Outcast Press

'Weeping Worlds & Paper Shelters'

William Taylor Jr.
Jay Sizemore
Ivan de Monbrison
Matthew McGuirk
Sheldon Lee Compton
Sebastian Vice
Jason Melvin
David Calogero Centorbi
Perry Gasteiger
Andre Peltier

INTERVIEW WITH

HLR

EDITOR & DESIGN
Amy-Jean Muller

POETRY
VOL. 3

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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

Letter from the editor

Having produced another successful edition last month, it's a pleasure to introduce you to Volume 3, 'Weeping Worlds and Paper Shelters.' It certainly isn't lost on me, how privileged I am to read the work that makes its way to the Outcast Press inbox, and it's especially true when work is deeply personal. Even if pieces originate from observation, both reflect an intense empathy which exists within us and the human condition.

As part of Volume 2, our winning poet HLR was interviewed for her winning poem, 'How Could You?" We spoke candidly about trauma, pain, and grief, and what it means to write and reflect on these experiences. HLR is known for her outstanding work, HISTORY OF PRESENT COMPLAINT, published by Close to the Bone 2021. This work deals with the intensity of mental health, and it's extremely fitting that HLR joins us for this edition of 'Weeping Worlds and Paper Shelters.'

I was struck instantly by the visuals depicted in the works from these writers and saw a deep correlation between the impending destruction of our worlds in line with our inherent pain. Such visual depictions reminded me that even in the face of disappointment, depression, and hopelessness, the tools provided to us to weather the storm of apocalyptic scenes often feel futile. Moreover, when out worlds fall apart and break down around us, efforts to withstand them often feel like paper shelters too.

Volume 3's, 'Weeping Worlds and Paper Shelters' aims to illustrate the harshness of lives falling apart. When you grieve for those you have lost, especially those lost to mental health, you experience a harsh catastrophe, where poignant endings, become broken beginnings for those sweeping up and left behind.

I would like to thank and introduce the following writers who have offered glimpses into the brokenness of ourselves with empathy and honesty. You have created this work. These are *Your* voices.

Thank you to the following contributors:

William Taylor Jr. lives and writes in San Francisco. He is the author of numerous books of poetry, and a volume of fiction. His work has been published widely in journals across the globe, including Rattle, The New York Quarterly, and The Chiron Review. He is a five time Pushcart Prize nominee and was a recipient of the 2013 Kathy Acker Award. *Pretty Things to Say*, (Six Ft. Swells Press, 2020) is his latest collection of poetry.

Jay Sizemore writes poems then wonders where they come from, like a coma patient constantly waking up having written himself a memoir of another life. He doesn't question the muse, though lately he's asking the muse to use complete sentences. Find his books on Amazon and the like. He lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife and their fur babies.

Ivan de Monbrison is a poet, novelist and artist born in 1969 in Paris. He has studied oriental languages in Paris, and then worked for the Picasso Museum, before dedicating himself to his own creativity. He has been published in literary magazines globally. His last poetry book in English and Russian без лица / Faceless has just been released in Canada. He does not believe that his art is of any real significance, he does it as some kind of a tribal ritual, he is fully aware that vanity is one of the worst enemies of most poets and artists, and tries to stay away from it as much as possible.
https://sites.google.com/view/ivan-de-monbrison/home

Matt McGuirk teaches and laughs at his puns by day and scribbles somewhat coherent words nightly. He lives with his family in New Hampshire. Words in *The Daily Drunk Magazine, Goat's Milk, Honeyfire Lit, Idle Ink, Maudlin House, Sledgehammer Lit, Versification* and others. Twitter handle: @McguirkMatthew and Instagram @mcguirk_matthew.

Sheldon Lee Compton is the author of *Sway* (Cowboy Jamboree, 2020) and the forthcoming *The Orchard Is Full of Sound* (West Virginia University Press, 2022). Writing, cosmology, cats, reading, baseball. That kind of thing.

Sebastian Vice is the founder of Outcast Press, an indie publication specializing in transgressive fiction and dirty realism. His short fiction and poetry has appeared in Punk Noir Magazine, and A Thin Slice of Anxiety. His flash fiction piece "One Last Good Day" has been nominated for Best Of The Net 2021. He has forthcoming short stories in Cinnabar Moth Publishing, Close To The Bone, and Outcast Press' anthology In Filth It Shall Be Found. His debut novel Heaven's Tourist will be published by Cinnabar Moth Publishing (Nov 2022). You can find him on Twitter: @sebastian_vice.

When Jason Melvin dies he wishes to be cremated and his ashes placed into a Nacho Cheese Doritos bag, resealed. Sticky googly eyes should be placed on the outside of the bag, that way his grandchildren will be able to shake and play with him. And if they forget that Grandpa's in there and open the bag at snack time, so be it. His work has been published in *Olney, Anti-Heroin Chic, HorrorSleazeTrash, The Daily Drunk*, *Sledgehammer, Rat's Ass Review* and others.

David Calogero Centorbi is a writer that in the 90's earned an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona. Now, he is writing and working in Detroit, MI. He is the author of AFTER FALLING INTO DISARRAY (Daily Drunk Press). Published work in Schuylkill Valley Journal-Dispatches, Anti-Heroin Chic, The Daily Drunk, Drunk Monkeys, Horror Sleaze Trash, Punk Noir, and Tiny Molecules. He is a regular monthly contributor at Versification. He can be found here on Twitter: @DavidCaCentorbi. Blog: davidcentorbi.blogspot.com

Perry Gasteiger is a queer, non-binary poet. Their work focuses on 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 aims to see the easily unnoticeable in an evocative and empathetic way.

Andre F. Peltier (he/him) is a Lecturer III at Eastern Michigan University where he teaches literature and writing. He lives in Ypsilanti, MI, with his wife and children. His poetry has recently appeared in various publications like CP Quarterly, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Version 9 Magazine, About Place, Novus Review, Wingless Dreamer, and Fahmidan Journal, and most recently he has had a poem accepted by Lavender and Lime Literary. In his free time, he obsesses over soccer and comic books. Twitter: @aandrefpeltier

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Amy-Jean Muller is an artist, writer and poet from South Africa who lives and works in London. Both her art and writing explore culture, memory, mental health, identity, femininity, and sexuality. She has exhibited her art in South Africa and London. Her writing can be found in various publications and is a regular contributor for Versification, The Daily Drunk and Poetry EIC for Outcast Press.

Her poetry book, Baptism by Fire, was released in January 2021. She has been nominated for both Best of the Net and Pushcart prizes and will be guest editor for ELJ Editions Anthology 'It Shouldn't: Facing an Empty Chair,' due May 2022. She also writes transgressive fiction and is currently completing her first novel, a collection of short stories, and a second poetry collection. amyjeanmuller.com | Twitter: @muller_aj

DEDICATED TO
M.G

The Great Loneliness of the World

– William Taylor Jr.

The great loneliness of the world
sits before you on a plate

like a day-old sandwich
with stale crusts,

the voice of Mother Universe
calling from the other room:

Just shut up eat it kid,
that's what yer getting.

A View from Above

–Jay Sizemore

~after E. M. Forster

Half god, half ghost,
the creature becomes degenerate,
blind to a world
of beautiful things
breaking beneath the dirty moon.

It's a portentous poetry
to wage war
against the spring,
where fate and coincidence
thrive like hydrangeas

and violets losing their leaves
to linger upon the surface
of love's sacred lake
we all wish to bathe in,
and emerge from refreshed,

never choosing which debris
clings like wet paper
to the dimpled flesh.
The choices seem guided
much as the truth

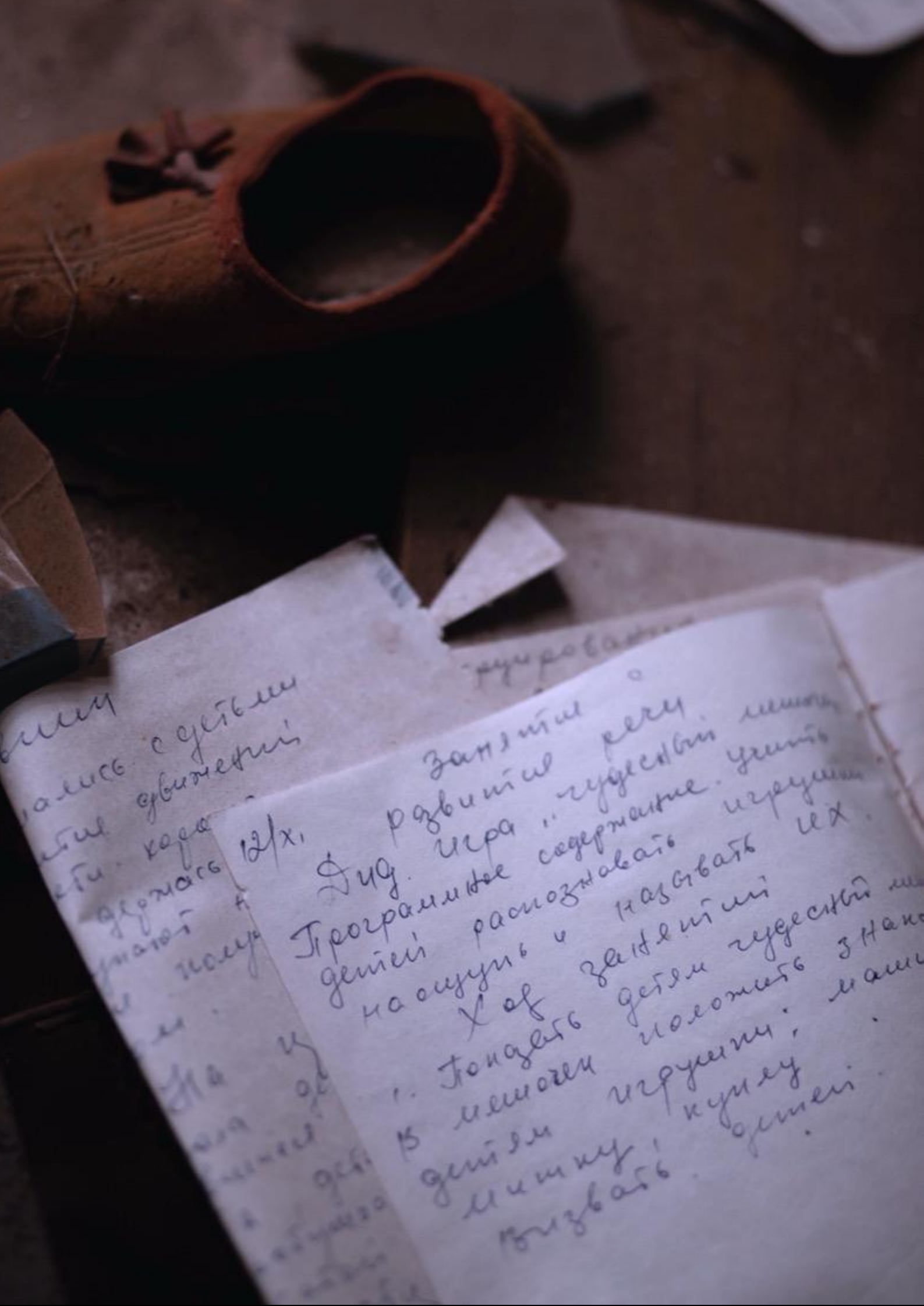
is most generally misunderstood,
and is therefore the hardest to convey,
like counting the feathers
in every flock of birds
taking flight within the throat.

Untitled / Без названия

– Ivan de Monbrison

В этом месте
Сегодня
Мы снова мертвы,
Я думаю что
Мир куб не круглый,
Все
Но не ты
Падая в воздухе,
Как маленькие шарики из бумаги.

In this place
Today
We are dead again,
I think that
The world is a cube not round,
Everybody
But not you
Falling down in the air,
Like small balloons of paper.


Дид. игра
Программное содержание
детей распознавать
на ощупь и называть
игрушки
Хаб занятий
Помогать детям
в умении
положить
игрушки
куклу
Вызывать
детей

“Simple Math”

– Matthew McGuirk

If my rent is 1,200 dollars,

my car payment is 350 dollars

and I make 15 dollars an hour,

how much money do I have left over after buying a pack a day?

12 X 12 was always easy in middle school, but where did my phone go?

How many hours is it from 2:45am to 7:20am?

Google Search: how much caffeine balances out 144oz of alcohol?

How fast do I need to drive to cover 20 miles in 10 minutes?

1,200+25 is math I can do,

but how come it’s more when the check bounces?

Why do you think I couldn’t pay in the first place?

In my Father’s Father’s House

– Sheldon Lee Compton

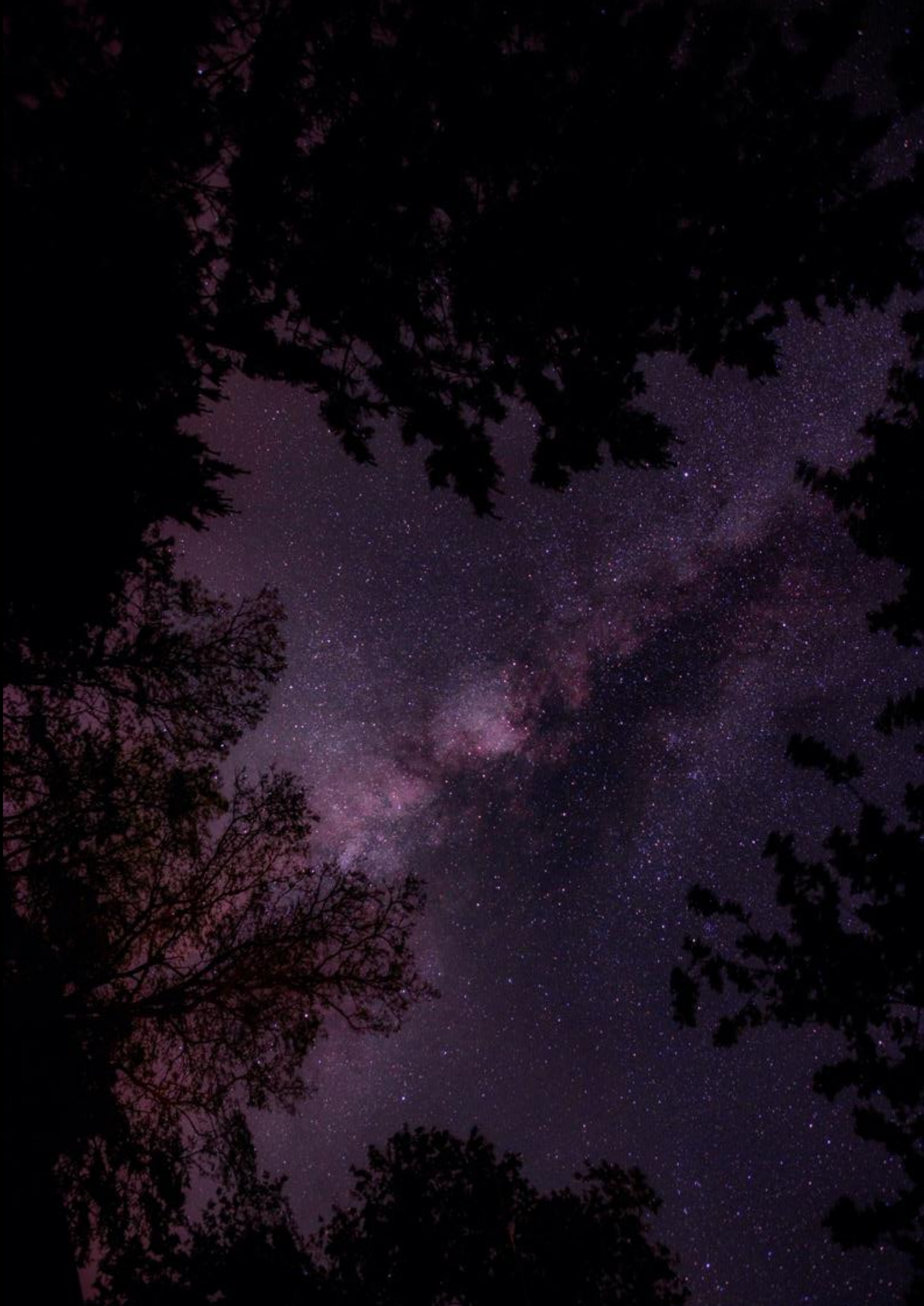
The boy side-slides from the attic. His hair drips sweat. The air in his lungs is scorched from surviving for ten-thousand years beneath the wild heat of a cousin he thought was a friend. The kitchen table is there, foggy in the brownblack. The refrigerator stands moai-like. He walks to the table and sits. The silence breaks away and he hears a clock ticking and staccato snores coming from the open bedroom door. He tries to take in everything through all his senses. One would think he was trying to create another him or another person the way he strives to activate his whole being. Here in this common kitchen, in what is still an indistinct thumb-spread of blur and haze, the boy believes he feels a shivering, a quaking, a spasm like a muscle strained until almost cramping. It could be close. He remains and keeps sitting and keeps sitting with a grain of anger pressured like a diamond in the folds of his mind. He opens his eyes wide wider *wider* and hopes for his sight to adjust. He waits for one beautiful thing that, by night overwhelmed,

will cover him like a garment.

Beyond

– Sebastian Vice

A depression expands
faster than the
cosmos
Tears flooding
oceans
faster than global warming
If my pain could scream
Your eardrums would shatter
If my pain was heard
It would
        nuke your soul
If my melancholy was fire
It would
        consume the world
and spread
across existence
where no phoenix could rise
From the Ashes



He always seemed to be chasing you

– Jason Melvin

Shortly after burying you he traded in your beat-up blue pick-up
for a bright yellow *69 Chevy Chevelle* black racing stripes hood to trunk
I was a little mad but too young to have an opinion on the matter
I liked collecting treasures providing memories
I understand trinkets are easier to place in a box but
it still smelled of Marlboros had
your sticky sweat in the seats that pick-up still ran but

He was seventeen and that Chevelle was beautiful
already smoking while the cancer ravaged you drinking
to numb the pain of your passing A teenage boy
paying respects to a dead father by championing your mistakes
and when it looked like maybe
after thirty years of chasing He had finally stopped running
Goddammit that's when he caught *you*

“Crop Rotation”

– Matthew McGuirk

I’m not sure why I’m standing in front of the class

thinking about my vegetable gardens,

but somehow it makes sense.

Looking at Alex itching to get to the bathroom or parking lot for the next drag

off a cigarette or cloud from his vape

and wondering if that was his dad 20 years ago.

Sarah wears long sleeves in a 90-degree classroom

and I wonder what’s hiding under them.

Is this pain handed down from her parents?

or are those inherited scars seared in her mind as well?

Watching Ray slap a tray over Seth’s head in the lunchroom

makes me think about his father and what kind of belt he might wear,

passing down punishments that aren’t deserved.

In gardening, they always say crop rotation is *key*.

You don’t want the diseases to catch up with the plants season after season.

I wonder if they’re on to something.

THE ELOQUENCE OF DEPARTURE

– David Calogero Centorbi

1

Do all these people sitting in bone-dead cars see themselves as survivors?

Why the haste? Why the tantrums?
All day I know I'm going to bleat.
I've thrown off my hands and face, and I stand in line
anticipating my cracked skull and its falling
bouquet of flowers.

2

Yeah, I heard about your dream, but I thought it was propaganda for cremation.

Oh, this life of olives and bumper cars.
I tied the noose too loose and fell
to the floor amongst the celebration of dust...

No, I'm not daunted, just a little bruised—genuine water
starving for another try at immortality.

3

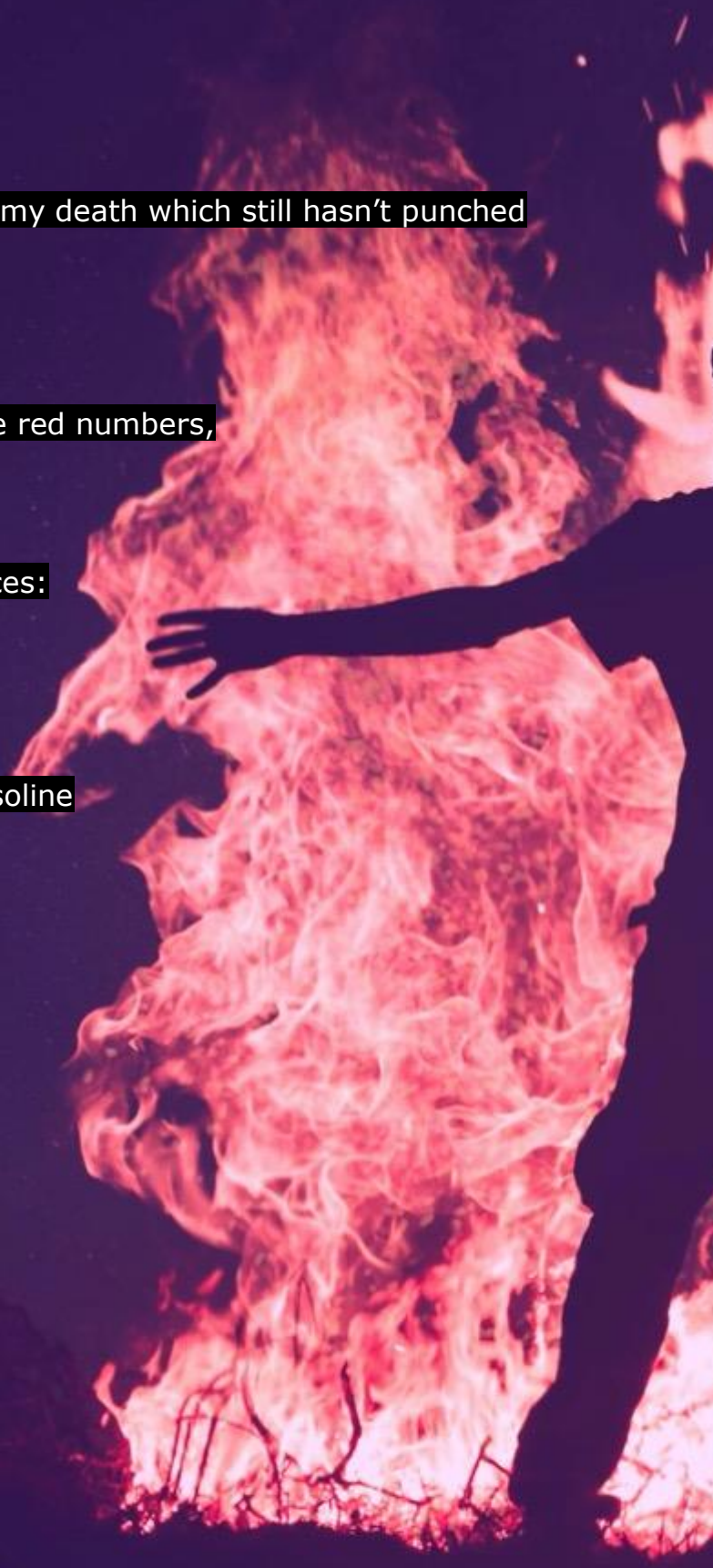
I turn the radio off and backstroke to my death which still hasn't punched in...

Walking around in the lingerie
of anticipation, I sit and look up at the red numbers,
wait for eternity to be called,

but the computers have lost their voices:
mouthless monitors unable to praise
fellatio or cunnilingus.

The smoking light is lit. I pour the gasoline
and light a match:

I am God's Christmas tree.



Dreams

- Perry Gasteiger

Last night I dreamt I was suffocating.

It’s a dream I live every day.
My throat closed, my lungs tightened, the air
stolen from my chest as my ribs constricted on themselves,
crushing under the pressure of their own anger;

then somehow, I always catch my breath.
From within an ivory cage Life wills on
through splintered bones, tearing at raw flesh,
breathing air back into collapsing lungs.

I have lived a lifetime in an unconscious hour;
I've seen the clock wind down a thousand nights,
ten thousand days waiting for the long fingers of Death
to wrap softly around my chest.

Tonight I dreamt of Sunshine.

She burned herself into my mind,
leaving her image printed on my lobes,
Her flames licking my face
and that is when I realized:

fire may not be the worst way to die.

Northern Lights

– Andre F. Peltier

We lugged lawn chairs
to the cornfield
with our case of Busch Lite.
We sat huffing
gasoline, smoking
Camel straights,
realizing our future
began that night.
As our heads cleared
from the fumes,
overcast midnight skies
cleared too.

We stared in awe
as the dissipating clouds
gave way to early
October Aurora Borealis.
We passed the gas-can
around again,
inhaled deeply,
and saw our collective
tomorrows
writ upon that crazy
neon north.

The perils of discovery

– Jay Sizemore

~after Joseph Conrad

Papier mache Mephistopheles
where the mangroves writhe
and darkness is an abeyance
of light struggling to survive,

we crawl through the throat
of the sleeping jungle snake
subcutaneously aware
of white eyes flaring wide

like temporary candles
lit and flaming, prayers for ivory
along the edges of the river.
What some would call savagery

I call the heart, the human condition,
a desire to see it through,
to sneak between the teeth
of the snapping gator's jaws,

lungs sputtering smoke
like a churning steamboat
beached in the muds of madness,
savage as a butcher's laughter,

you'll find me dancing
in the bloody pools of sacrifice
and cradling the shrunken heads
of the world's greatest philosophers.

Interview with HLR

AJM: Outcast Press doesn't dictate a theme to writers from the outset, rather these develop into a narrative before publication, is this something that drew you to the press?

HLR: Reading Volume 1 made me decide to send some poetry to you, I loved your selection, AJ! It was so thoughtfully curated. I actually feel more confident in my submissions to calls that are themed (un-themed calls are more hit-and-miss for me) but I love a challenge, and I love what Outcast Press is all about. I was excited to see they've branched out to publishing poetry. And who doesn't love a surprise acceptance email for a poem they thought was a long shot?

AJM: What do you find most interesting about having the space to explore dark or transgressive themes?

HLR: I'm thrilled (and relieved) at the *demand* there is for dark poetry, transgressive stories, grit-lit and psych ward accounts in a world where we're constantly bombarded with stories of human horror in the media and on our social feeds; that so many readers *want* to be challenged and provoked and affected by what they read. I thought that most people want safe, ~nice~ poems, and short fiction with relatable characters and satisfying denouements, but that's not true. I love how just when you think everything has been done to death, someone pops up with something brand new.

I know that lots of people read to escape, but why anyone would want to escape into my world, I have no idea. All of my work deals with the darkness in my life, I *can't* write happy stories or work well within traditional poetic forms, I loathe cliché and boring writing makes me cry. I only write what I know, which is perpetual fuckery and chaos that is so unbelievable to boring people that I can actually sell it as 'fiction'. So, I'm forever thankful for every mag/press/publisher that lets me and so many others just *be* tragic, messy *wrong'uns* in whatever way we want, and I cherish every reader who decides that my work is worth expending their finite minutes over. It's magic.

AJM: Do you think writing enables writers to resolve trauma or is it more about finding meaning to allow readers to connect?

HLR: Well, I write for me and only me, purely selfishly, as a way of coping with my personality disorder and collection of traumas. My debut prosetry collection 'History of Present Complaint' (Close to the Bone) was me confronting, processing, and resolving the trauma of being involuntary sectioned during an horrific psychotic episode. Left un-dealt-with, it would've consumed me, so that book *had* to be written when it was, 10 months after the fact. 'How Could You?' was me dealing with a violent sexual assault that happened in 2016. I didn't need to deal with it until now because I needed to deal with other traumas first. I could let the incident in 'How Could You?' stay in the back of mind and it couldn't/didn't/wouldn't do as much damage to me as The Big Traumas were busy doing.

I wanted to submit to Outcast Poetry, but I don't think my work is 'transgressive.' I was going through my archives and found 'How Could You?' and honestly, AJ, I was only brave enough to edit it and submit it and finally deal with that incident because of your chapbook 'Baptism By Fire.' You inspired me to acknowledge that buried memory for was it was, to have an honest conversation with myself about the definition of rape and to make it real to someone other than myself, and Outcast Poetry gave me the space to own it, to have the last laugh, the final 'fuck you,' so I'm really grateful for that.

With my personal writing I don't write for readers (my day job is writing for clients and target audiences), and I never expect anything from anyone, I don't have that power or the audacity or time or imagination, but if/when someone connects with my work or gleans meaning from it, that's amazing! Writing is me therapizing and treating myself, and it's dangerous and it's rewarding and it's difficult and it's risky, but all the best things are.

AJM: You have been candid about trauma in your piece "How could you?" The work poses a question to both the reader and the perpetrator. Do you find writing acts to answer these questions, inadvertently or otherwise?

HLR: I think that, in this case, the question 'How Could You?' is one that can't be answered. Or rather it *can* be answered but the answer won't be satisfactory to me, won't justify why the guy in the poem did what he did. I don't want an answer either—by writing that poem and getting it out of my hands, I've drawn a line under the whole thing, it's done, I've dealt with it. So much writing asks important questions, some provides answers or demands them from the reader, and that is such a powerful and vital ability. But in that poem, I wanted nothing but closure. And I got it.

AJM: You have chosen to use both Spanish and English in the piece itself. Was this a choice from the outset? And given the title asks a question, was it intentional to provide an 'answer' in Spanish to reinforce the idea that any answer in the face of trauma would be inherently futile?

HLR: Yes, it was intentional in the sense that I was trying to demonstrate that words *can* and *do* speak just as loudly as actions do. In my life, words people have said to me have nearly killed me, whereas, say, the stab-wounds didn't hurt me half as much. 'History of Present Complaint' mentions a text message I was sent that will traumatise me for the rest of my life. Words *hurt.* Words kill. Cuts heal, swellings calm down, bruises fade, hair grows back, I live with broken bones and I always do my own stitches. But conversations haunt me, terrorise me, change me.

In this poem I wanted to depict the feeling of being assaulted physically and verbally, through action *and* by a language that I don't speak, that made me sort of doubly-vulnerable in that situation: not understanding what he was saying to me was, I realised later, just another way that he controlled that narrative, and added to the sense of confusion and disbelief I felt—I couldn't respond accordingly. This poem was really about the power of language, I think, rather than what was done to my body.

AJM: You are known for work that does not shy away from issues around mental health and trauma; do you hope this will inspire others to explore their voice too?

HLR: I don't hope for anything with my writing other than hope it helps me cope with shit and move on and get stronger. Over the years I've had emails from readers who have told me that I've encouraged them them to seek help for their mental health and/or talk about their problems and/or start writing, and it will never not be incredible to me that I made a difference to them, that I helped someone. It's a privilege that I don't take for granted.

AJM: Loss and grief are also evident in your work. Have you found this process a means of commemoration or catharsis?

HLR: For me, personally, it's certainly for catharsis rather than commemoration. Of course, writing a poem about someone who has died is a way of me immortalising them, preserving a specific memory before I lose it, but that's not its purpose. It's just a purge of thoughts and feelings, it's overspill from when the grief is too huge to contain inside me.

I commemorate all the loved ones I've lost in so many ways in my daily life, ways I feel are more effective at keeping their memories alive (blasting their favourite songs, ordering "their drink" at the bar, doing terrible impressions of them, speaking to their families about them, getting wasted on their birthdays and telling anyone who'll listen what a brilliant bastard they were) than writing a poem that nobody who actually knew the deceased will ever read.

AJM: And lastly, is there a word or phrase that reminds you of a lost loved one or provides solace in the face of grief and loss?

HLR: Hmmm, I'm terrible at following my own advice, but your questions reminded me of this poem I wrote a year after my father died, which may serve an insight into surviving grief and loss:

In the 52 weeks that I've somehow lived
without you I've discovered that while
"I'll be there *for* you" means *something*,
"I'll be there *with* you" means *everything*.
(The former is a favour; the latter is a lifesaver).

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 prosetry 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