



## Calliope (1954-2001)

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Volume 1971 *Calliope Manuscript Day 1971: i don't think i'm anybody's thursday someone's saving me for a rainy day*

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Article 2

1971

### Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Woods, John (1971) "Introduction," *Calliope (1954-2001)*: Vol. 1971 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/calliope/vol1971/iss1/2>

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In the past few years, national and local institutions interested in helping young writers have extended their concern from the university to the secondary schools.

The National Endowment for the Arts, a tax-supported institution, has initiated and financed a number of programs. As is usually the case, the performing arts have received the most attention; but creative writing, that solitary and often invisible activity, has also been supported.

Four or five years ago, a "Poetry in the Schools" program was started in inner city high schools and junior highs in New York and Detroit. This concept spread rapidly, so that many states, including Michigan, have brought practicing poets and other writers, many of national reputation, into the classroom and community.

These brief exposures to the writer and his writing have had mixed results, of course; but more often than not they have started or intensified a real excitement in the making of poems, stories, and plays.

Some otherwise turned-off students have been brought to life by these encounters; and those who had already begun to write have felt that the gap between their own work and the sanctified poem in the text was not as wide as they had thought.

Many students, talented or not, have learned that the poem or story emerged, however obliquely, from the daily concerns of a living person. They will probably not read a poem quite the same again.

Manuscript Day was planned to expand, in a way, on the possibilities of the student-author encounter by focussing more attention on the writing itself than is generally possible in the whirlwind appearance of the visiting writer.

When a young student begins to write, in a country generally indifferent to language, he first needs sympathetic support. Later, if he is to develop his skills, he needs practical criticism as well.

We cannot make too large a claim here. The "workshop" approach, where the student's writing is the subject of often heated discussion, yields its values slowly. A certain trust must

be earned by each writer-critic. Each student must overcome a natural defensiveness and learn what in his writing is worth defending, or, better, what in his writing defends itself. The workshop is simply the beginning of the individual's struggle between objectivity and subjectivity which is the basis of creative work.

Those of us at Western who have been involved with Manuscript Day, now in its second year, are amazed all over again by the quality and quantity of the writing being done in the schools. From this little corner of Michigan, we are pleased to welcome nearly 350 students and their teachers from about 45 schools. Some students, such as Judy Pattullo and Patrick Rode (9th grade!) are already accomplished writers.

This book is a collection of some of the best work submitted to the second annual Manuscript Day, Dec. 1, 1971. No one knows where circumstances will lead these young writers, but we welcome them to an uncommon cause and wish them well.

—John Woods  
for the Manuscript Day Staff