

From the Executive Managing Editor:

George Floyd.

That is the name in the back—no, foreground—of everything now. It is the name that haunts this letter, this journal, and our community. George Floyd is the name that called a nation out of a pandemic-imposed isolation and to the streets—participating in protests before seeing our parents, our elders, our grown children, even our friends. The outcry for our community overpowering any outbreak.

This recognition and heed to the call for justice in our communities is partially due to new perspective gained in quarantine—perspective that allowed us to acknowledge our hunger for tiny things we now hold so dear. *Hunger for Tiny Things*, the title for this year's collection, comes from a line in Christine Robbins's poem *My grandparents' house was razed*, a poem that is wild and mythical, about science and wonder. It is a deconstruction, a rebuilding of an origin story. It is a search for meaning. "The hunger / For tiny things. Hunger / As a weighted place / Where magnets snap."

Humans are fooled by complacency into thinking our hunger is for only the little things. This pandemic has made that clear. Surely we miss and we hunger for things that were once tiny, common, or underappreciated: the touch of a friend, the hospitality of family, an easy trip to the grocery store. We desire regular routine, as Michael Kleber-Diggs writes in his beautiful poem *Eggshells*. But when that hunger is revealed as a weighted place, as Robbins suggests in her poem, these little things are recalculated, reweighed. “Tiny” things are heavier, like the freedom to move about the world as we once did. Like the freedom to move about the world as we never have. Like the freedom to breathe. Like freedom.

Hunger as a weighted place. A place of justice. A place of equality. A place of peace.

The cover image we’ve selected for this issue by Jeremy Brenner is emblematic of where we find ourselves. The rose is a delicate beauty, maybe even the standard symbol. The back cover displays that ideal—the rose as a version of perfection, under the orange scrim of memory. But we know memory enables a distorted preservation. In reality, the rose, while a hardy perennial, is susceptible to its environment, climate, and time. Just as we all are.

The virus exposed the inequities in the human condition. Like the cover image, the veil has lifted, revealing truth and clarity. This truth was magnified on May 25 with a viral nine-minute cell phone video. The combination of events has forced a reckoning of systemic omission and brutality, leaving us all to bear witness. At *Water~Stone Review*, we are responding to the calls from our contributors and colleagues in the community to examine our own past and complacency in that system. We are making new decisions and moving in new directions for our post-COVID-19 survival, but more importantly for our relevancy in the call to do better.

It seems nearly impossible to write about the work in this journal as a postscript to all that has happened recently. It is work mostly submitted before the pandemic, selected over a series of virtual board meetings, conversations, and debates. It is work accepted before the world knew George Floyd. My own inability to write in this moment is a kind of paralysis but also an acute awareness that mine is not the voice to hear from right now. I offer instead the voices of this volume, which speak of destruction and of loss, of ownership, responsibility, choice, and fate. Their stories connect us to art and provide solace in research and careful observation. They allow us to feel grounded in place, cleansed through fire, and offer warning

and inspiration. These voices illustrate moments of regeneration, rebuilding, and coming to peace with what has been severed, lost, or finally exposed.

Anne Piper opens her beautifully arresting poem *The Roses* with the lines “the roses / bloomed luxuriously / it was the summer of deciding.” Piper’s poem perfectly marries a moment of external beauty with a reticent internal battle. It is the summer of deciding, and I am resolute in my job as both editor and human to listen to these voices, to learn, to do that over and over and again, and then to act.

I thank all the contributors for gifting us with their beautiful work that is as relevant and timeless as ever. Thank you to the editors, Katrina Vandenberg and Keith Lesmeister, who were professional joys to work with despite all the technical and emotional challenges thrown into the process. Thank you to the tiniest but mightiest editorial board led by the tenacious Amanda Happy, Liz Caswell, and Lucas McMillan, who never skipped a beat in the shutdown and dedicated themselves wholly to this issue that was fighting to be born, as Katrina once said. Thank you to Kazim Ali for grounding us with a beautiful virtual visit in the middle of our isolation. Thank you to Stan Rubin and Barrie Jean Borich for their trust in this year of transition and for the solace that their reviews bring to the journal. Thank you to Dylan Olson-Cole and Anne Kelley Conklin for their excellent contributions to the consistency in quality assurance and the remarkable beauty we offer with each issue. Finally, thank you to our assistant managing editor, Robyn Earhart, whose wisdom, steady encouragement, and commitment to *WSR* is the unglorified, often unseen, essential work behind it all. Thank you.

Meghan Maloney-Vinz