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Letter from Editor

Patrick Kay

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There's a two-story Barnes & Noble in Pineville. The ground floor is coffee table books, calendars, discounted paperback collections, and those soulless-eyed Funko Pop dolls created for any and all mass media enterprises. The elevator goes up to the fiction, the prose, the literary classics. The stuff you're taught in school. To the left, as you ascend, is a mural over the bookstore's internal Starbucks. It puts all the greats of Western literature in one room together: Eliot, Faulkner, Melville, the like. Maybe a Woolf or a Neruda thrown in for good measure. I believe the intended effect is for me to get excited, for me to be carried in to the great golden castle of literary significance and, I don't know, give Barnes & Noble more money. On one hand I get very excited at the mention of these names. On the other, well.

There's an inherent self-defeatism in young college students. I don't really blame anyone for it. You go from being the best reader and best writer in class to grappling with ancient texts and realizing that you've been formatting MLA incorrectly all your life. And then some day, maybe, you ride up that elevator and see that mural and decide to not submit to your college literary magazine because you were expecting to be the best poet in the world but the competition inside of your mind has ballooned to include all the dead Modernists. One can wait a lifetime to reach artistic perfection but even that perfection isn't fully achieved until a hundred years after death and two hundred JSTOR articles. All those legends of old, the mythological heroes of this incredibly short span of time, were the same as me. Just spewing out their sappy bullshit to local publications and saying "Well, I'm no Shakespeare."

More than one of your professors was published in the Anthology. Did you know that? You can embarrass them if you dig far enough. One past editor is a Pulitzer Prize finalist. That's really good. Someone in the hundred-year history of the Anthology will be taught in a class someday. And then maybe some other student from some other university will come make his pilgrimage to my office and ask to see the original copy in its original printed form, tenderly turning each page with reverence. Then through the grapevine I'll hear about the story and laugh to myself because all the Anthology is is a small publication at a small school and all I did for it was yell obnoxiously to kids about submitting. Every year it ends up inadvertently more than that, though. It's a holy book to someone, even if that someone's your mom.

It has been an absolute pleasure to serve on the Anthology staff for the past three years. I've learned a lot, sure, but more importantly I've seen my peers improve their work year after year. What starts as pretty-good-for-an-eighteen-year-old grows into excellent, grows into legitimate favorites on par with any legendary figure. I'm so proud of Connie and Laurie for their contributions to the Anthology over the years and it's been amazing to watch their writing get better



every time. Kelsey designed our issue this year; during her interview I was upset that her mockup examples were so great without me even seeing her growth and being able to appreciate it more. If you think Craig's art and Jami's poetry are good in this issue I hope you stick around, because it's only going to get better. Fake it till you make it, right? I kept badgering people about submissions and then got what I asked for in spades.

My sincerest hope is that one day when I ride up an elevator to the literary classics and look left to a mural, I'll recognize a friend. I'll beam, get shy, look down, try to maintain a cool demeanor. I won't turn to the nearest stranger and tug on their elbow, desperate for an excuse to say "Did you know I know them?" I'll keep it to myself because I'll be leaving the store soon, after all, and those friends are patiently waiting for me at home.

Patrick Kay
Editor-in-Chief