

## Book Review

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Power, Bill. *Ripple: An Intimate Exchange of Urgency and Hope Between An Ecologist and His Daughter*. Green Writers Press, 2025.

In ecologist Bill Power's *Ripple*, letters written to his daughter model inter-generational dialogue for healing a wounded planet.

Only a few weeks into this summer, I found myself in my primary care physician's office, asking her if it might be time to begin medication for anxiety and depression. The months from June to August are usually when I thrive — no schoolwork, no painfully early sunsets, just free days of warmth and a minimum wage job. But this summer — and, if I'm being honest, every single day since January 20, 2025 — has sorely lacked the carefree bliss I eagerly anticipate come the end of May. And, judging from my doctor's response, I know I'm not the only one experiencing this new wave of reverse seasonal depression: "Sure, I can put you on something — you're only the seventh person your age I've seen today for this! What, is the crushing weight of inheriting this f\*cked up world just a little too much for you, too?" I laughed, knowing if I didn't, I might end up in tears.

Like many in my generation, I try to keep a good attitude about it all, that is, the realization that our parents are handing us down a country built on racism, an economy dependent on exploitation, a planet that can no longer withstand human damage, and a cultural ethos increasingly reliant on wielding the name of God as justification for bigotry and violence. I volunteer, I consult my elders and my teachers, I attend protests and blow my paychecks on fundraisers for families I'll never meet. Still, though, nothing will ease my mind quite like a good book can, and luckily for me, I had one handed to me on a silver platter this summer.

Like a particularly resounding Mary Oliver poem or Angela Davis essay, Bill Powers' *Ripple* came at a perfect time in my life; in a moment of my brain's development where I could sense my neurons grasping for a better way to process its surroundings. *Ripple* offers a refreshing perspective: not one necessarily opposing mine or my peers', but one of age-old dad wisdom that provides gentle guidance, anchored by a proposition to focus on oneself, in the present, as part of a whole, as a tool for aiding the world. It's simultaneously radical and beautifully rudimentary: meditations, written in letters addressed to his teenage daughter, that nudge us back to earth, an almost playfully simple reminder that sometimes the best stewards of our planet are those that move the least. Or, rather, those who learn to ripple.

But what does it mean to ripple? For Bill, an ecologist and writer, and his daughter Amaya who was raised in Samaipata, Bolivia, and is on the cusp of adulthood, it signals a form of resistance that empowers from the ground up: a contemplative, introspective practice that echoes outward.

He asks, “why not simply observe — from a still place within yourself — all the roles you’ve played and all the voices that have reflected back versions of who you might become?”

By continually searching for and establishing a deeper connection with oneself and another, and therefore with our natural surroundings, we can rehearse a mindset that prioritizes these things rather than a fixed career or nuclear life plan, and better flow with the changes life inevitably brings us.

And it's a positive feedback loop: recognizing our vast human insignificance among nature helps us reframe our goals, reorienting back toward forms of living that protect our planet and bring us closer to each other, and farther from the anxiety-inducing question of "now what?" “With a shift in consciousness, we humans are certainly creative enough to imagine a kinder social order and then – also over generations – rebuild a material order with respect toward the broad community of life,” Powers reminds us. Fixing the world sounds terrifying, yes. Being softer and more aware of our place in it, though, might not only ease that thought, but it might even be the key to the solution.

Powers dutifully cites the greats, recalling everyone from Coates to Camus as figures that influenced his own transition into adulthood. He narrates his time at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson among resident artists who have mastered their crafts as tools for interpreting the world. But what lingers is not the tales of time spent within these authors’ and artists’ worlds — though they certainly don’t hurt. The real message lies in the lines to his daughter that reveal the intimate, vulnerable sides to the intergenerational exchanges occurring all over the world right now, and Amaya’s thoughtful, wise-beyond-her-years musings in return. *Ripple* uses the intimacy of correspondence to tackle enormous questions about inheritance, responsibility, and hope, inviting readers to sit and think alongside father and daughter, to change our minds without feeling lectured. Powers gives us words that take a millisecond to comprehend yet stick for days — that's because his advice is like other parental gems that become gospel, both hyper-personalized to Amaya and universally applicable. And children like Amaya show that Gen Z isn’t just listening, but responding with our own wisdom.

What struck me most was how Bill and Amaya navigate the tension between despair and action. They don't offer easy solutions to our "increasingly Separated world," as they call it, but rather model a way of thinking that acknowledges both the weight of what we're inheriting and the possibility of peaceful yet intentional response. Their meditative, probing reflections on past, present, and future felt like the kind of conversation I've been desperately seeking — one that doesn't minimize the scale of our challenges but also doesn't surrender to hopelessness. Powers emphasizes this again and again: “The decision to maintain inner peace no matter what happens may seem naive or weak, but it's a powerful rebellion.”

*Ripple* brought me the simultaneous relief and inspiring energy I didn't know I needed. In a summer when even my doctor couldn't help but acknowledge the crushing weight young people are carrying, Powers offers a different kind of medication: a framework for processing our inheritance without being paralyzed by it. This is a book I can see becoming a source of direction and contemplation for anyone grappling with how to pass the torch — or how to receive it — in times like these. For lovers of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, *Between the World and Me* or *Braiding Sweetgrass*: Powers' deft ability to uncover deeply spiritual truths from parental anecdotes and quiet observances from the natural world will resonate. For those who walk with the words of Thich Nhat Hanh or Thomas Merton in your footsteps, you can expect a similar attention to detail here as Powers marries modern moments with nods to ancient contemplative practices, making this book all the more necessary for those wishing to feel more grounded in today's world.

And for all parents and children and educators and mentors navigating the beautiful, terrifying work of growing up in — and growing into — a world that desperately needs tending: Powers reminds us that sometimes the most revolutionary act is learning to be still enough to hear what the earth, and each other, are trying to tell us.

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