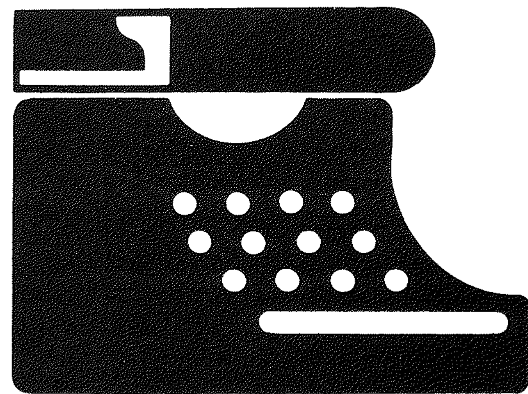
Teachers & Writers



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Special Issue!

THE SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE

THIS ISSUE OF *TEACHERS & WRITERS* MAGAZINE focuses on the school literary magazine, in particular the high school literary magazine. In the first article, "Consciousness and Community," I talk about how students can expand their own literary awareness and create a larger audience for their work and their magazine. I also discuss some of the best high school magazines I've read over the past year.

Ed Sullivan contributes a piece that outlines the history of the high school magazine, describes what it is today, and offers guidelines for how the magazine can accomplish its goals. David Shapiro, in addition to contributing a memoir of his high school literary days and a poem from way back, also offers some advice to advisers. It's interesting to note not only how Sullivan and Shapiro agree but also where they sharply differ. Katherine Koch discusses the art and design of a number of magazines offering observations on what works and what doesn't. A number of T&W writers discuss their own high school magazine experiences, in school and out. There's a piece on T&W school anthologies. They're not the same as literary magazines, and I thought they would serve as an interesting contrast. Pat Padgett has prefaced her brief selection of anthology poems. Finally, we have included a list of resources mentioned in the issue.

—*Mark Statman, Guest Editor*

MARK STATMAN, guest editor for this issue, is a poet and fiction writer who has worked in the T&W program for the past two years. His writing has appeared in *Pacific Review*, the *National Poetry Magazine of the Lower East Side*, *Architectures*, and the *Village Voice*.

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CONSCIOUSNESS & COMMUNITY
Uses of the School Literary Magazine

by Mark Statman

SOMETHING I'VE NOTICED WHEN TEACHING, reading literary magazines, or talking with student writers and teachers is how they aren't very conscious of literary history, how they don't feel connected to contemporary writing. These young writers and teachers all want to be good writers, good teachers of writing, but except for the visiting writers in the schools and what appears in school magazines and textbooks, too often they're unaware of what's happened and happening in literature. This leads to a dullness, a thinness in their work. While the writers and teachers may think they're entering new territory, they aren't.

The process of getting one's work more involved with the world and the world of literature is a fundamental part of growing as a writer. It's important to see one's own personal project of writing as being connected to a larger project, which countless people have been and are engaged in. What follows are some practical suggestions for bringing this about. They're suggestions for magazine staffs in particular, but they can also be used in the classroom or adapted for individuals writing alone.

Staff Meetings as Seminars

Most school literary magazines come out once a year. Staffs usually meet weekly to discuss the work submitted. But do they really get that many contributions that every moment needs to be spent on evaluating/accepting/rejecting? Not usually. So instead, I encourage staffs to use staff meetings as a time for talking about literature. Develop, for example, a kind of literary historical agenda. How many students really know who comes between Shakespeare and Eliot? What happens in the transition from the Romantics to the moderns, between Wordsworth and Williams? Portion out a literary anthology, such as the *Norton Anthology of Poetry,* and have people talk about different periods and poets.

To get a sense of what's going on in the 1980s, staffs can subscribe to contemporary magazines (*The Paris Review, Poetry,* and *Sulfur* are three that represent decidedly different editorial sensibilities). Talk about what's going on there, how are these poets being interesting, challenging. Is there anything inspiring in the work, anything the students might want to use in their own writing? And having done this, go further. See if poetry and fiction can be tied into other artistic forms (music, film, and video, for example). One of the biggest breakthroughs I made was understanding how to use what I knew about punk music and video technique in my own fiction.

Another thing one can try is asking various teachers (English and others) to give short talks to magazine staff on writers and themes the teachers may be particularly interested in. Very often teachers have studied writers and books that don't get taught in school. You can ask them to prepare reading lists or outlines ahead of time so there can be good questions and discussions.

Readings and Writing Workshops

A complaint I often hear from magazine staff members and writers is that they are considered snobs and elitists. I hear that no one else cares about what they do, that there really is no audience in the school for them.

The truth is that, usually, these people are right. But I don't think this is a situation one has to put up with. It's hard, but it isn't impossible, to build a literary community. Public readings and writing workshops are direct ways for exposing the school to literature, for making literature a part of school life. Some ideas for readings:

- Bring in professional poets and writers to give readings at least once or twice a year. For a pretty reasonable fee, poets are usually happy to do this and they're often willing to give writing workshops as part of this event. Poets & Writers has a listing of writers all over the country who could be available for this, and many state arts councils sponsor such readings and workshops.
- Hold readings once every month or so for contributors (and even non-contributors) to the magazine. These should mainly be students, but teachers who write should be encouraged to read as well. You can get three or four people to read, usually for ten or fifteen minutes each. It's always possible to find people who write and would want to read but who haven't been involved with the magazine. By including these people, one expands the community a bit, especially since these people may bring other people along with them, out of interest or curiosity. Student readings are particularly good for giving writers a sense of community, the feeling that people "out there" really are getting to know their work.
- Have exchange readings with other schools; often there's more than one school in the district with a magazine. Go into the community itself: organize a large group reading at a school and include writers from every school in the district.
- Encourage student writers to go to readings both in the school and the community. For big-city schools these are usually pretty easy to find, but any community near a college or university should have a fair number of readings.

Some ideas for writing workshops:

- As stated above, ask a poet or writer to give a workshop along with a reading.
- Hold writing workshops throughout the year, organized by the staff and led by teachers, selected student writers, parents, and so on. These are very easy to organize and can become part of staff meetings. All you need to do is get people together, suggest a theme, an idea, a form,

and let everybody go. Because everyone writes about similar things, this can lead to discussions about how each person felt, what challenged them, how different problems were solved, and so on.

Other ideas for expanding into the school community can include that of collaborations. Let musicians/composers and writers collaborate on works. These can then be performed for the school as part of regularly scheduled music performances. If there are playwrights in the school, encourage them to work with actors on plays in progress. The chance to have readings of a work in this way is extremely beneficial to the writer, and it gives student actors a greater sense of how plays are built. Later these same actors can perform a play they had a chance to help create. Other collaborations are also possible: poetry books with painters, poetry videos with video artists, etc.

What all this means, quite simply, is developing an atmosphere in which people are talking to each other about what they are doing all the time. In this atmosphere people can remain enthusiastic and inspired and feel that there is always a challenging support group, and a knowledgeable one at that, available.

How important is all this, these meetings, these readings? Very. They force the staff, the school, and the writers to develop a consciousness that is literary, yes, but also more complete, more about people talking to each other and getting to know and understand each other.

These meetings and readings prevent complacency, the "oh, we're the literary magazine, of course we know what poetry is" attitude because they force the writers and staff into the never-ending process of searching, questioning, defining, and growing. This means not only does everybody become more aware of what they are doing, but they also become more aware of what others are trying to do.

This awareness changes the way staff members read new manuscripts. When people submit their manuscripts, staff members become involved in a dramatic process. Here is this work. It has to be read. If someone thought it was important enough to write and then submit, it automatically becomes important enough to consider.

Work has to be read consciously and with a conscience. It has to be read fairly. Naturally there are limitations. Staff members have to decide what kind of work they are interested in. But note, *they have to.* Even before they consider specific work, staff must arrive at some sense of their editorial principles, based on their understanding of literature, the school, and the community. Questions have to be raised. What do you print, the work that is best or the work that best represents the school? What procedures will you establish for evaluating work? For suggesting revision?

Censorship is another issue. What do you do about controversial material, pornography, or poems in favor of apartheid? Are you ready to handle the issues? Can the staff communicate with itself and the writers? Does the staff know enough about what it wants, to know what doesn't belong?

These are not easy questions. But given an environment in which such questions are seen as literary requirements, the possibilities increase enormously that someone, maybe everyone, will figure out what to do. And the school magazine will be stronger for that resolve.

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The sense of consciousness and conscience, a sense of commitment to the various possibilities for the magazine, can be seen in examples from all over the country. Because a magazine publishes work that has not been produced specifically for it (as opposed to the stories and articles in the school newspaper or yearbook), the thing I'm most interested in is how staffs are able to produce an aesthetically coherent publication while representing so many different individual artists.

Of the 200 or so high school magazines I read a year, I have selected the following three to talk about not because they are necessarily the "best," but because I think they represent some of what the best kinds of magazines have to offer. The final feeling one gets from reading these three is that one has read a constructed publication that shows careful thinking about the best way to reach an audience. There is a reason why one piece is in one place, another piece next to it, another a page later, and so on, just as one line in a good poem inevitably follows another.

The 1986 *Heritage,* from James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia, was edited by Liz Shura and advised by Bernis von zur Muehlen. I'm impressed by its quiet, attractive design: simple graphics, attractive page designs, and balanced spreads. There is also balance in terms of the verbal content. The stress is on personal experiences, inner psychological exploration. There's a lot of poetry, some of it formally innovative, some fiction that is fairly conventional in form but very strong on descriptive writing, character and character development, and a witty, anti-academic critical essay.

The 1986 *Eyrie,* from East Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, was edited by Mark Lewis and advised by Jean Jarrell. It is very exciting visually, due to its sophisticated use of typography, graphics, and the same kind of aesthetic of excessiveness one finds in "new wave" art publications or in *The Face* magazine. Its contents are varied, ranging from some very contemporary poetry and experimental fiction to an interview/photo essay with a math teacher and several art portfolios. More than most other magazines, *Eyrie* seems to concern itself with work that is politically and socially conscious (poverty, nuclear weapons, war, and peace), work related to a larger world beyond the school and the immediate community.

The *Poly Arts Journal* from Polytechnic Preparatory Country Day School in Brooklyn, New York, looks like the more professional, conservative literary journals. Unlike *Eyrie* and *Heritage* (which are 8½ x 11"), the *Journal* is 5½ x 8½". The design is fairly straightforward, letting the poem, story or visual element speak for itself. The movement of the magazine is linear, each work seeming to inform the one that follows it. For example, a surreal work of fiction leads into a surreal horror story that leads into a horror story of insanity that leads into a narrative about feeling cut off from humanity while walking around New York City. The final piece seems to accumulate additional dimensions by coming after all the previous works. The tone of the *Journal* is much more literary than the other two magazines: the fiction seems consciously modernist, while the poetry uses both open and closed forms. There is also a translation of a Jimenez poem and the reproduction of a student's musical score.

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THE SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINE

History, Form, & Function

by Edmund J. Sullivan

SCHOOL LITERARY MAGAZINES IN THE UNITED States date back to the first half of the 19th century. Today they are flourishing, though nobody really knows how many magazines there are in secondary schools in the United States. Estimates range as high as 10,000, but an educated guess puts the total at 5,000. Each year the National Council of Teachers of English evaluates about 1,000 magazines from high schools across the country.

A brief history

The earliest known student publication in America was an underground newspaper published at the Friends Latin School (now the William Penn Charter School) during the British occupation of Philadelphia in 1777. It ceased publication several issues later.

The first magazine known to be published in an American secondary school was *The Literary Journal* of the Boston Latin School in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1829. More than 130 other student magazines began regular publication before 1900. These early magazines offered short articles and news briefs written by students about their fellow students. For this reason, they were called "general" magazines, in contrast to the more specifically literary magazines that succeeded them. Some literary material, such as short poems, was included in these 19th-century magazines. Poetry and short fiction were just as often included in annuals, as yearbooks were then known, which began publication after the Civil War.

During the 1920s, the general magazine faded in importance as the student newspaper grew in popularity. Newspapers took over the function of reporting on events and activities. Annuals combined portrait photography and capsule summaries to highlight the year in review. Almost by default, the general magazines of the 1920s became the literary magazines of the 1930s and 1940s. Poetry and short stories, plus an occasional essay or two, became their staple fare.

Between World Wars I and II the average number of years of formal schooling (including college) for the American white male increased from eight to twelve. Many more Americans completed high school during the 1930s than in the previous decade, partly because there were fewer full-time jobs for them than in more prosperous times.

Because more students stayed in high school for longer periods of time, and because of sweeping changes in the thinking of leading philosophers of education, such as John Dewey, high school came to be seen as places where more than just the three R's were to be taught. Many student activities previously viewed as strictly extracurricular were incorporated into the school program as officially recognized (i.e., sponsored) school projects. Among them were student publications such as newspapers, yearbooks, and magazines.

Perhaps more than newspapers or yearbooks, magazines came to be seen as an extension of the English curriculum. While the other two types of student publications published nonfiction accounts of events and activities of interest to students, the literary magazines devoted themselves to poetry, short fiction, and some essays, the writing of which was taught in regular English classes. Thus, although it doesn't always work out this way, literary magazines have enjoyed a potentially more regular source of contributions than have newspapers or yearbooks, which use a specialized, journalistic format.

With the widespread use of offset printing in the 1950s and 1960s, most literary magazines expanded to literary-art magazines. Offset printing permitted cheaper yet better quality reproduction of pen-and-ink drawings and other line art as well as the use of color. Some schools assigned an art teacher to work with the English teacher as advisers to a joint showcase for student writing and art.

Whom does the school literary magazine serve?

Ideally, the literary magazine should serve the entire school population: students foremost, but also faculty, staff, parents, and other members of the community. Unfortunately, in some schools the magazine becomes something of a stepchild of the English department, depending solely on creative writing classes for its submissions. Other schools insist on an entirely "open" process of soliciting submissions from all members of the school population. This enlarges, at least theoretically, the potential pool of talented contributors.

Staff clearly benefit, both as individuals and as a group, from a magazine whose quality is recognized as superior. This generally requires a decent budget, dedicated editors, and an adviser whose talent lies in advising, one who knows the difference between teaching students what to do as opposed to doing it for them. Such a magazine should have a budget sufficient to print a reasonable number of its submissions in a decent format. It needs editors who are both highly motivated and sufficiently organized to recruit staff, to evaluate contributions, and to coordinate design and production tasks. Finally, the superior literary magazine needs an interested and sympathetic teacher as adviser. The adviser must be prepared to coach the staff from the sidelines, when they need it, while keeping the editors' sights on the twin goals of editorial excellence and creative expression.

How the magazine serves its readers is a question that elicits considerable debate, particularly when a magazine prints something that offends the taste of some of its readers.

EDMUND J. SULLIVAN is the director of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association and the editor of *The School Press Review*.

Some readers are more concerned about explicit references to sexuality than others, though the battles of the 1970s over the inclusion of four-letter words seem to have subsided. Graphic depictions of the use of controlled substances have given way to concerns of the 1980s: the nuclear freeze issue, high-tech vs. high touch. These changes remind us that the magazines are always the province of their student authors and editors: it is their issues, their concerns, their troubles that will come out in this format.

Besides the topical issues of the day, student literary magazines continue to reflect the passage of their contributors and their audience through adolescence. In particular, poetry is susceptible to three recurrent themes: love, death, and loneliness. Some editors lose count of the number of poems they print on these themes; their magazines lose their balance by concentrating on these poems to the exclusion of others.

What is its purpose?

Perhaps the two most important functions of the literary-art magazine are to provide a showcase for the schools' English and art curricula and to offer talented students an early opportunity to be published. The connection with the English and art curricula in some schools produces many potential contributions. If these are actively sought out, evaluated fairly, and edited properly, the resulting magazine should be an accurate reflection of both the native talent in the school population and the accomplished teaching which has trained that talent. Often, a well-done student magazine summarizes the best of the English and art curricula in a school during the year.

The early opportunity for student writers and artists to be published not only builds the confidence of these students, it exposes them to critical reactions from readers and, perhaps more interestingly, from themselves.

How should it accomplish all of this?

To be a showcase and an early opportunity to publish, the literary-art magazine needs to seek submissions as widely as possible within the school community, concentrating particularly on students, but not ignoring the occasional contribution—clearly identified as such—from a faculty member or other school personnel. Since the magazine represents, at least partly, the combined work of a community of writers and artists, it should seek out members of that community wherever they may be.

Diversity of genre is also important. It is relatively easy to find short fiction and poetry and even plays in abundance in the usual high school community. Students sometimes produce well-written essays, interviews, and other nonfiction pieces for the literary-art magazine, work that a truly superior magazine will include.

Art often consists entirely of line art (pen-and-ink illustrations), though sometimes charcoal or watercolors are published. More photography has been included in recent years, due to cheaper methods of offset printing.

What is the role of the faculty adviser?

The magazine adviser should be a teacher who can be an effective catalyst, an organized leader, and a sympathetic but tough critic. Though student editors should do the actual editing, they usually need to be taught the mechanics of the editing process. A fair evaluation procedure—such as a "blind" judging with names removed from manuscripts or artwork—must be devised by the editors, with some guidance. The staff must be urged to look for contributors beyond an "in-group" or self-styled elite. These tasks need an adviser as catalyst—one who begins the chain reaction or who prompts it to get started again when it falters or stumbles.

The adviser must help the editors set realistic deadlines, enforce them in a reasonable way, and make certain the editing and production proceeds according to schedule, particularly if the magazine is an after-school project. The adviser should be capable of helping to structure the editing process to permit publication by year's end.

Finally, the staff—both contributors and editors—need a sympathetic but constructive critic on several levels. Contributors need helpful criticism with their pieces when revisions are necessary. Some balance needs to be struck between verbal and visual content, if the magazine includes both. Though the editors should make the final decision, the adviser needs to keep their view firmly focused on fairly evaluating submissions and firmly adhering to essential deadlines.

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From *By Seven Singing Willows* (Bronxville Elementary School, Bronxville, N.Y., anthology, 1930): linoleum block print by 5th-grade girl.

MASCARA, MOTOWN, & THE WHITE DOVE REVIEW

by Mark Statman

WHEN I ASKED SOME OF THE WRITERS WHO work with T&W about their experiences with their high school magazines, the responses were varied. For some people the magazine meant nothing (some schools didn't even have them), for others it was major or minor or somewhere in between. A number of people noted that they did write in high school but not for the magazine; it was the newspaper or the yearbook that took their time. In any case, almost everyone "back then" was writing something.

Barbara Danish (writer): I was on the staff of my high school literary magazine. I seem to remember thoroughly goofing off. The one incident I remember is receiving a story which had as its point revenge against the faculty adviser. At the end of the story she was found dead, plastered to the bottom of a car. This was discovered when the mechanic put the car up on a lift to see what was making thumping sounds. Should we publish the story was our concern.

The strange thing is I don't really know *why* I was there. I can't imagine it had anything to do with continuing writing (at the time I was mainly writing in my journal and writing poems in history class where I daydreamed the period away).

I remember one thing—a poem on pennies—and how they had been touched by countless people and been to countless places. At the time, *I think,* it struck me as a very interesting thought. Now I think about how literary magazines are filled with the observations of young poets that advisers and adult readers probably need to pay attention to or at least I need to.

Sheryl Noethe (poet): No, I had nothing to do with it. I was off smoking cigs in the girl's bathroom and putting on mascara—just didn't have time for much else.

Geri Lipschultz (poet): I was an unwitting contributor in high school. They ripped through my poems and stories and I found their tampering a drag. A lot of ego in the "literary powerhouses" of my high school classes. I never felt like one, never thought for a second I'd end up a writer in the world.

They took a line from one of my poems and threw it on the cover of the lit mag with my name misspelled next to it. The line went something like this: "An image captures a moment's notice/ but a lifetime's pose." I remember what I thought it meant when I wrote it and it was a really different thing to me when I looked at it several years ago. Somehow I think I was playing with a more profound thought than was ever present in my conscious mind. I am aware that my students are probably not aware of the great gifts of profundity that their subconscious dreams up for them, but I sometimes try to show them why a particular line of theirs is pungent.

Adele Slaughter (poet): If you can believe it, my high school did not have a high school mag. But I was the editor of the yearbook (next best thing?). I became the editor of the college magazine, *Calvert,* at the University of Maryland. Both of these experiences were a part of why I am writing today. There was *no* literary community in my high school. I was deprived.

Michael Schwartz (poet): The high school literary magazine at my high school was called *The Introspect* and it was very serious and uncool. I submitted some stuff I had written for my Creative Writing elective class which was taught by the magazine's adviser. I can't remember what got in.

I was co-editor in chief of the Beachwood High *Beachcomber.* Some highlights of this experience: Watergate-era style "investigative journalism" about impropriety and scandal in the senior class fundraiser, the strongarm techniques of ad selling by the yearbook, the principal's no bathroom door policy to discourage smoking and getting high, and the demotion of the music teacher to the middle school. We were generally tactless, irresponsible, and inaccurate.

Also, I wrote feature articles on stories around the school that seemed interesting to me—Bryan Fischer's wrestling trip to Iran (we didn't know anything about Iran then), Laure Miller's national achievements as a ping pong player. I wrote opinionated descriptions of policy changes in the school under the pretense that they were news stories written under a byline. We did a parody issue of our paper that was a crowning achievement because we got to see people enjoying it all over the school on the day it came out. I got to watch Sharon Tepper repeating something I had written under an alias to Marci Jacober and laughing and I felt like a ghost going through the library and the world, invisible, the thoughts of my mind shared with hundreds of people, virtually everyone in the school. I felt like a secret participant for one of the few times in my high school life. I think this experience helped me decide that I wanted to be a writer, although at the time I thought I wanted to be a newspaper feature writer.

Howard Senzel (fiction writer): I was an alienated high school student and had nothing to do with anything official or school sponsored. I thought that everything that had to do with high school was bullshit. My decision to dedicate my life to writing came at the age of thirty-three.

Gary Lenhart (poet and associate director of T&W): I never contributed to or read my high school magazine, considering it the bailiwick of a coterie of girls who read J. D. Salinger and flipped over the Beatles. My friends listened to Motown and if they read anything they kept it to themselves. I discovered recently that T&W's Nancy Larson Shapiro, Dale Wors-

ley, and Mark Statman were sports editors of their high school newspapers. So was I. It used to be that sports writers were conscious stylists and wise guys.

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I received these responses by mail. But perhaps the most unusual response I got came from Ron Padgett, who responded live. In the T&W office one day I asked him about his high school magazine. Ron sort of frowned and thought for a second and said something like you know I don't think there was one in my school. Then, after a couple of seconds of more frowning and thinking, he added, "But I did start my own magazine back then."

A few days later Ron handed me *The White Dove Review* (1959-60). Later, when I glanced through its five issues, I found the work of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Creeley, LeRoi Jones, and Gregory Corso, some of the most important American writers of the past quarter century. I also found the work of Tulsa writers, such as college student Ted Berrigan and the three editors, Ron, Dick Gallup, and Joe Brainard, all of whom became figures on the New York scene in the 1960s. It was all a little weird, to say the least. I mean, I'd asked Ron for something about his high school experiences in Tulsa in the late fifties and he'd handed me back what looked like a major literary experience.

Ron agreed that it was an unusual magazine, although he hadn't thought much about it at the time. "It all seemed normal to me. I just assumed people all over the country were doing the same thing."

It had started very simply. "I was working in a bookstore in Tulsa, 1958, and I was sixteen. I'd just discovered little magazines because the bookstore where I worked carried the *Evergreen Review*. It had contributor's notes that named a lot of other magazines, and I'd see ads for some, like *Yugen*, edited by LeRoi Jones. So I subscribed to *Yugen* and it led to others. I saw how simply produced they were and this led to the idea that I and my friends could do it too.

The original plan had been to do it through the high school as a school literary magazine. The school liked the idea, and Ron would have been able to have it printed on the school system press, but when he found out it would have meant a faculty adviser with veto power and that the school could control content, he backed out.

"We went to a local printer. It was cleaner that way. We wrote begging letters to writers we admired: Jack Kerouac, Paul Blackburn, Clarence Major, Allen Ginsberg. Allen was really helpful. He led us to other writers: Peter Orlovsky, Corso, Bob Creeley, Gilbert Sorrentino. LeRoi Jones was helpful too. You know, it was funny, the way they responded to these letters from some high school kids in Oklahoma."

"We wrote to E. E. Cummings, too. He sent us a postcard that said, 'Can you guarantee to provide proof after proof after proof until I approve?' Of course we couldn't wait, and I told him so. Imagine that."

The point of the magazine wasn't really to get big names, though. "As we grew, we printed more local poets. I liked that. We stayed true to who we were as opposed to pretending we were some New York magazine, which we couldn't have been."

"The whole enterprise shows we had enough blind faith to bring it off. We were just kids but we thought we were quite sophisticated. Anyway, I think the whole thing was great. I learned a lot from doing the *White Dove Review*. I learned about proofreading, dealing with angry authors, making a page clean and attractive, ordering half-tones, blow-ups, reductions, and type, doing paste-up, and making a balanced issue."

I asked Ron if there was anything of his in the magazine that we could reprint. He laughed. "Are you kidding? This stuff is strictly documentary now." But I pointed out a poem I liked. One of his. The last poem in the final issue. He looked at it and thought for a second. "All right. But you have to add that the author now thinks the last two lines are a disaster." He stopped. "But you know, the poem isn't *that* bad for a seventeen-year-old self."

6th Street Noon

the girl
in the street
head high
hair combed up
in back, the mist
from her mouth
like delicate stars
her hips vague
and gentle
under the tan
raincoat.

a leaf
late in winter.

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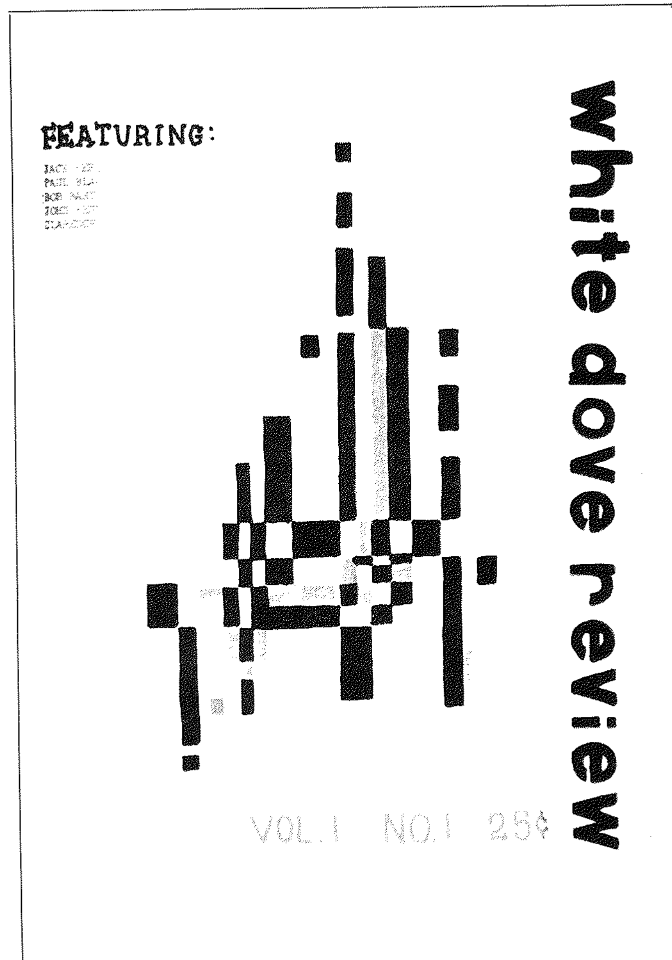

ERGO & EGO

High School Poetry, Newark, N.J., 1961-64

by David Shapiro

MAGAZINES HAVE NEVER BEEN MY FORTE. Looking back at my failure as a non-editor, I learn a lot by thinking about my experiences in school, where some of my fundamentally comic and skeptical attitude toward magazines and literary circles and coteries and cliques and cabals and clubs must have been formed.

Throughout my adolescence, to prove to my father, in part, that there was some merit in my slowly giving up a career as a violinist for that of writer, I was unusually interested in sending off my poems to magazines. These magazines, *Antioch Review, Kenyon, Sewanee, Minnesota,* etc. were mostly boring and even then repugnant to an aesthetic built up by my reading of the French Symbolists and Rilke, but I did think it would be wonderful to be published therein. By 1959, I had only been published by my mother's friend Arthur Markowitz in *The South Africa Jewish News,* but my appetite had been whetted. I also produced in mimeographed form—with my father's machinery at Bristol-Myers, where he practised as a dermatologist-consultant—little books of my own poetry. I wasn't too impressed by the production values of these early books, and I think it is because of my disdain for the mimeo format that later I underestimated the impact of certain little magazines such as *C* or *Floating Bear.* I found them a little careless and funny and infantile in form.

In grammar school, there were no magazines, so my own little production of books had to suffice. I also received long generous letters from John Ciardi, because I had rained down sentimental poems on his head. He responded with letters of advice. At this time, I was composing music and songs, string quartets, and poetry. The *Antioch Review* finally accepted a poem, "Sparrow," when I entered high school.

DAVID SHAPIRO's most recent book of poetry is *To an Idea* (Overlook/Viking). A new book, *House Blown Apart,* will appear this year.

Therefore, when I did attend the first meetings of the Weequahic High School literary magazine, named *Ergo,* I had a certain petty and loutish disdain for everyone on the board, including my sister, since I knew *she* didn't write poetry. To me, it was all a little like tedious English class. At any rate, though at first I despised most of the writers, I was accepted as a more-than-mascot and published. Later that first year, I got to know a couple of other students who were writing interesting poetry.

Looking at the first issue of *Ergo* from January 1961 (my freshman year) I note the following: Marc Zimetbaum, a painter who dated my sister and whose father had known Jackson Pollock, contributed a recklessly general editorial, like so many I penned later. The influence of the "Beat Generation" is seen in a first poem by Paul Gabriner, who loved Gerard Manley Hopkins and had a delicate declamatory style that annoyed me. His poem is entitled, "Song of the New Bohemian," and is accompanied by a rather glib ink caricature of a typical bearded bohemian as mediated by *Time* and *Life.* Gabriner's elegant disdain for all this is glimpsed in his last couplet, which I despised: "There's no need now our love to subvert./ We've both converted to Zen and dirt." Already, by 1961, I had been converted by Donald Allen's anthology *The New American Poetry: 1945-1960,* to a love for Olson, Duncan, Ashbery, O'Hara and Ginsberg, and I was known in my last days in school as the "Beat Prophet," because I played drums in outdoor improvisational happenings (where I screamed bad poetry to my own music and recited "The Waste Land" by heart to bored if astonished friends). In this first issue, I published a number of poems I had written at about age thirteen, some under the influence of Williams, and some influenced in part by translations from the Japanese and by the anthologies of Valéry and Baudelaire. I notice a bad "Tanka" included in all this and a poem, political and anxious, about the apartheid that my mother spent a lot of her life in South Africa *and* Newark fighting against.

I note in a later *Ergo* magazine (an issue I edited) that a line from Rimbaud is used as the epigraph for the issue, that illustrations are dominantly abstract expressionist. I also note that *Davar*, which I edited in 1964 for the local YMHA, has almost no illustrations and a special series of poems by my friend Joe Ceravolo. The Jewish theme has been permitted to lapse and most of all there is an emphasis on poetry. I had eradicated the usual high school naturalist short story and a number of my friends now wrote under the motley influence of the New York School, Stevens, Rilke, Tu Fu, and Pound.

What did I learn by editing my high school magazine and the YMHA *Davar*? That I could become friendly with fellow poets and artists, that a competitive spirit would be constant but not killing, and that one could hardly ever create a decent magazine inside an academic institution surrounded by advisors. I liked the "party" atmosphere of certain meetings in my basement and I still miss those days in which just one high school girl seemed as significant as Dante's Beatrice or Guido's shepherdess or Pound's shopkeeper resting against a wall.

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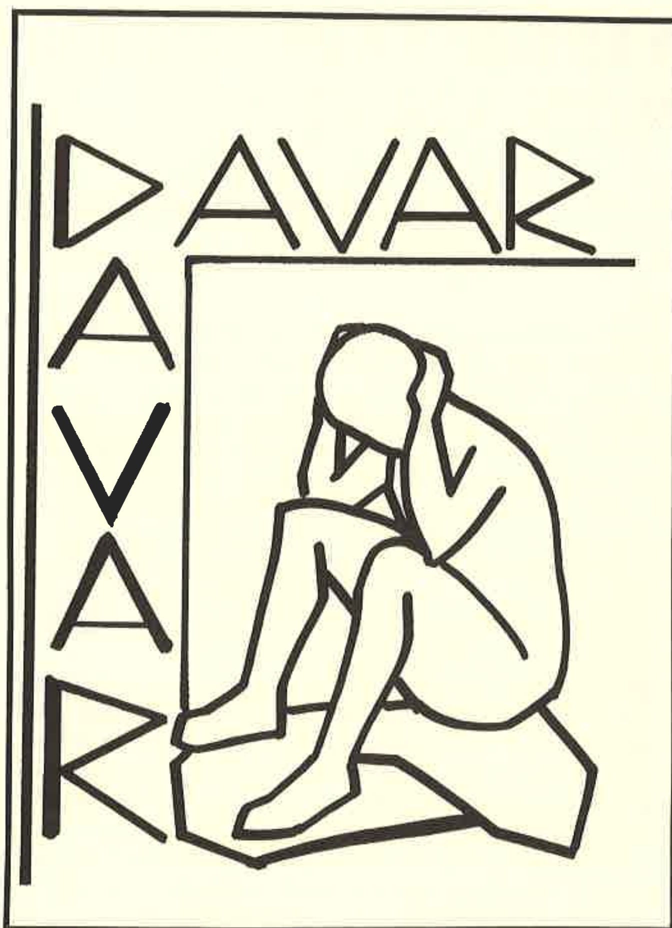
"In a High School Auditorium" is a bad academic poem I wrote in high school. A leader of the local SANE antinuclear group asked me to write a poem about nuclear shelters. At about this time, many speakers on the subject would come and harangue us in the big Weequahic auditorium. The poem is an unappealing amalgamation of Richard Eberhardt, William Carlos Williams, etc. But it is a "period piece" in its apocalyptic anger and domesticity: high school by a high school student.

In a High School Auditorium

The week is not green; I listen
insecurely to a speaker
in the auditorium of a high school.
Because the man is offended,
he is not difficult to hear
for isolate students in the hall.
He is the recurrent man of
preparation, but this week
something in that story overthrows
the accent of usefulness.
It could be more appealing to have
someone eat pears on stage
than listen to the speaker without hair
contented to tell us to prepare
because he cannot see the blood leaves
falling from the maple-trees.
Now I know who the male figure is
suddenly suspended over this hall.
I would like to blacken
his small hands with a student's pencil,
which would be like seeing
the storks of spring in that fable
of the Alsace-Lorraine
accepting the dark wings
for the spring bodies of soldiers.
The speaker sees only the boys
who erupt in ghostly applause
when he is finished with his
spirit gun. But that figure above him
is still in the middle of my eyes—
Oh when will the pounding boys
in the center aisle look up
to see the man drop?



Some Advice for Faculty Advisers

1. Keep out of the way.
2. Permit the best to happen.
3. Be pluralistic and honest in your own taste.
4. Don't expect democracy on the aesthetic plane. Magazines are often run best by a dogmatic cabal of three or four heroes.
5. Don't institute long procedural norms that have destroyed many adult magazines.
6. Don't worry too much about "production values," unless a student truly believes in design and helps himself or herself by becoming a skilled self-publisher.
7. Remember that magazines are a logical place for experimentation, dissidence, privacy, and freedom.

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ART & DESIGN IN SCHOOL MAGAZINES

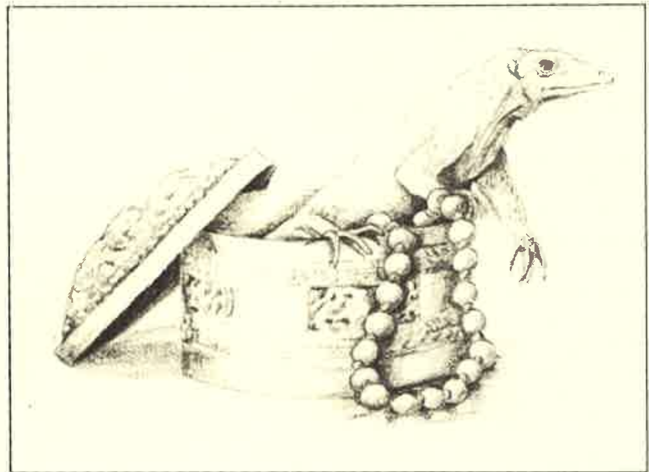
by Katherine Koch

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN AND GOOD ART GO WELL together in middle school and high school magazines. For one thing, it's hard to tell if art is any good when it's poorly reproduced or badly placed on the page; and for another, they both come from the same attitudes—care, concentration, experimentation, and inclusiveness. There is good design and artwork in cheaply produced magazines as well as in slick ones. In fact, the restrictions of a low budget often impose a vigor and clarity lacking in magazines with a lot of money. If the money's available, it's almost irresistible to play around with cut-outs, color reproduction, centerfolds, and unusual kinds of paper, but without a lot of editorial experience these devices can overwhelm the writing and art. Art generally looks best reproduced as large as possible and framed—enough space around it so you're not distracted by anything else—but art linked with a particular piece of writing can be crowded, cropped in unusual ways, or surrounded by words and look just fine.

I am surprised by how school magazines often have such arresting, interesting, and relaxed photographs, compared to most of the drawings and paintings. What kids mean, where they live, and who and what they like to look at come through with less of the stilted sentimentality and pretentiousness that more traditional forms can induce. Some of the most interesting school magazines present themselves as part of the community, with photographs that dramatize interviews, show a town's or a person's history, and even introduce the magazine's staff.

Several recent magazines remain in my mind as examples of remarkably good design and art. *Heritage,* from the James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia, and *Pegasus,* from the Joseph T. Walker School in Marietta, Georgia, are fairly high-budget affairs, big and glossy, with excellent and varied reproductions; *Montage,* from Greenhill Upper School in Dallas, Texas, and *Unframed Thoughts,* from University Lake School in Hartland, Wisconsin, do a lot within a small, uniform format.

Heritage scatters striking black and gray pages with white type throughout the magazine, along with beautiful and appropriate photos and photograms. Two strange, detailed pencil drawings by Liz Shura and Carolyn Brady show a love of complicated surfaces in a well-constructed three-dimensional space; they connote a world in the imagination as real as this one, where recognizable objects and animals are caught playing symbolic roles as serious as those in Renaissance art. Andy Clements's pen-and-ink drawing of a clarinet, in the middle of a story about a girl playing the clarinet, is a good example of art used as illustration because it stands on its own as a skillful and thought-provoking piece of work. It isn't bound up with the story, it just happens to be an interesting drawing of a clarinet surrounded in an odd, rhythmic way by sharp-leaved ferns and what look like shiny, bulbous philodendrons. A magazine I haven't mentioned, *Chanter,* from Bel Air High School in El Paso, Texas, also has a great example of art as illustration. It's a photo by Alex Delgado over a poem called "Prom Night." The poem is a tragic, formally written history of a prom dress; the photo, of a girl in a long dress holding a white rose, has the casualness of a snapshot and the blurry seriousness of memory. It's beautiful—the girl is beautiful and the billowing dress shines and creases—and fascinating in the way it brings the poem closer to real life, a friend, memories preserved by photos no one thinks of seriously at the time they are taken.



Pencil drawing by Carolyn Brady from *Heritage*

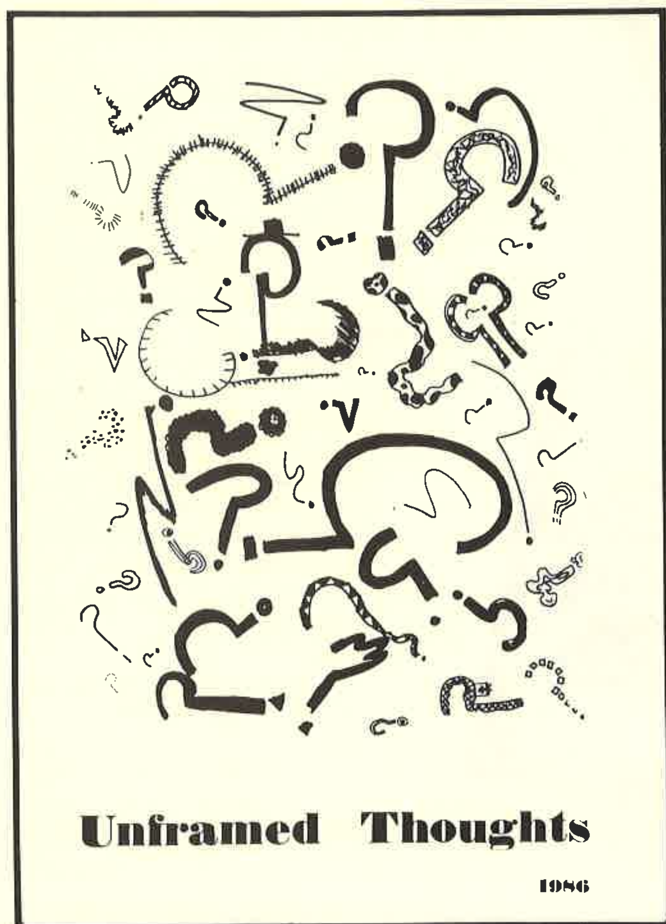
Pegasus's strength is in the way it combines works by students of all ages, from first grade through high school, combining art and writing that don't go together obviously yet add to one another by being looked at and thought about at the same time. A poem by a tenth-grader is next to block-prints of a Victorian house by three sixth-graders. Each print, going down the page, is smaller than the last, giving a parallel impression of experience at different distance, as well as adding to the sense the poem has of traveling through the spaces in a house. "The Quiz of Life: A Response," is surrounded by tropical drawings full of snakes, trees, and butterflies; graphically vivid cutouts of suns by fourth-graders introduce a two-page spread of poems by kids of all ages about the sky, the sun, and morning.

KATHERINE KOCH is a painter.

Unframed Thoughts does marvelous things with a half-page (5½ × 8½) format, just one typeface, and what seem like hundreds of tiny, sharp black-and-white line drawings, with a few paintings and collages thrown in. Most of the artwork is surrounded by the same thin black line, and each one attracts your eye for a different reason. The overall effect is lucid and firm. One example is "The Haunted House" by Bridget Frederick, made of dots, *x*'s and black squares. The

"The Haunted House" by Bridget Frederick from *Unframed Thoughts*

engaging cover is a humorous, wiggly, and not especially artistic collection of question marks drawn in different styles and positions by Tanya Oldenhoff, some of them pouring onto the back cover and gradually coming to a halt.



Montage, similarly small and unflashy, uses good photos, prints, and drawings simply cropped and strikingly placed. It includes some very hip portraits and an amazing middle shot of part of the white porch of a country store or gas station overshadowed by a tree in full leaf. It's a sunny day, and in the middle there's a big "SALE" sign, a shining clean dark window with wavy panels, and a small wooden bench. On either side are an old-fashioned Coke machine covered by a lush hanging plant and a welcome sign saying, "We have hand-dipped Blue Bell Ice Cream." The entire effect is intimate but spacious, calm, and full of detail. It's

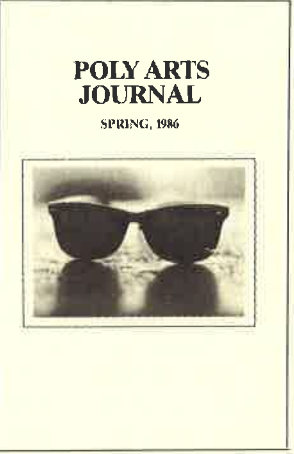
Photograph by 12th-grader Michele Henelly from *Montage*

subtle; there's no striking central object, no one-line joke, no focus on something already known to be a beautiful thing—flowers, children, forests, reflections in water, an elegant city block, a gnarled tree trunk. There's no taking advantage of people or objects as an excuse to show poverty, despair, or cuteness—no alienation, no condescension, no distance. Part of this photograph's appeal is its willingness to leave well-enough alone. It's a self-sufficient and serious work.

In general, the best idea about design seems to be to keep it big, simple, and clear; and the best idea about art is that it be as various as possible. Cartoons, cutouts, collages, decorative borders, oil paintings, computer graphics, hand-lettering, monoprints, a series of contact prints, photograms, quick sketches—the more imaginative and inclusive a magazine is about its art the better.

Linoleum print by 10th-grader Melinda Segal from *Montage*

"Mime Character" by Sarah Cheney from *Unframed Thoughts*



Drawing by Andy Clements from *Heritage*

GATES TO THE PLACE WHERE GENIUS RULES

by Mark Statman

EACH YEAR TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE artists produce anthologies from their school residencies, documentations of the process in which a writer has entered the classroom and, with the classroom teacher, helped students not only to write poetry, fiction, and plays, but also to see themselves as people who can think and write creatively and see written language as their own.

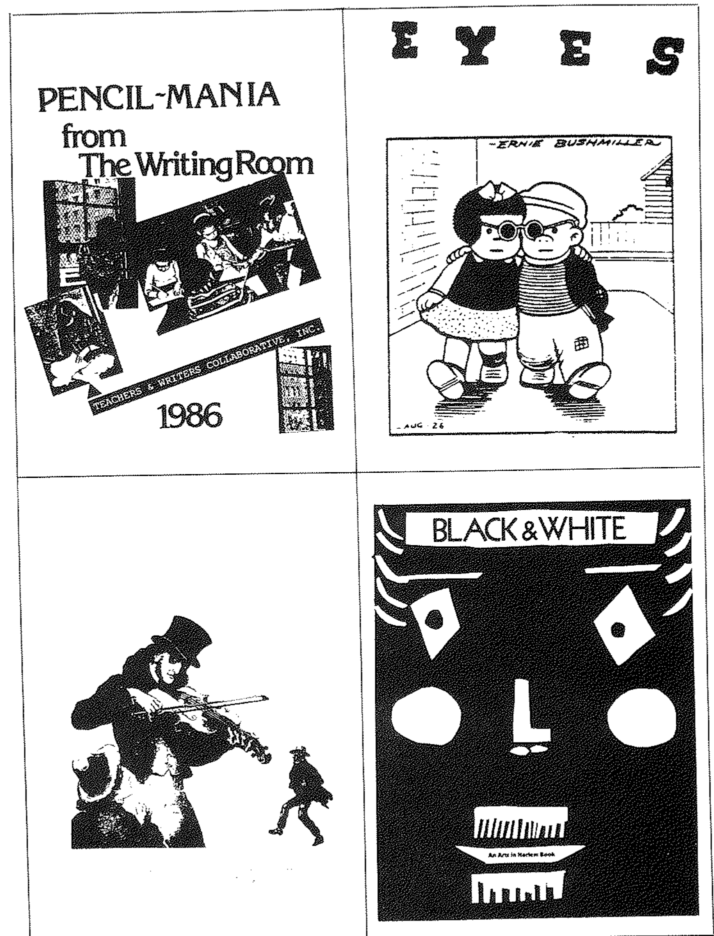
The artists put a lot of work into editing and typing the anthologies. The time required runs from about eight to forty hours on each one, with an average of about fifteen. Anthologies vary in length depending on the length of the residency. A ten-day residency yields an anthology of 13-15 pages, a fifteen-day residency 18-20 pages, and so on.

There are some big differences between a residency anthology and a student literary magazine. Anthologies are a product of the relationship between students and the visiting artist. Unlike teachers in a typical creative writing or English class, the artists seem less concerned with product than with process. Artists ask students to work as *artists*—they are given an idea, a theme, a form, something to inspire them to work, and then, with that small electric charge, the students move into new territory that involves how they think, what they feel, what they want and care about and see. Poet Geri Lipschultz explains it as their "experiencing the sense of moving from thought to thing, from nothing to something."

The quality of the work in a residency anthology always varies, because the point is to represent as many students as possible, to give everyone, not only the best, credit for having created. Since anthologies are usually distributed only to classes with whom the artist has worked, every reader is also a contributor. This prevents students from focusing on who's in and who's out. Instead, they read what they and their classmates have written, read what everyone has had to say. They experience a different way of communicating with each other.

Although some of the visiting writers noted that they'd rather spend the time it takes to produce the anthologies on teaching (noting that no teaching time is sacrificed to anthology production), most artists see the anthology as positive. Some find the anthologies useful as teaching tools. Playwright Dale Worsley: "I use certain poems and stories as seed for new writing from year to year. There is a tradition that develops in each school. Local literary heroes are created." Poet Kurtis Lamkin: "I use work for exercises, examples and just for fun, particularly those writings that demonstrate imagination and risk-taking, which is as important as command of form."

The anthologies provide clear benefits for students. Writer Barbara Danish: "They see their work in print—I've had kids stop me five years later to tell me they still have it and read it. It gives them a chance to work through a whole process, to have to deal with an audience." Geri Lipschultz: "Pride and power—the pen over the sword." Poet Michael Schwartz: "I think it is good for writers to see their thoughts in a permanent form, outside their heads. I think it always brings home the fact that writing is a constructed creation, not just thoughts or talk that are allowed to be loose and imprecise and flawed." Novelist Sue Willis: "Self-esteem, cash (they sometimes sell copies on the street), the sense of a project accomplished over time." Dale Worsley: "When they see their work in print, their imaginations are affirmed and they become much more discriminating, mature, and powerful." Fiction writer Lucia Nevai: "They appreciate each other's skills, feel a sense of closure to the writing process. The anthologies are essential." Kurtis Lamkin: "Proof that the power to create is in them—it's like a gate to a place where their genius rules. No one can take that from them." Poet Linda Gutstein: "For those gifted in writing but considered unexceptional or even deficient in other areas, it evens the score a bit and helps the students reexamine their notions of intelligence." ●



Covers from T&W school anthologies

THE T&W SCHOOL ANTHOLOGIES

by Pat Padgett

DURING THE 1985-86 SCHOOL YEAR, T&W WORKshop programs resulted in nearly 50 anthologies of children's writing. Although every manuscript crossed my desk, I had been too busy with the production and distribution of the booklets to have time to actually *read* any of the material. When summer vacation arrived, I was faced with over 1,000 pages of children's writing.

I approached the stacks of booklets wondering if all those writers T&W had sent out into the schools to teach could possibly have made a difference, and whether, after eight years as an arts administrator, I would still be able to see that difference. I began to read. During the next few days, I made several chair changes, but I was never bored. My confidence in the ability and commitment of the writers working in our program was renewed and the value of the programs reconfirmed.

The writing was from "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" students; from "gifted and talented" and "at risk" classes; from children with sophisticated language skills and from children newly arrived in the U.S. Whatever their skills or backgrounds, the kids had one thing in common—a natural propensity to create. The works were filled with an impulse to make a kind of order that is pleasing but non-restrictive. In her poem "Art," fifth-grader Charity Alejandro wrote, "With art you can/ control the/ world/ and make surprising/ things happen." The other children made less direct statements. But their works, dealing with everything from family tragedies to poetic conceits, show them trying to give shape and definition to their world and themselves through a natural delight in and curiosity about language.

Here are a few typical pieces from last year's program. (Because of space limitations, I chose short poems and no fiction.)

Rain Drops Fall

Rain drops fall
on the city shadow.
When rain drops fall
new things begin.
My aunt had a baby.

When rain drops fall
old dreams are washed away.
The baby died
in the city
where shadow dreams play.
—*Lajuan Smith, 6th grade*

The ladybug stays
On the leaf—her ancestor
Slept there on Sunday
—*Jennifer Martinez, 3rd grade*

Birth is a
nice experience. You might be
surprised with yourself.
—*Antoine Jordan, 3rd grade*

To My Dear Mother

This is the best season of my life
When the moon is rising
And the stars are bright
When times are sad
And your lips are a beauty
And the mirrors are clean
And the clouds are silver
—*Ruben Bermudez, 3rd grade*

Every Morning

Every morning
from my bed
I view an obituary taped
to my mirror.
It's my mother's.
I lie in my king size bed thinking
is she here with me
or uptown visiting my sister?
—*Dwayne Fuentes, 7th grade*

Metaphors of Beauty

What if a swan wasn't a calm, beautiful lake?
Let it be, oh, let it be a pheasant,
worth of nothing.

What if I weren't a fun-loving kitten?
I'd be a dull human, my attitude all drained out,
or an old turtle, always sticking in my head.

What if beauty wasn't mysterious?
Let it be a known mystery.
—*Sophia Wang, 4th grade*

The Sky and Ground

On the ground there is laughter
In the sky there is a rainbow
On the ground there are cows
And trees with branches
But not on the ground
I am very sleepy
—*Widalis Munoz, 3rd grade*

The leaves rise from the trees
Fall into the water splashing
Like little fish swim
—*Margaret Kaczorowski, 3rd grade*

Ears hear what
they're not supposed to, so
I know a lot
—*Lawanda, 3rd grade*

Dark Day too hard to see it's
raining and dark, the wind swarming
around not a hole in sight. Then
suddenly brightening to pinkness. The
Chrysler Building is shining to the
south. The rain starts, goes
west. The birds fly, the wind snaps
out so hard. The bird moves around.
—*Ozzie Gordon, 4th grade*

Prayer

Let me fall asleep without
regretting the fact that I'm
still young.
Let my mother please forgive me
and let my apology be heard.
Let my words, "I hate you!"
not ring in her head with
meaning.
Let me banish the words from
my vocabulary, and let her
understand.
Let the door be opened
and my mother walk in.
Let an apology be accepted
and she'll still love me.
Already I'm asleep.
—*Erika Ferszt, 6th grade*

PAT PADGETT is associate director of Teachers & Writers.