

EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

Looking to the Land: Environmental Writing

Grisel Y. Acosta

Ice crystals are falling from the sky as I write this introduction to a collection of works that ask us to pay attention to the ecologies we find ourselves in. When the spring/summer issue is in print, the cold flakes will have melted and the frutos de estos labores will be in your hands, like a true harvest of words. However, our current relationship with our environment is in jeopardy. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), or COP 26 took place in fall 2021, amid environmental protests demanding everyone around the world to initiate immediate changes such as controlling dangerous emissions and using healthier energy sources. Our lives literally depend upon these changes, but while the world speaks of changes for the future, Latinx/a/e folks continue to remind the world that our various communities have often had a sacred, interdependent relationship with the land. We see this most obviously in the works of the late Rudolfo Anaya, which references life in the rural South, the work of Piri Thomas, who wrote about urban environmental hazards in *Down These Mean Streets* (1967), and in later works by former Texas Poet Laureate Carmen Tafolla, who delights in describing our rich connection to fresh produce. These traditions continue today and it is incredibly easy to find literature by Latinx/a/e folks that is rooted in the environment. We focus on such works in this issue. Cristal Briseida Almonte places loss in firelight, the ocean, and the breath, while Ester Gonzalez Barrientos extends a parallel ocean and breath to wind and mountain when recounting the loss of an activist leader. Lydia A. Saravia

recounts sewing as exercise in recycling and frugality that also weaves together family, and Joanna Beltrán Girón weaves together hybrid genres in creative scholarship that reminds us, “The mountains have knots; the knots are stars”.

Additionally, and most excitedly, in this issue we celebrate our first *Norma Elia Cantú Creative Writing Award* recipients, María Fernanda and Carolina Hinojosa. A huge congratulations to both! Their works continue the environmental theme. Fernanda guides us through intimate moments via violets, beaches, and natural lotions, while Hinojosa creates a masterful eco-poetic essay that is homage to both the nopal and to her grandmother. The female-centered spaces these women write about will continue to call you back again and again. I’d like to thank Ashley Morales, from Rider University, who has been instrumental in this issue for her promotional and copyediting work. Enjoy!