

From the Executive Editor:

A quarter of a century is a long time for a literary journal. It is a rarity in a world saturated with places and ways to publish and in a time wrought with budget cuts and conglomerate takeovers. We are grateful for our long ride. While twenty-five years really only represents a sliver of a fragment on the continuum of the human timeline, these twenty-five years somehow feel more significant. Evolution itself has accelerated. Everything is faster, more immediate, more responsive.

Water~Stone Review, Volume 25 finds us living in a complicated, noise-driven world. The invention of Wi-Fi, along with its offspring (search engines, online shopping, smartphones, streaming services, social media, FaceTime, and Zoom), has forever altered the trajectory of our species, but there is a quiet burning in our nature. If we rest for a moment without a device telling us where to turn and how to listen, we can hear its hiss and snap. A primordial haunting that defies the search bar and exists outside of our GPS grid. This place has “no service” from a provider, no satellite reach. Perhaps its source is the stardust still floating in our very cells.

Whatever it is and wherever it resides in us, we are immune to its power. A power that transcends time and its inventions. When we are able to step away from the moment, the images the machines and satellites present, we yearn for the guidance,

the signal, the power coming from within. We listen for it in our lives, our relationships, our rituals, our past, and our path. We see it in the delicate balance between birth and death, labor and trauma, belonging and abandonment, sacrifice and surrender. We yield to it only when we are quiet enough to hear its buzz, catch glimpse of its fiery tail.

The writing selected for this issue echoes this persistent investigation, shifting perceptions, reflection, and inquiry into what it means to be human in this twenty-first century. We have seen how quiet burns and the cosmic power that emanates from the witnessing.

We've chosen that line, *How Quiet Burns*, as our title. It comes from Ty Chapman's poem *Pantheon*, which speaks to the inheritance of wisdom and injustice and the crackling power in the recording, the witnessing of that legacy in the world today. A. Muia, J. G. Jesman, Annie Trinh, Patrick Cabello Hansel, Alice Duggan, Jennifer Huang, J. Jacqueline McLean, Ernestine Saankaláxt Hayes, Michael Hahn, Kim Haengsook, Tara Westmor, Gregor Langen, tswb, Cole W. Williams, Ciara Alfaro, Nancy Shih-Knodel, Robert Hedin, and indeed all of the contributors, set their work in content or form to the historical, racial, scientific burning in our world and the relational, personal, and universal contracture scars left in its aftermath.

We have three outstanding contributing editors to thank for their exceptional tending to this power: Ed Bok Lee, Kao Kalia Yang, and Mona Power extended *Water~Stone Review's* stratosphere, went off grid, and listened for the stardust. With the diligent help of assistant editors Larissa Larson, Mubanga Kalimamukwento, and Zoey Gulden, they found it humming in new work from world-renowned writers, emerging talents, and established stalwarts of their craft. And we are honored to have them all in one collection.

A special thank-you to Michael Torres for his generous interview and time with our students. It was a lovely series of evenings, finally in community again after such a long, virus-induced drought.

Thank you to the production team of Dylan Olson-Cole, Parker Sprout, Logan Myers, Anne Kelley Conklin, and managing editor Rachel Guvenc. You all make this look easy.

We are thankful to you, our loyal readers and contributors, for your support and affection over these past twenty-five years. Let this issue smolder in your hands and ignite your hearts. May you feel the power in its quiet burn.

Meghan Maloney-Vinz