the blue-gray  
nuthatches whose acrobatics  
always entertain,  
then a bit of the bargain  
mix to keep  
the cost in check.

We watch black-capped  
chickadees take  
feeding spots from  
the multitude of sparrows,  
whose many varieties  
we can never  
seem to sort.

Hidden among trees that  
edge the lawn,  
or lurking under back porch  
eaves, we sometimes spot  
a peregrine falcon  
or Cooper's hawk.  
They do not come for the seeds.

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## HOW COULD YOU? – HLR

**You used my own body against me. This flesh that is mine to weaponise. This house that is mine to demolish, not yours to rent out / trash / ask for your deposit back. I didn't think you were capable of such cruelty, didn't know you had it in you. And yeah, in the moment it sounded sexy but I don't need to understand Spanish to know that the words you whispered in my ear that night were really truly nasty: don't you know that malice translates easily, mi cariño.**

3/12/13  
3/12/13

F+D  
we were in  
Love here



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## "DROUGHT" – JAY ROHR

Weathered and eroded  
By brick blunt tongue jabs  
Flesh fails,  
Though the ghost thrives  
Haunting the graveyard  
Where family florists  
Grow the next thorns.  
Born to bring blood  
But never a tear,  
A drought starves the farm.  
Yet the jabs keep on piston  
Determined to deliver  
The rain that's never coming.

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# YOU DON'T KNOW – GINA MARIE BERNARD

**i've turned into a wraith—  
died off without trace or notice,**

**but you don't know**

**how my fingers tremble twisting handles;  
how my heart revolves on ungreased gears;  
how my world collapsed when i was twelve.**

**you strain to catch my weeping—whimpers  
stifled by wincing and flinches.**

**but you don't know**

**how loudly i begged God to make him stop;  
how time just stalled but also sped;  
how much i pled, but pleas were gagged  
and no one heard as i was robbed.**

**it's over now—except bleed echoes,**

**but you don't know**

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## SMALL TALK – KATY NAYLOR

one day the void will swallow me whole  
and spit out a pellet of fur and gristle and memory

I'll call up to you in your hiking boots -hi!-  
aren't the laced roots pretty here?

this patch of shade this loam this moss this bark  
just the odd ant mustn't grumble I'm so lucky  
- I stretch a smile over what used to be my face -

this is almost like old times I'll say  
remember, we climbed bough over bough  
birdsong and that joke about Miss Jones that nearly toppled you  
clear air, lightly sketched hills  
just the faintest shadow of wings overhead

me? sure, I've passed through acid  
and been retched down here into the mulch  
I'm a touch more densely knotted than before

if it doesn't make you gag we'll be just fine

an oak leaf kicked over me as you pass  
your eyes fixed on horizons beyond mine



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# ASHES BACK TO FLOWERS – LYNN-CEE FAULK

**drain the blood -**

**hanging from my ankles from**

**the old oak tree, feeding**

**the worms and the soil beneath,**

**giving freely of the poison**

**flowing through me,**

**glad to be rid of the salt water**

**high and low tides,**

**the sudden strange yearnings**

**of what never will be and**

**what never was,**

**filling my lungs**

**with fresh water to be**

**pumped, flowing clear and clean,**

**purging the poison and**

**reconstituting my old bones;**

**back to the waters**

that flowed over tiny  
feet, barefoot in shallow  
creek beds, smooth stones  
guiding gently around a crowd  
of tadpoles seeking through instinct  
the next stage, one step closer  
to the end that awaits us,  
catching them in jars, selfishly  
wanting to possess their  
mutable nature for myself  
sad when my theft proved  
to be of their life,  
lesson learned - there is always  
a price, a trade off to be made;  
my blood is barter and in  
exchange: the sweet forgetting



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## PRIVILEGE – GINA MARIE BERNARD

**i am still in pajamas,  
coffee cooling behind drawn shades.  
i pretend i'll go to work tomorrow—  
set my clothes in a neat pile, so they'll be ready.**

**i loathe the world—ugly, apathetic, and cruel.  
i witness police murder another black man;  
tally totals after today's mass shooting;  
wonder how worlds swallow women up whole.**

**bitterness burns deep in my throat—  
decayed breath of suicidal thought.  
can i summon courage to loop my neck  
and hang myself in a poured concrete basement?**

**my mind tells my heart to be still.  
i rise and find myself going**

**back to bed.**

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## CARLINGFORD— CHRISTOPHER OWENS

**A crack in the clouds indicates a desperate acceptance that myths once used to live life by, can be wrong on occasion. The glowing red and yellow that dilates the light clouds on this day have caught me out in terms of attire, but the snow that engulfs the wilted sunflowers outside my tower demands my attention.**

**A field of mass, stilted growth coloured in shades of black and white as far as the eye can process. Threatening but also, quite peaceful as well. Akin to an old battlefield where the spirits of participants are bound to recreate the more dull, listless moments in their past existence.**

**Medieval in execution, but Bauhaus in design. The flat roof has a sniper rifle at each corner, while the glass curtain walls revel in the clockwork stairwell constructed of stone and timber. Each room is filled with a vast array of books, records and CD's.**

**Seeing a flock of starlings passing by as they search for warmth, I am comforted by the knowledge that this is temporary. That the ghosts will be purged soon, new life will emerge and the crack in the clouds will expand further, revealing a sky filled with vibrancy, plume and condensation.**

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# HE STARTS FROM 1 – RICHARD LEISE

2. \_ of

consciousness \_

1. No problem can be solved from the same level

3. \_that creates

it\_ .

4. So ....

to overcome his anxiety?

6. \_Every morning\_

5. Asan swallows Two green pills

7. &

9. Takes Two more to modify his

mindset.

8. \_before bed\_

10. Before morning.

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# HERETIC – JOE HAWARD

**“This is my body.”**

**Surrendering to ancient desire**

**Sacrificial blood**

**Wine for venerated institutions.**

**“This is my mind.”**

**Dampening dissent**

**Give them your brain**

**They bleach all critique.**

**“This is my strength.”**

**Nothing more can be done**

**Weakness forsaken**

**You’re better off dead.**

**“This is my soul.”**

**Midnight’s despair**

**Abandoned by dogmatic curse**

**Fucked by heretic’s thorns.**

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# INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT CUMMINGS

**AJM: Scott, firstly, congratulations on winning the most votes for Outcast Press Volume 1 'The Things We Carry.' Were you excited to learn there was the possibility to be interviewed for Volume 2?**



SC: Thank you. Yes, my competitive side was pretty excited by the prospect of winning a vote and being recognised for my poem. It feels bizarre to actually win because I initially submitted as a way to support yourself and Outcast Press. I wasn't sure my poems were transgressive in a way, and what you were looking for, but admire a press trying to bring gritty writing to the fore.

**AJM: What were your overall thoughts of Volume 1 'The Things We Carry?'**

SC: I loved Volume 1. As well as looking beautiful, it introduced me to a lot of new writers and included work from others I admire. It showed the aesthetic of the press and that transgressive poetry has room for all kinds of voices under the one umbrella. I especially loved "Seppuku" by Joe Haward and I'm a fan of anything by David Calogero Centorbi. Plus, it introduced me to Leia John, who feels like a singular unique voice in the landscape.

**AJM: What do you find most interesting about being able to explore dark and transgressive themes?**

SC: Darkness is as fundamentally human as the capacity for love. We all have this bit of darkness inside us, and it is so much more varied than love. It can come out in evil, or it can be used against ourselves both physically and emotionally. Writing about these things helps me cope with my own and helps me to see beyond the increasingly sanitised writing spaces that are presented to us.

**AJM: When you wrote 'Blood on Snow' was there an occasion or idea that inspired the work in particular?**

SC: Initially it was the blood on snow imagery that I was taken with which reminded me of Kill Bill and old samurai films, and I plugged that together

with a sort of mafia backbeat with this Miller's Crossing type murder. This one actually took a few tries to get right.

There's also a contradiction in that I used cinema as inspiration, but the last moments of the poem are meant to jar against that and show that these types of death are quiet, almost unremarkable, events for those involved as opposed to the bombastic versions we typically see on screen.

**AJM: In 'Blood on Snow' you explore the themes of friendship and betrayal, is this something you explore a lot in your work?**

SC: It has been recently, but it is not something I've experienced much of myself. I think because I use writing to help me get rid of negative feelings that it's something that comes out naturally. It's easier to pass off your shit to some rube on the page who's going to end up with his throat slit than getting frustrated with the real people in your life.

**AJM: Do you think writing enables writers to resolve issues they may face or is it more about finding meaning to allow readers to connect?**



SC: Definitely the former. I've kind of alluded to it before, but I try to use my negative thoughts and feelings to go towards my writing. It's partly a purging and partly a learning experience. Last week, I wrote a micro chapbook called 'Sandbagging' full of poems written by my most cynical self and my head feels less cluttered this week.

Being totally honest, I don't really think about readers because I don't think I have many. I, also, wouldn't want to end up tying myself in knots thinking about what others want or expect from me. I think that shows in the fact that I write dark stuff like what you have published, but I write totally daft essays and poems that I've had the honour of having published at The Daily Drunk, for the most part.

**AJM: Your work is both introspective and visceral, what brought you to the page, what have you learned and when did you start writing?**

SC: I started writing what might be called lyrics as a lovelorn teenager and wannabe indie rock star. With no discernible musical ability or emergence of a Johnny Marr-like figure to carry my lyrics into musical being, I jacked it in for around 15 years.

Lockdown, the deterioration of my mental health, and a friendly nudge brought me back to writing stories and I fell headlong in love with poetry around this time too. I'd always shunned it thinking it was flowery and opaque, but when I found some work emanating from a press that interested me, I discovered the imagery and emotion inherent within which eventually led me to trying it myself.

I've learned to believe in myself a bit more. Part of the reason I stopped was feelings of inadequacy and not having the smarts for it. To be honest, this still happens at times, like when I read your chapbook *Baptism by Fire*, but I am able to push through it now and come out the other side to keep writing and submitting.



**AJM: Who do you most admire as a writer and who do you most admire in your life? Are there any similarities between the two?**

SC: Stephen J. Golds is a writer I look up to hugely. The 4.4 poetry series at *Close to the Bone* is what got me hooked on poetry and his work is so honest and amazes me every time. He'll be sick of hearing me spout gratitude towards him, but I would not be speaking to you right now, if it wasn't for him.

Vicky, my fiancé, is the person in my life I most admire. She's almost a mum of three at times between me and the boys. Lesser people would've had enough of me at times in how much I can stress and procrastinate and alternatively, not give a shit at times.

I'd say they are polar opposites in terms of who they are, but they share a sense of honesty that inspired me to try and do the same.

**AJM: You are known in the community for reading, recording, and sharing poetry. What sparked your interest in creating content online?**

SC: It was part of getting out during the winter lockdown. It was a reason to get out for a walk and I kept it up on my jaunts. It's helped me explore the local area more and I love getting people's work out there for others to hear. Mostly, it is a fun and relaxing thing to do, apart from when I get accosted by muddy dogs!

**AJM: And lastly, what are the key words or phrases that you live by?**



SC: The one that springs to mind is "nobody cares". By this I mean to just be yourself because life's biggest battle is usually with yourself. Caring what people think is what held me back for a long time and with the writing and the videos I'm being who I am and not caring what others think about it.

**AJM: Anything else we should know?**

SC: My name is on the cover of a book for the first time with the release of 10th Rule Books Guns N Roses Rock 'n' Noirror 2: It's So Easy in which I have a murderous piece of flash fiction. In August, I have a couple of poems being released in that month's issue of the Yellow Mama ezine. Delighted to be part of a dream journal and one I have been reading for a few years now. In December, my debut chapbook, 'A Chapbook About Nothing,' will be released as part of the Close to the Bone First Cut series.

**Scott Cumming never considered himself to be a writer until recently, but turns out he has some stuff to say. He has been published in The Daily Drunk, Punk Noir Magazine, Versification, and Shotgun Honey. His debut poetry chapbook is due for release in December. Host of the Modus Operandi: Flash Fiction podcast and runs Waxing Poetic, a YouTube channel devoted to the best recent poetry from around the net. To read 'Blood on Snow' head to Outcast Press Poetry Volume 1.**

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