

Midwest Writing Center

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THE
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

It's been nine summers since the Young Emerging Writers program was first introduced. In that time, we've welcomed over 75 interns into our ranks, many of whom participated in the program more than once. To look back on everything the program—and the many talented writers who make the program so outstanding—have accomplished, it feels to me like standing at the base of a mountain—impressive, breathtaking, but hard to take it all in when standing too close.

While it feels like I'm still standing too close to it to see it whole, I can say that from my perspective this is probably the most successful issue the YEW program has produced to date.

Of course, the success of this issue starts with the interns who created it. As with every issue of *The Atlas*, all of the content, the organization of the content, and the overall editorial perspective of the magazine comes entirely from the interns, who produce a stunning amount of quality work in just six weeks. This issue brings new elements to the magazine, including original photography and a travelogue. All the contributions in this issue demonstrate the craft, talent, and range of all of this year's terrific young writers.

Another important reason for the success of this issue is the amazing Skylar Alexander, who handled the production aspects of this issue—from the design and layout of the words and images you are about to experience, to enlisting a professional graphic designer, Cassie Wenger, to create our amazing cover. She is an incredible talent, both in her writing and her editorial/design efforts. Getting to work with her first as an intern, then as Editorial Director, and then as my friend, has been one of the great privileges of my creative life. Every year she has been involved with

Young Emerging Writers, the program has become stronger and more successful.

We also had the assistance of the terrific poet Joshua Caffrey, who spent many days in workshop groups helping these interns to hone their writing and elevate their work to places they would likely have not taken it without his insights and contributions. We also had visits from novelist/publisher Brian Krans and award-winning poet Adam Fell, who were generous to share their time, talents, and experiences with us. We also made use of a wealth of new equipment throughout the process (which we've documented and will soon release on the MWC website). I want to thank the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend for awarding MWC a Core Mission Grant, which has been, and will continue to be, a game changer for both YEW and the agency as a whole.

Next year will be the Young Emerging Writers Program's tenth anniversary, and we plan to celebrate mightily; we'll be expanding the program, inviting past interns to contribute new work, hosting more performances—and doing more everything. And while ten years feels like summiting the mountain to some people, in reality it's just sitting atop a single peak within a vast, beautiful range that all of us have contributed to and will continue to climb and explore for as long as we put our pens to paper, our fingers to keys, our attention to the world and to our imaginations.

Sincerely,

RC

Ryan Collins
Managing Editor

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ARS POETICA

STEPHANIE KONRADY

Poetry is chex mix in motion.
It's the bowl of chex mix at a party,
with everyone's hand dipped in.

Fiction is trail mix in the bowl next door.
It has slightly different flavors,
but just as much variety and just as many hands.

Language and literature are the packages
with their products clearly marked: Art.
They sit on shelves and label calories and
nutrients that feed and fatten the soul.

A writer is the guest at the party, who,
if they don't behave, are repeatedly
invited back. Guests stay longer
in the mind and memory if they're told the
rules, but have abandoned them.

A TEMPORARY POEM

ABIGAIL MORROW

Nobody knows what Latin sounds like anymore.
This is because language, like all things most human,
Is as fleeting as the lives of the mayflies that come in June.
It is fitting, therefore, that the parts of us that last the longest
Are the least important.
Dust to dust,
Ashes to ashes,
Our celestial minds are returned unceremoniously to the mud
we once welled up from—
And for naught.
If I am starstuff, let me join my brethren
In the shadow of the suns.
Let me stretch my arms across the world.
Let me breathe in the places of nothing and no one.
But let the hearts and minds of the children of the universe be
reminded:
There is no such thing as immortality,
And the universe, like this poem,
Is infinitely temporary.