

SABBATICAL PROJECT
1995-1996 School Year

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**SABBATICAL PROPOSAL
BRUCE WILLIAMS
FOR 1995-1996 SCHOOL YEAR**

This semester I have had my first opportunity to teach Creative Writing, Poetry. Teaching and preparing for this course has been an exciting experience that has helped me deepen my students' experience of poetry, as well as my own, through contact with the rich world of Los Angeles poetry--a process that I would like to pursue further during my sabbatical. This exploration will help me grow both as teacher and poet. It will also provide alternative ways of delivering creative-writing experience to my students, ways that may better fit their schedules and their needs.

BACKGROUND:

Since deciding, nearly a year ago, to teach Creative Writing, Poetry, I have been very busy. I read widely. I also returned to my own writing, left unpursued for years, and began submitting poems, because I wanted to be able to help my students with the process of getting published. I had never done so before and was surprised at the results. In less than a year twenty-five poems were accepted by a variety of journals that range from inside english, a journal for California Community College English teachers, to Curmudgeon, a small new publication from South Carolina. I even received payment, an extreme rarity for poets, for two poems published by Byline, a magazine for professional writers. At the same time I have been attending various poetry readings and workshops. Last summer I was accepted in a week-long

workshop at Santa Monica City Colleges, where I met a number of poets, and was able to work with the noted poets Alicia Ostriker, Lynne Emmanuel, Walter Pavlich, and David St. John. Since then I have been attending activities at the Beyond Baroque Foundation in Venice, and recently I've begun running open poetry readings twice a month at the Barnes and Noble bookstore in Montclair. All this activity has been very stimulating but rather exhausting while teaching full-time.

These activities have shown me how much more there is to explore in the Los Angeles poetry world, and given me some directions for that exploration as well. My teaching of poetry has let me know how vital it is to enrich student experience and to meet individual needs. Surprisingly enough, the teaching of creative-writing fits the T.Q.M. model more closely than might be expected. In a creative-writing course where one does not have to submit material for admittance, students come with a wide variety of needs and abilities. The teacher must take students where they are and help them pursue their own goals. For example, relatively few modern poets choose to rhyme. Many of my students, however, are interested in it, and, therefore, I have included some instruction on rhyme, and the way modern poets approach it. In the current educational climate, moreover, recruitment for a creative-writing course, as well as many other courses, is obviously an issue. This is one of the reasons I have been going to poetry readings and meeting other poets in this area. I have also become aware that alternative methods of delivery, such as computer modem,

may be appropriate for this course, as well as others in the Mt.SAC curriculum, in order to increase the clientele by not limiting instruction to particular times.

As a result of my experience teaching poetry and exploring the Los Angeles poetry community, I would like to pursue a number of projects during my sabbatical year.

GOALS:

The primary goal of my sabbatical is networking with the Los Angeles poetic community--entering the dialogue more deeply that I have begun to be part of, so I can help my students enter that dialogue as well. My goal is not only to help my students write better, but to help them share what they write, and to come into contact with others who are sharing poetry--to help them, in other words, to find markets for their creativity. In the process I hope to gain incidental information that may improve my classroom teaching, but my most fundamental goal remains the networking

This primary goal comes from my assumptions about poetry. I do not see poetry as merely a private indulgence, but as a public act. Whatever personal satisfaction the poet derives from writing, ideally poetry is meant to be shared outside the classroom or workshop. Consequently, in addition to teaching my students various poetic techniques, I want to teach my students how to share their poetry publicly and become part of the poetic community. I already do that to some extent by suggesting a magazine a student might submit to or a reading that might be desirable to attend.

Obviously, the more I know about the poetic community, the better my suggestions will be for my students' explorations. In the process of deepening my own connections with the poetry community, I will encounter additional teaching techniques, but this will not be as important as the networking. Fortunately, at this time there is much activity in the Los Angeles poetic community and a great deal of opportunity for public expression--so much so that one well-known poet, Jack Grapes, refers to it as a "poetic renaissance." In my sabbatical I want to concentrate on three areas: (1) exploring the spoken word scene; (2) interviewing local poet/teachers; (3) and learning about the on-line sharing of poetry.

THE SPOKEN-WORD SCENE:

In recent years there has been a tremendous increase in poetry reading in the Los Angeles area. There are many opportunities for students to attend readings and to participate in them. According to Poetry Flash, a monthly magazine of poetry news, there were over eighty open poetry readings in Southern California in November and almost fifty other events.

This revival of spoken poetry is very exciting, and I would like to direct my poetry and literature students to the best of it, and obviously there is a great variety--everything from venues where poets read in the nude to others where Christian poetry is especially welcome. I would, therefore, like to attend some readings repeatedly and produce an annotated directory for my

students that will deal with at least ten of the following venues:

A.R.K. Studio & Gallery, Long Beach
Barnes and Noble, Montclair
Barnes and Noble, Pasadena
Barnes and Noble, Puente Hills Mall
Beans hosts Pooh-I-Try, Whittier
Beyond Baroque, Venice
The Buzz Coffeehouse, Echo Park
The Colloquy, Beverly Hills
The Espresso Bar, Pasadena
The Factory Readings, Santa Ana
Haven Coffee House and Gallery, Pomona
Hollywood Moguls, Los Angeles
Iguana Cafe, North Hollywood
Lannan Readings and Conversations, at
Pacific Design Center, West Hollywood
Midnight Special Bookstore, Santa Monica
Old Town Pub, Pasadena
Portico, Upland
The 222 Espresso Bar, Glendora
The Riverside Poetry Society, Riverside
Vroman's Books, Pasadena

In order to evaluate the various readings, I plan to attend them up to three times and, if possible, to participate in the

readings. Sometimes I think one or two visits may be sufficient--I may, for example, decide that a particular venue is not worth the effort of further investigation--but for the most part I want to avoid generalizing from what may be an off night or a particularly good one.

My evaluations will take the form of a review, somewhat like a play or movie review and will usually contain the following elements:

1. The Location: a description of the venue is and direction to it from the Mt. SAC area.
2. Atmosphere: What kind of physical environment does the location have? Is it a dark, smokey cellar, or a clean, well-lighted cafe? And more importantly, what kind of performance atmosphere does the location have? Does the audience pay attention, or must the poets compete with background noise? Is there a sound system and a stage? Is the audience young, old, "neo-punk," or college intellectuals?
3. Procedures: Is the reading completely open, or are there featured readers? What is the actual process of participating in the readings. Is there a signup? When is this signup? Do readers read in the order in which they sign up, or is there some kind of random order? Is there a time-limit for the readers, and how rigidly is it enforced? Does everyone who wants to get to read?
4. Readings: Is it possible to generalize about the poetry

read? Did one type pre-dominate? Were the readings consistently avant-garde and shocking, or more conventional? Were they street poetry, or academic?

5. Final evaluation: Overall, were the readings positive experiences? Would they be for student? For all students or just for poetry students? For only particular kinds of poetry students?

INTERVIEWS

My investigations of the Spoken Word Scene in Los Angeles should enable both my students and me to become more a part of this important aspect of the Los Angeles poetic world. Also in order to network even more productively with the poetry community in Southern California, I want to interview at least six of the following teacher/poets in this area:

Dick Barnes, Pomona College

Allen Berman, Upland High School

Ralph Carlson, Azusa Pacific

Wanda Coleman, Loyola Marymount University

Michael Goodman, Golden West College

Jack Grapes, Bombshelter Press

Ron Koertge, Pasadena City College

Jim Kruso, Santa Monica City College

Kathy Long, Santa Monica City College

Annette Lynch, Professor Emeritus, Mt. San Antonio College

Bill Mohr, Beyond Baroque Foundation

Robert Rippy, San Bernardino Valley College

David St. John, University of Southern California

To interview this wide range of individuals will increase my sense the poetry world at all levels. The eminent poet, David St. John, for example, is a 1994 nominee for the National Book Award, and several recent articles in the Los Angeles Times have praised his work. Allen Berman, on the other hand, is a local high school teacher I've met at poetry readings. But in all cases, I think the most important aspect of these interviews will be the networking-- simply meeting and talking with these individuals. And to some extent the interviews will have to be flexible. There are, however, a number of points that I want to be sure to include: how poetry and poetry courses can be promoted in this age of practicality, how to approach the student with little exposure to poetry, what contribution the spoken-word scene makes to the practice and teaching of poetry, how the various poetry teachers look at the integration of computers into a poetry class and the on-line sharing of poetry networks, how they view the changes that the multi-media presentation of poetry may make, and what possibilities and problems they see in teaching distance learning creative-writing through the use of modems, or other devices. (Obviously, the interview focus will vary with the particular interviewee. I doubt, for example, that either David St. John or

Wanda Coleman has had to give much thought about student recruitment. My community college colleagues, however, have undoubtedly considered this issue at length, and I am eager to discuss it with them.)

I plan to take extensive notes on these interviews and to keep a journal of my activities. In my report I will discuss the highlights of the interviews in such a way as to present what consensus, or at least points of controversy, exists on various concerns in the Los Angeles poetic community. In the interviews some questions may be:

1. Do you have any difficulty attracting students to your classes? How do you deal with that difficulty?
2. What kind of students are attracted to your classes? And what are their goals?
3. How can the reading and writing of poetry be introduced to students who have had minimal contact and concern with it?
4. Is the general social atmosphere at this time conducive for the teaching and study of poetry?
5. Are your administration and colleagues supportive of your activities?
6. How do you look at the Los Angeles poetry scene at this time?
7. What do you think of the spoken-word scene?

8. Is it valuable to introduce creative writing students and students in general to it?
9. What use do you make of computer technology in your classes?
10. What do you think are the advantages and problems of using on-line sharing of material as part of poetry workshopping? Could you see a course organized primarily around it?

COMPUTERS:

In addition to attending poetry readings and interviewing poet/teachers, I believe an excellent way I can connect more deeply with the world of poetry, and, therefore, help my students do the same, is through the on-line sharing of poetry. I think an investigation of this area may give me additional insights that may lead to a reorganization of my courses.

There is increasing interest in the sharing of poetry through on-line computer. Local area bulletin boards are being used, and there is exchange on other systems. There is, for example, a poetry workshop being run through America On-Line. And a recent article by G.L. Mitchell "The Writer's Place on the Information Superhighway," in the September/October issue of Poet's and Writer's dealt with on-line publishing and other matters. Obviously there are a number of ways to use distance learning creative-writing. For example, after a weekend of intensive workshopping, a poetry course might continue it by modem. I would like to learn about this matter in a number of ways:

1. By some preliminary reading on local area bulletin boards and Internet.
2. By following leads that interviewees may offer. (David St. John, for example, has already given me the names of some amateur enthusiasts of computer poetry, and I plan to contact them.)
3. By upgrading my computer and participating in on-line computer workshops, probably at first through America On-Line, as well becoming involved in various poetry bulletin boards that I may locate. (There are many writing conferences and journals on Internet. Mitchell, for example mentions Grist On-Line, and writes that it "emphasizes poetry and poetics; the poetry and poetics of electronic publishing; e-mail art; interactive poetry; multimedia poetry; virtual poetry; language poetry; poetry on diskette and CD; and the impact of style and content on these new media and forms of distribution. The primary purpose of Grist On-Line is the electronic/network/bulletin-board publication, distribution, and archiving of significant poems by contemporary authors." (28).

Eventually I hope to present this material in a similar fashion to the way I will write up my venue investigations. I will deal with such considerations as how to access the particular electronic venue, the type of poetry presented, the procedures and quality of feedback, and the overall value of the experience.

SCHEDULING:

During the first semester of my sabbatical I plan to conduct at least four of the interviews, to attend half the poetry readings, to complete my preliminary reading on computer applications, and to improve my on-line skills. (I will be especially concerned with learning about local area bulletin boards and Internet.)

During the second semester I intend to complete the interviews, the poetry readings, and participate in at least one on-line computer workshop. In order to stay on task I will follow a month to month time line.

August:	Reading on Internet and local area bulletin boards, setting up of interviews.
September:	Interviews with Annette Lynch and Ralph Carlson, evaluation of two poetry venues, hone skills on accessing Internet and local area bulletin boards.
October:	Interviews, evaluation of poetry venues, get on America-on-line.
November:	Continue October's activities
December:	Have completed six interviews and at least five venue evaluations, begin participating in local area bulletin boards.
January:	Continue interviews and evaluations, begin to

- interact on Internet.
- February: Complete interviews and evaluations.
- March: Share material extensively over Internet. If possible participate in on-line publications. Explore unforeseen possibilities for networking with poetic community. (suggestions that may have come from interviews, etc.)
- April: Tie up any loose ends in various projects, begin writing report and directory.
- May: Complete writing report and directory.

RESULTS:

At the end of this sabbatical I will have achieved a number of things:

1. Have an annotated directory of poetry readings that I can give to my students so that they can pick events that may be suitable to their interests. This list can also be used by teachers in literature courses to help broaden their students' experience of literature off campus. (If possible, have as part of this or another directory a listing and evaluation of various on-line sources for exchanging poetry and information about poetry.)
2. Have made contacts in the artistic community that may be useful to my students and perhaps for such events as Writer's Day at Mt. SAC. (I will also, perhaps, give Mt.

SAC. a little higher visibility in that community.)

3. Have specific ideas for the uses of computers and on-line computer technology for creative writing that can be shared with my colleagues through my report and that will perhaps contribute to the development of distance learning creative-writing courses.
4. Be reinvigorated in my own teaching by contact with the sort of individuals and literature that originally brought me into the teaching of English in the first place.

REPORT:

My lengthy sabbatical report will be based on the notes and journals kept during my sabbatical. There will be three basic sections to this report, although there may be some overlap:

1. Evaluation of the spoken word venues as listed in my directory of spoken word venues. This directory will also be printed separately, for students and colleagues.
2. Poet/teacher interviews. This report will highlight the results of the interviews and point out areas of consensus and controversy within the poetic community. It will include insights that seem especially helpful to teachers of poetry. (Some of these, like the promotion of courses and recruitment of students, I may share directly in briefer written form with my department colleagues.)
3. On-line investigations. This section will evaluate my on-line

experiences in a way somewhat like the venue visitations evaluations. For example, I will deal with the value, and nature of various on-line bulletin boards and poetry workshops. (Perhaps these evaluations will be a subsection of the directory for students and colleagues .) The section will also present interview highlights that deal with the teaching of poetry and computers. And finally, based on interviews and my own experience, this section may include distance learning applications for creative writing poetry courses.

ADDENDUM:

I also plan to attend some intensive poetry workshops and conference such as the one I attended at Santa Monica College, and there are many to choose from. There is The Bay Area Writers Workshop in Berkeley, the Napa Valley Writer's Conference, the Santa Barbara Writer's Conference, the Writers' Form at Pasadena City College, and short workshops given privately by Jack Grapes. However, these may not be appropriate to my proposal since many of these are scheduled during summers and weekends. (It may also be a little hard to obtain their exact dates for more than a year in advance.) I seek the committee's advice on this matter.

SABBATICAL REPORT

PURPOSE

My sabbatical proposal and the details of my goals precede this report, but in the simplest sense, the purpose of this project was networking, so that I could be better connected with the world of poetry outside the class room and so I could better connect my students to that world. In order to do this networking, there were three aspects to my sabbatical project: (1) I interviewed numerous poet/teachers; (2) I attended numerous poetry readings; (3) I explored on-line poetry. This project was absorbing and invigorating; I am, indeed, more closely connected with the poetry community, and I have much that I can share with my colleagues and students.

INTERVIEWS

Perhaps the most gratifying aspect of my sabbatical was the interviewing of other poet/teachers, since this was so gratifying, and since it formed the background of many of my other activities, it seems appropriate to report on it first. In doing these interviews I was able to talk to many fascinating people and to connect, and even become friends with, poets of local, regional, and national reputation. Originally I proposed a list of poets, and said I would interview at least ten of them. But my interviews often connected me with new poets. (David St. John, for example, suggested I talk to Bruce Kiejewski, the publisher of Jacaranda Review, which is soon to become an on-line publication.) As a result, I interviewed seventeen teacher/poets: Michael Andrews, Rosemary Adam, Dick Barnes, Allen Berman, Ralph Carlson, Bruce Kiejewski, Ron Koertge, Gary Kroeker, Suzanne Lummis, Annette Lynch, Thomas Lux, Bill Mohr, Holly Prado, Robert Rippy, Maurya Simon, David St. John, and Charles Webb.

I selected these individuals in order to become acquainted with a wide range of poetic and teaching experience. There were three high school teachers, three community college instructors, seven college professors, and three individuals whose teaching was primarily private, or who were connected only tangentially with education. Moreover, I tried to pick a range of accomplishments and prestige. Annette Lynch is best known to her many ex-colleagues and students at Mt. San Antonio College. Charles Webb

and Suzanne Lummis are leaders in the L.A. Poetry world and have recently edited an ambitious anthology of L.A. poets, Grand Passion. Widely published and nationally known poet, Maurya Simon, teaches at both the University of California at Riverside and Cal Tech. David St. John, of U.S.C., was nominated for the National Book Award, among many other honors. Thomas Lux, was poet in residence at U.C. Irvine in their M.F.A. program, one of the most prestigious in the country. He had been awarded the Claremont Graduate School Kingsley Tufts Poetry Prize, monetarily the largest poetry prize for a single volume of poetry given in the United States.

These interviews were usually done in person at one setting. A few individuals, including David St. John, and Nettie Lynch, I saw more than once. In the case of Ron Koertge and Maurya Simon, I also attended their classes for several sessions. Holly Prado I interviewed over the telephone. While I did not interview Thomas Lux formally, taking his poetry workshop answered many of my concerns, so I have included his remarks. Usually I recorded the interviews to help jog my memory when summarizing what had been discussed. For the most part I followed the questions included in my sabbatical proposal. Generally the interviews dealt with five main concerns: (1) background; (2) teaching; (3) L.A. poetry; (4) poetry in general; (5) computers, and my summaries focused on these concerns. I also looked at the syllabi of some instructors. Sometimes I supplemented my interviews with reading, often the writings of the individuals I talked with.

Appendix I to this report contains the actual summaries of the various interviews. Appendix II lists much of the reading I did associated with this sabbatical.

Here I will make some generalizations from the interviews since one of the things I was interested in discovering in the process of doing my sabbatical was whether there were any obvious points of agreement or dispute within the Los Angeles poetry community. In doing so I will employ the same categories I have used for my summaries. Naturally these conclusions are my evaluation of what I have heard, and I doubt that any completely objective study of this matter could be made. Certainly more individuals could be interviewed. Nevertheless, I have learned that the poetry community is a fairly small community. And I believe there are some helpful generalizations to be made from my interviews.

TEACHING:

Every teacher/poet I talked to uses the standard workshop method of teaching writing: Students write poems; they bring copies of the poems for everyone in class; they read them aloud; and then they discuss them. This is the almost universal method of teaching creative writing and is derived from the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop, which was the first, and for years, the only creative writing program in the country. In such a workshop students and the instructor make helpful suggestions. Often the teacher comments last, and then writer the makes comments. There are, of course, variations. Tom Lux, for example, has the student

read their work aloud, and then he, or another member of the class, reads the work aloud a second time before the discussion begins. He does this because he feels it's important for poets to hear their work. He also encourages students to record their material and listen to it.

Although the workshop method is standard, there is considerable variation as to the assignments. Some instructors assign particular poetic forms. Ralph Carlson and Robert Rippy, for example, teach the sestina, the sonnet, and the villanelle. Charles Webb uses the haiku and the tanka, among other forms. In her class at Cal Tech, Maurya Simon included the prose poem, shaped poem, acrostic, as well as other forms, but did not require students to write in form if they had something else that they would rather do. Neither Holly Prado, nor Michael Andrews, on the other hand, like to use forms, and, in fact feel that such assignments produce inferior poetry.

Besides the use of forms, instructors also vary on the use of in-class writing exercises, or prompts, that help students generate poetry, or what can later be revised into poetry. Some, like Allen Berman, Michael Andrews, and Suzanne Lummis, use a great many prompts. Suzanne Lummis, for example, has paired students tell each other a brief memory, then write each other's memory. Ralph Carlson has students select words as a group to be used in a sestina. On the other hand, Holly Prado, and David St. John feel such exercises are artificial.

Almost everyone, however, agrees on the importance of reading

in a creative writing course. One simply cannot write poetry without reading it. And, not surprisingly, many instructors find students' skills, and especially their reading skills, to be weaker than they were in the past. Many students have not or do not read contemporary poetry; therefore, as David St. John notes, they have almost no idea of what modern poetic diction is.

Almost all teachers make reading poetry, especially contemporary poetry, a vital part of their course. Ralph Carlson teaches a course that is, in fact, a combination literature and creative writing course. All the creative writing courses at U.S.C. have a heavy reading component. Moreover, David St. John will sometimes casually suggest reading a particular author to improve a weakness in the student's poetry. Maurya Simon makes reading many examples of the various poetic forms essential to students learning those forms. Bill Mohr feels that perhaps the most important acquisition from any creative writing course is a reading list which could keep the student busy for years. Charles Webb assigns a great deal of outside reading, although he admits that students do not always finish all of it. He also has students compile a personal anthology of poems they like. (This is a practice I follow in my own course and one that Robert Pinsky, a recent Pulitzer Prize winner, also recommends.)

Only Ron Koertge uses little reading in his poetry class. He finds that when he assigns reading the students write less and would prefer to emphasize the good things in student poetry. Nevertheless, he recommends reading highly to his students. He

urges them to read poetry aloud, not try to analyze it, simply let it roll over them. During a dry period, he thinks one of the most useful aids is reading aloud a poet one does not normally like or read.

Administrative support for writing courses also varies. In general, the situation is good, even surprisingly so, at the college level. It is less favorable at the community college and high school level.

In the past few years there has been a large increase in M.F.A. programs, such as the new one at Long Beach State. However, I did not expect creative writing courses to be as popular as they sometimes are at the undergraduate level. At both U.S.C., where David St. John teaches, and Long Beach State, where Charles Webb is works, it is possible to have a creative writing emphasis as an undergraduate English major. Webb reports that his poetry classes are crammed. Angie Estes, who teaches creative writing and literature at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, also reports that her classes are popular. (Ms. Estes spoke at the 1996 Writer's Day at Mt. Sac., and while I did not interview her formally, we did have long conversations over lunch and coffee.) Maurya Simon, who teaches at U.C. Riverside, in a "free-standing" creative writing department that supports an undergraduate major, reports that the students are enthusiastic and the number of majors involved in the program is growing.

The situation at U.S.C. is even more encouraging. David St. John was originally brought there in hopes that he would develop a

graduate M.F.A. program, but he elected instead to revitalize the undergraduate creative writing program. At the time he arrived, there were few creative writing majors. Now it is by far the most popular English major with almost four hundred students involved. St. John attributes the interest in creative writing to the excellent teaching by committed nationally known writers, such as T. Coraghessan Boyle, Molly Bendall and Carol Muske. He also believes that young people today are hungry for the authentic language of poetry because the quality of public discourse has reached such a low point.

Much of David's speculation may be sound. But I wonder if there are not two other factors in the popularity of undergraduate creative writing courses. First, the study of literature may be less appealing than creative writing because much of this study of is dominated by current critical theory--everything from deconstruction to neo-marxism, which is often formidable and unappealing. Second, in terms of jobs, the study of creative writing is no more impractical than the study of literature, and, fact, it may even be more practical. One of the usual career choices for English majors is teaching, but often that teaching involves teaching writing, so any kind of a writing course may seem good preparation.

Whatever the causes of the relatively secure situation of writing courses in colleges, they are not always so well-supported in high school. Rosemary Adam, recently retired, taught many creative writing courses at Claremont High School for years.

However, Gary Kroeker, a published novelist and poet, who is also Chairman of the English Department at Los Altos High School, does not teach creative writing currently, nor are there any creative writing courses offered at Los Altos. This is also true of Upland High School, where Allen Berman formally taught a poetry class. The class was popular, and the work I've seen from Mr. Berman's students was impressive. However, there was a problem last year with a parent's complaints about the content of some student poems. Although the administration and Mr. Berman say there is no necessary connection, Mr Berman was on leave when I interviewed him, and the class was not being offered.

The situation of creative writing in community colleges, at least from the instructors I talked to, is also more marginal than in four year colleges. Sometimes, for example, at Mt. SAC enrollment in creative writing courses is low enough that they are in danger of being canceled. At San Bernardino Valley, Robert Rippey taught one section of a class that dealt with creative writing in general, rather than poetry in particular. And no community college that I encountered offered more than one section per semester of creative writing poetry. Nettie Lynch taught five sections of her poetry class per year for decades, but this has not been the case for several years. Ron Koertge's class started with nineteen students, and he reported that the administration usually let it go with low numbers. He himself was also able to give students waivers for the class directly on the first night. (It is worth noting here that few of the creative writing classes I

encountered started with the requisite twenty pre-enrolled students that Mt. SAC has required in recent years.)

L.A. POETRY:

Everyone I interviewed agreed that there was much poetic activity in the greater Los Angeles area and that this was helpful. Many instructors encourage students to attend readings. Both Charles Webb and Suzanne Lummis, for example, begin class by asking if anyone knows of any poetry events that are going on. Webb also requires students to attend readings and make reports. Many poets were aware that open "coffee house" readings could be bad, but they still thought they were valuable

One aspect of the L.A. poetry world that some poets, such as Suzanne Lummis and David St. John, found valuable was its lack of compartmentalization. There are not as many isolated groups of poets--"academics" in one corner and "poets of the people" in another. This was attributed by some to the L.A. Poetry Festival and to the inclusiveness of the anthology, Grand Passion.

A less attractive aspect of Los Angeles is the absence of any significant book publishing. As Bill Mohr, a long-time L.A. poet, put it, "The situation in Los Angeles is as if there were Nashville with all those great musicians there, but no music industry." Others, Suzanne Lummis, and Holly Prado, for example, agreed with this assessment. Many poets also feel that the Los Angeles Times has been less supportive than it could be of Los Angeles poetry, and believe that this was especially true the many years that Jack Miles was editor of the L.A. Times Book Review.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Many poets I have talked to see that there is a rebirth of poetry. There certainly has been a great deal of recent activity. Last year was, after all, a year in which a film that received Academy Award Nominations--The Postman--dealt with the poet Pablo Neruda. It was also a year in which there were two series on poetry on public television, Bill Moyers', The Language of Life, and Bob Holman's, The United States of Poetry.

There are, of course, difficulties. Funding for poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts is probably a thing of the past, and this loss will have a bad effect on some small presses and magazines. But the poets I talked to were not as upset as I expected them to be. Dick Barnes, for example, noted that there were poetry magazines before the N.E.A. and there would be poetry magazines after the N.E.A. They might, however, have to go back to being printed less attractively.

COMPUTERS:

The one area where there was considerable disagreement among the poets I talked to was on the matter of computers and on-line publishing. Many of them used computers only for wordprocessing--as glorified typewriters. Moreover, some were actively suspicious of technology. A few, however, were extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

Although not many poets wrote directly on computer, some, like David St. John, agreed that computers made it easier to revise and

think about line-breaks and the appearance of the poem on the page. Dick Barnes, on the other hand, wondered whether this ease of revision was really a good thing. Many of the poets, Suzanne Lummis, and Holly Prado, for example, were not familiar with the Web, and others like Dick Barnes and Charles Webb were concerned that the Web could be a potential drain on time. The latter has in recent years, gained some national acceptance for his poetry and wants to put all his efforts into increasing that success. Dick Barnes likes using on-line technology for scholarship and has been teaching himself Italian by pulling up Italian newspapers from the Web. However, as far as poetry is concerned, he doesn't have time to read all the books that line his office walls, much less deal with electronic information. As for Ron Koertge, he is so low tech that in twenty-five years of teaching he has never shown a movie or used an overhead projector in his classroom, and he never intends to. Nor will he spend time answering his e-mail.

On the other hand, a few poets were enthusiastic. Both Michael Andrews and Bruce Kiejewski are extremely knowledgeable about technology and both are becoming involved in on-line publication. And while they see on-line publication as potentially revolutionary, they are also aware of difficulties. Neither one, for example, intends to allow on-line submissions to their journals. Current submissions on paper are already overwhelming and on-line ones would be impossible. Also most people do not enjoy reading documents off the screen, and there need to

be some "added value" aspects of such a publication to make it appealing.

Most of the poets, however, were aware that new technologies opened the possibility of adding the author's speaking voice to their work. There was also general agreement that on-line teaching of creative writing is quite possible since there were already successful M.F.A. programs that were taught largely by correspondence.

POETRY READINGS:

There are many poetry readings, both amateur "open readings," and more professional ones by scheduled poets. In fact there are publications devoted to listing such readings, most notably Poetry Flash of San Francisco, and Next of Long Beach. There are so many readings I could have spent my entire sabbatical attending them. The April 1996 issue of Next, for example, lists 84 sites where poetry can be heard in the greater Los Angeles area. I did not want to spend my entire time simply doing this. So I included a list of possible venues in my proposal, and said I would research at least ten of them, then write reviews of the venues so I and other teachers could direct students to readings that would be appropriate. Later, as I discovered new venues, or found out that old ones were no longer open, I added some sites to my list. (At Peter Parra's suggestion I sent him a letter mentioning these venues.)

By conservative estimate, I attended at least 80 readings during my sabbatical at nearly 30 different venues. Of these venues, I have evaluated 24. These reviews are included in the Appendix II of this report.

Sometimes it did not seem valuable to attend readings at a particular venue more than once. Also in the process of attending poetry readings I developed favorites. In general I've come to prefer professional readings. I love, for example, the readings given once a month by the Poetry Society of America at the Chateau Marmont Hotel in Hollywood. I am also the facilitator for the open readings at Barnes and Noble in Montclair and attend them twice a month. Some venues are beyond the focus of this report. In Los Vegas, for examples, the National Convention of the Popular Culture Society had poetry readings, as well as scholarly papers, as part of its program. I submitted material and was accepted as a presenter.

Although a detailed evaluation of 24 venues is included in Appendix II of this report, it would be appropriate to make some general remarks about poetry readings, and to indicate here what I feel are the best ones in the immediate Mt. SAC area and in greater Los Angeles.

Open readings are exactly what they sound like, anyone can read poetry. Usually readers can sign up a short time before the reading, and often they are limited to about five minutes. Sometimes there are scheduled featured readers as well as open readers. The open readings are often amateurish. But they usually

include one or two good poets, and they are helpful for students to go to because they help students see that there is poetry outside the class room--poetry that even they can participate in. The scheduled readings are quite different and through them students can have the opportunity to hear some of the most celebrated poets in Los Angeles and in the United States.

There are not too many valuable open readings in the immediate Mt. SAC area. One I would recommend is at the 222 Espresso Bar in Glendora and is run by Ralph Carlson, a professor at Azusa Pacific, and a good poet. It is held in a small, generally quiet coffee house, and there is little pressure or competition. The poets basically read to each other, and a group of fairly good poets attend these readings.

The professional readings in the Mt. SAC area are often outstanding. The scheduled readings at Pomona College and at the Claremont McKenna Athenaeum feature some of the best poets in the United States. At Pomona I have heard Galway Kinnell, Tom Gunn, Garrett Hongo, and Dana Gioia. At Claremont McKenna I have listened to Rita Dove, Robert Pinsky, Maxine Kumin, Denise Levertoff, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko. Moreover, these readings are free and easily accessible to Mt. SAC students. The readings at Pomona are held in intimate Crookshank Hall with wine and cheese afterwards. Those at McKenna are in the more formal Athenaeum and can include dinner if reservations are made.

Of all the open readings in the Los Angeles area I prefer those at the Midnight Special Bookstore in Santa Monica or the

Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center in Venice. Beyond Baroque has been a center of Los Angeles poetry for many years, and holds open readings the first Sunday of the month at 5 p.m. The readings have a devoted following of poets and an aggressively avant-garde atmosphere that many students will enjoy. The Midnight Special readings take place every Friday at an independent bookstore in the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica. They are well-attended, and some of the readers are professional. This venue is a spin-off from Beyond Baroque, and the readers exhibit more variety and are not always as routinely shocking and avant-garde. Santa Monica is about a forty-five minute drive from the Mt. Sac area, but the Promenade is always interesting, and the once a week meetings offer more opportunities for students to attend.

Moreover, there are many other poetic activities that take place at both Beyond Baroque and the Midnight Special--free workshops, readings by well-known poets, celebrations of book publications, and even poetry slams--competitions between poets for prizes. Either venue, thus, would provide an easy opening into much of the Los Angeles poetry activity, especially activity not connected with academia.

The occasional readings by well-known poets which take place at either Beyond Baroque or the Midnight Special are sometimes excellent. I have heard David Ignatow, for example, read at Beyond Baroque. And last June the three long time friends, Philip Levine, Garret Hongo, and Ed Hirsch, all read together at Midnight Special. However, I believe the best place to hear scheduled readings of

well-known poets is at the Poetry Society of America's Act of the Poet readings put on at the Chateau Marmont Hotel on Sunset Blvd. Here I have heard Tom Lux, David Halprin, Robert Pinsky, Ralph Angel, Marie Howe, Molly Bendall, Judith Hall, and Maurya Simon. The readings in this elegant old Hollywood landmark have the special, appropriately Hollywood feature, of including an actor who reads also. When Marie Howe read in April, for example, the actor was Joe Spano, who played Lieutenant Goldman on Hill Street Blues. The readings are also a social event in the Los Angeles poetry community, especially the academic part of it. (It was a particular pleasure to realize after a while that I recognized many of the people in the audience and that a few of them recognized me as well.)

One of the especially enjoyable readings was that of Robert Pinsky, who had just been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. Through oversight, or perhaps intention, the reading was scheduled at exactly the same time as the Superbowl. Just before the beginning, someone in the audience asked, "What's the score?" To which most of the crowd replied, "Who cares!" No one did care, Mr. Pinsky read magnificently. This may seem pretentious, but poets can use camaraderie as much as football fans. (As a matter of fact, one of the major benefits of all readings is camaraderie they promote, and one of the reasons this investigation can benefit both students and colleagues.)

ON-LINE POETRY:

Finally, in order to find another way that I and my students could network with poetry outside the classroom, I proposed in my sabbatical to learn more about the on-line sharing of poetry and perhaps find sites that I could recommend and review in the same way that I reviewed venues for poetry readings. I also had two unexpressed interests: (1) to find out about the feasibility of teaching poetry on-line. (2) to explore the possibility of an on-line poetry journal. This part of my sabbatical was both the most interesting and the least satisfying because I accidentally picked a perfect, but very challenging, time to study this phenomenon. In the past year, interest in cyberspace in general, and the World Wide Web in particular, has grown exponentially.

Very quickly I found my major interest was in the World Wide Web and its endless hyper-spaced linked sites of information. Although I did join one news group on creative writing, this mainly provided endless e-mail. Nor did I find electronic chat groups or poetry workshops appealing, perhaps because there's much more direct human contact at poetry readings, and I needed socializing because I did not have the contact of the class room. Consequently, I spent the last months of my sabbatical surfing the poetic Web, and riding a few appealing waves. I also used my interviews to learn more about on-line poetry.

But perhaps my main discovery was that the information is almost overwhelming. For example, on May 5, I logged onto America

On Line, entered Netcrawler, one of their available search engines, and did a search under the words "poetry magazines", and came up with over 21,000 possible sites. (Some of these were probably not valid, since I believe the machine was searching for the words "poetry" and "magazine" individually, but this is still a good deal of information.) Moreover, the information in cyberspace is constantly changing, as is apparent to anyone who uses it for a short-time, or as one of my most knowledgeable informants, Bruce Kiejewski, put it material on the Net has a "short shelf life."

I could easily have spent my entire sabbatical on-line, but that would have been less personally gratifying, and I would not have been able to discover as much about the Los Angeles poetry community. Consequently, what I have is the beginning of an exploration that I will continue. I have included Appendix III that list and briefly discusses 27 on-line poetry sites.

Here, I shall describe highlights my on-line experience as they relate to scholarship, publication, and learning opportunities. I shall also discuss some strategies or approaches for exploring the world of cyberpoetry. Other implications of my research will be discussed in the conclusion to my report.

SCHOLARSHIP:

The Web has many resources for the scholarly study of poetry. First, there are collections of poetry. It is possible, for example, to download Whitman's Leaves of Grass, on line. (Scholarly editions of many poets are now available through the Bartleby Project at Columbia University.) There are also pages

devoted to particular poets. For instance, Elizabeth Bishop, one of my favorites, has a page. Although the page is still under construction, it recently included a detailed discussion of the importance of sound, especially the sound of diphthongs, in her poem, "Filling Station." Some current poets, Carolyn Foche, for example, have personal home pages, which provide not only information about them, but information about the contemporary poetry world through links to other sites. There are, of course, very specific collections of poetry. I have mentioned the Bartleby Project. The Atlantic Monthly, to take another example, is now publishing The Atlantic Monthly Poetry Pages. These includes poems and readings by recent poets recently published in the magazine. (One can, for example, hear Philip Levine reading his work.) But the site additionally includes material from much earlier editions of the magazine--Robert Frost's poetry that appeared in The Atlantic Monthly, for instance.

The Web also provides resources for exploring a particular topic rather than a poet, and I have used it in that manner. One interest I have is in a poetic form called the "ghazal," a form that is employed in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu poetry, and has been imitated in English by a number of poets, Adrienne Rich in particular. It is, according to some, the only new poetic form to come into English poetry in many years. There is, however, recent controversy about whether this form has been understood correctly by its American proponents. Though the Web I was able to find out much more about ghazals--to go to the Urdu Poetry Pages,

for instance, and to see examples of the form in that language. (Naturally, I could not understand the poems, but I could certainly see where the rhymes and repetition occurred in the verse.) I also was able to read a long essay on the form translated from Hindi and to find a Pakistani engineering student at Ohio Wesleyan who is eager to contact those interested in his native form. (This on-line search on the Web, by the way, yielded me much more information on the ghazal than I had acquired from more conventional research.)

PUBLICATIONS:

Many are speculating as to whether on-line publication will replace books. When I attended the Popular Culture Convention in Las Vegas, for example, there was one panel that discussed the question of whether on-line publication might be a criteria for granting tenure at universities. One presenter even wondered if it would be possible to bring up the number of "hits" on an article posted on the Web as evidence of scholarly accomplishment. (A "hit" occurs when someone accesses a particular page or site through their computer.) David St. John, on the other hand, doubts that the screen can ever replace the physicality of books, and even Bruce Kiejewski thinks that computer publication must provide some "added value," since most people do not like to read things off the screen. (Curling up with a computer screen in bed is obviously not too convenient.) But whatever the exact future, there is much poetry published on-line. There are "teasers" of hard-copy journals, there are full on-line journals, there are pages of individuals and groups of poets. There are also many sites where

poets may submit material on-line.

"Teasers" are, perhaps too common. Caffeine, a Los Angeles paged poetry magazine, publishes a few poems, but not nearly all of each issues. (It does, however, permit electronic submissions.) The Atlantic Monthly Poetry Pages are a more sophisticated teaser. (The Atlantic Monthly, probably wisely, does not permit electronic submissions.) Bakunin, a San Fernando poetry magazine with a respectable reputation, despite the fact that it is dedicated to "the dead Russian anarchist" provides a few poems and information on the magazine. More importantly, though, it provides a long list of which are revealing and interesting.

There are, of course, full versions of some poetry magazines. Blue Penny Quarterly, for example, is a fairly high quality magazine completely on line. Poet On Line is an anthology that features such poets as Robert Bly and Tom Clark. Oasis is a poetry magazine of Barstow Community College. (Submissions are limited to students and faculty.) And Deep South is an on-line poetry review from New Zealand.

There are also, many other on-line publishing projects, some of them fascinating. There is, for example, the U.C.T. Poetry Web, a site where the work of poets from Cape Town South Africa is presented. This site is multicultural indeed--poets from all ethnic groups are represented. There are, of course, many individuals who have their own home pages where they present their poetry, much of it, of course, of not especially high quality. (It's easy to make fun of this sort of thing, but Whitman would have loved it and

probably thought W.W.W. stood for Walt Whitman World--"Behold Walt, you are the Internet/There is so much of you and so luscious.")

And, possibly most interesting for beginning students, there are places where they can post their poetry and sometimes receive comments from others about it. AHA! Poetry, for example, is a site that includes an "open mike," where individuals may submit poetry. (I did this and got a rather nice comment through e-mail.)

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES:

There are also on-line resources that for individuals who want to improve their writing more systematically. AHA! Poetry, once again, offers instruction in such exotic poetic forms as the cinquain, ghazal, haiku, renga, sijo, and tanka. The Electronic Poetry Pages offers a "workshop" where individuals can submit poems and receive feedback from other poets on them. It also offers fairly sound advice on how to give such feedback. Some of the Internet providers also offer resources. CompuServe, for example, offers writers "chat-rooms." It also offers a "mentoring program" where more "experienced" writers can give help to others. (This did not seem particularly valuable to me.) There are, of course, on-line courses where one can actually receive college credit. J. Sarge Reynold Community College in Virginia, for example, has an on-line poetry course that is taught by the same instructor who teaches their on-campus course. (The course is essentially a workshop run electronically. Students submit material. It is posted by the professor. Then he and the students comment on it electronically. There are also two books and regular background

reading.)

APPROACH:

Obviously there is a great deal of material on the Web that is worthwhile. There is also some of less value. I was interested, for example, to discover a listing of a Corporate Poetry Page. Here I found essentially a number of advertisements for the services or writings, electronic or otherwise, of a Mr. Essman. Mr. Essman is a "consultant" and "motivational speaker," who, among other things, can teach business seminars in "corporate poetry," which will improve their communications skills and "culture." These seminars will include such fixed forms as the haiku, blank verse, and the sonnet. Unfortunately, Mr. Essman, would be more persuasive if he didn't also offer computer programs, books, or tapes that could solve almost every problem imaginable. From him you can, for example, learn how to meet an ideal mate, or failing that, get advice for the love lorn. You can get information on how to stop smoking, or if that doesn't work, how to prepare to go under anaesthesia, or if even that doesn't work, how to write your own obituary.

Common sense would seem to indicate that this is not a site one would want to explore at too much length, but even pulling up home pages can take time. The best way I've found to locate reliable sites is by following the links of sites that appear to be of high quality. Finding these, of course, is aided by what I already know about the world of poetry. The Atlantic Monthly is a highly respected magazine, for example, and publication in it is

prestigious. Therefore, its links are probably worthwhile, or at least represent "the poetry establishment." Sometimes poets themselves have their sites, and if one likes a poet, then their choices can be rewarding. One of the most interesting sites, for example, that I found was the Carolyn Foche Page, which I referred to earlier.

Carolyn Foche is an honored poet who was seen on Bill Moyers' "The Language of Life," and who is especially concerned with the social impact of poetry. She is editor, for example, of the anthology, Against Forgetting, which presents poetry of the victims of the various horrors of this century, beginning with the Armenian genocide, and including such sad chapters as the holocaust and the Soviet suppression of Eastern Europe. The Carolyn Foche Page includes some information about her, as well as links for ordering her books. It also contains her personal home page which contains links to her own "hot spots" in the Web. Foche has an original and interesting mind, so naturally, her links are valuable. Much time could be spent in following them.

There is, in fact, so much material to explore in cyberspace that the fears of some of the poets I talked to that it might drain their time are more than a little justified. It can consume time, and even with a fast modem, too many minutes are spent waiting for information to download, especially if one is interested in graphics or real sound. In coming years, I will nevertheless continue some of that exploration. I hope to have students help me by getting them to explore sites on their own and then to make

reports on them the way I currently have them make reports on readings. I doubt, though, that I will want to be involved in a professional on-line poetry journal publication because screening submissions to an a poetry journal is such an overwhelming task. The proliferation of M.F.A. programs has increased submission everywhere, and editors are deluged. Bruce Kiejewski, for example, told me that he had over 4000 submissions for the last issue of Jacaranda Review, a minor publication. The only way he was able to handle this mountain at all was because the journal is linked to a graduate class at Cal State Fullerton. The ease of on-line submissions, of course, would make this even worse. After consultation with my department and division, I will, however, probably make some sort of proposal involving an on-line poetry course at Mt. Sac.

SUPPLEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

In the addendum to my proposal I mentioned that there might be some supplementary activities involved in my sabbatical, such as taking some poetry workshops and possibly attending some conferences during or close to my sabbatical. I did do this, and although it may not be an official part of the sabbatical, I would like to mention how much satisfaction it gave me.

Just before my sabbatical, I attended the Santa Monica Writers Conference. There I was able to study with Jane Hirshfield, Edward Hirsch, Philip Levine, and Patti Anne Rogers. During my sabbatical

I also took workshops through Beyond Baroque with David St. John, Holly Prado, and Thomas Lux. In addition, I studied privately with Maurya Simon. Through these workshops I was able make valuable contacts that were helpful in other aspects of my sabbatical. Moreover, I was able to witness experienced teachers of poetry.

Finally, during my sabbatical I was able read a great deal of contemporary poetry. Much of my reading was in preparation for interviews. Some of it, also, was a result. Maurya Simon, for example, introduced me to the wonderful prose poems of Russell Edson and even lent me some of his out-of-print material. (A partial list of my reading follows this report in Appendix IV.)

CONCLUSIONS AND RESULTS:

I think the above report and the following appendices make it quite clear that I completed the sabbatical project that I proposed:

1. I proposed that I would interview a number of teacher/poets in the Los Angeles area, a minimum of six. In fact, I interviewed seventeen of them. During process I have come to know the Los Angeles poetry world better and become known, to a slight extent, in it. Obviously, this will help in recruiting participants to speak at Writer's Day. (I have arranged for David St. John to speak at the 1997 event.) I have also learned much about poetry and about the teaching of poetry. I additionally now know a great deal about such exotic forms as the ghazal and the prose poem. I, furthermore, know that creative writing is quite

popular with college undergraduates and that this may, indeed, be one reason that we will want to continue it at Mt. SAC.

These interviews will make me a more effective creative writing teacher, and I suspect a more effective teacher in general. Much of what I learned can be shared with my colleagues informally and by this report. Moreover, poetry, or any creative activity exists within a community, within a culture. I now know more about the culture of poetry and can help interested students join that culture.

2. Besides talking to poet/teachers, I also proposed that I would investigate the "spoken-word" scene for poetry in this area. In my proposal I indicated that I would attend poetry readings and write a directory of readings that would contain reviews of at least ten venues. In fact, as Appendix I will show, I have reviewed twenty-four venues.

Attending these readings obviously made me more familiar with an important aspect of this areas poetry culture. It will enable me to direct students towards readings that may interest them. They will also use the reviews in Appendix I, as may my colleagues. (Placing them in the appendix makes it easier to print them separately.)

3. I also proposed that I would investigate the use of computers, and, more importantly, on-line communication for poetry. I have begun to do so through my own on-line explorations and through my interviews with poet/teachers. I say "begun" because I had not realized at the time how vast the world of cyberspace is.

I have, however, included in Appendix II, an evaluation of almost thirty useful sites which often contain good links to other sites. Again, I have put them in a separate appendix for ease of printing them separately.

This investigation has introduced me to a whole new world of poetry, and there are several ways I plan to expand it.

- a. Continue my exploration of poetry on-line.
- b. Encourage my students to explore on-line poetry sites and write reports them.
- c. Devise and propose an on-line poetry writing course, or perhaps a course that combines both on-line and on-campus work.

4. Finally, in my proposal I said that my sabbatical would reinvigorate me by contact with the kind of individuals and the literature that brought me into the teaching of English in the first place. Such has been the case. I certainly have met fascinating individuals and read and listened to wonderful literature. The writing of this report, moreover, has helped me clarify my thinking on many issues.

This sabbatical year has, without a doubt, been the best year of my life. Only the few months I spent studying classical drama in Greece comes even close. I did not lose weight as I had hoped --perhaps I should have picked a somewhat more aerobic project--but that is my only regret, and I take comfort in the words of Pablo Neruda in The Postman, "Poets are fat."

EDITORIAL

As I indicated, above, my sabbatical has reinvigorated me. It has also re-dedicated me to the value of poetry in any education,. I would, therefore, like to include some remarks about this value in my report.

Poetry is perhaps our oldest crafted form of communication. It certainly preceded the development of the book. It will outlive the book if the book should vanish. I hope that the Mt. SAC community, and in particular its administration and board will continue to support the teaching of poetry for a number of reasons:

1. Poetry is especially multi-cultural. Poets have long drawn from many cultural sources. For example, Robert Pinsky, raised as an orthodox Jew, and given the Pulitzer Prize for his translation of Dante's Inferno, finds multi-culturalism in Dante's use of both classical and biblical material.

Moreover, modern poetry has been especially multi-cultural. It's emphasis on imagery, for example, is a result of the interest of poets like Pound in Oriental poetry. In addition, forms have often been borrowed from other cultures. The popular haiku was originally Japanese. The ghazal, appears in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, and is even used in Indian popular music.

Perhaps particular poetic forms only develop from specific cultures and languages, and this is why poetry went global long before the Internet. At any event poets continue to be especially interested in translation, much more interested than novelists.

Robert Hass, for example, has devoted much energy to the translation of Czeslaw Milosz, the Polish Noble Laureate. And Richard Barnes, the poet/teacher I interviewed at Pomona College, and his colleague, Robert Mezey, have just finished a long-awaited translation of the poetry of Jorge Luis Borges, a Chilean Noble Prize winner.

2. Writing poetry is an excellent way of teaching any kind of writing. The compression and economy of a poem can translate into other writing. That is why Ron Koertge, a poet teacher I interviewed, maintains writing poetry will tighten up one's prose. And at the Convention of the Popular Culture Society one presenter noted that both Peter Elbow, the guru of writing as process, and the new rhetoricians, the re-formulators of classical rhetorical theory, have advocated writing poetry in regular composition courses. (They do so, of course, for different reasons: Elbow because "college is short and life is long," the rhetoricians because the composing of poetry was part of the traditional method of teaching writing.)

3. Poetry, like most arts, employs both critical and creative thinking--not just the left or right brain, but the whole brain. Anyone who does not see this should try composing a sestina, a ghazal, or using line breaks effectively in free verse.

4. The teaching of poetry is collaborative since the workshop method is used. Such workshops, for example, arranged their chairs in circles long before other courses had broken out of their rows.

5. A poem, especially a good modern one, is a multi-media device.

There is sound, of course, when the poem read aloud. There is sight, the look of the poem on the screen or page. There are the many appeals to all the senses that imagery of modern poetry makes. In fact, both Robert Hass and Robert Pinsky say poetry is the most physical of all arts because in reading poetry we take another person's breathing into our body.

6. **Poetry meets student needs.** Since many students in four year colleges take creative writing, poetry in a community college can prepare them for this work. In addition, writing poetry can help students in a poetry classes bond with one another. It can be used to help students deal with their developmental and identity issues.

7. **Poetry is practical.** Supreme Court Justice Stevens says that the study of poetry is the best training for the law. Moreover, since the entertainment industry is such a major industry in Los Angeles, course in the creative arts do not seem inappropriate. Modern poetry with its emphasis on image is, in fact, considered by some as closer to cinema than other art forms.

Finally, in this information age, where we are bombarded with messages, the problem increasingly becomes how we can get our messages noticed. Perhaps, therefore, the training that poetry gives in making one's words both memorable and economical may well be important.

These claims, of course, are considerable, and if elaborated would probably take many pages. I invite any members of the administration or of the board who have doubts to take my course.

I will do my best to be persuasive.

Finally, since I have spent so much time dealing with poetry, I would like to end with one of my own that I wrote the summer before I began this project:

FREE ADVICE

I sit on a cliff near Dana Point,
that may crumble with next year's rain.

On the table is the paper. Injustice is
steady as the G.N.P. The body count is up.

Light glints off a sea indifferent
to our politics. The light is not

the sea's but stays a while with it,
a lens to look through whales and plankton.

A tree in the patio twists wooden rage
around boles and broken branches.

Teenagers walk the beach in advertisements
not meant for eyes of fifty-four.

A sailboat cuts the water like a surgeon.
My hand cannot stop it, nor the tree's

rage, nor the young bodies, nor even
the light it divides with its bow.

We are all center stage, but only
in one theatre. The world is not

a cloth cut to our nakedness, a frame
for our desires. And a good thing:

for this world remains.

(Poetry also remains.)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

These interviews were usually made in person at one sitting. In one or two instances, I supplemented the original interview with later conversations and phone calls. I recorded many of the interviews, but have used the recordings only to refresh my memory. I have not attempted to transcribe the interviews word for word, but have preferred to summarize main points. I did this because I felt this would make it easier to generalize from them and because I wanted to keep the interviews as informal as possible, especially since I was doing so many of them. (More formal transcribed interviews could involve some writers editing their material, the exchange of drafts, etc., and could be an entire sabbatical project alone.)

In my proposal I indicated I might ask the following questions:

1. Do you have any difficulty attracting students to your classes? How do you deal with that difficulty?
2. What kind of students are attracted to your classes? And what are their goals?
3. How can the reading and writing of poetry be introduced to students who have had minimal contact and concern with it?
4. Is the general social atmosphere at this time conducive

for the teaching and study of poetry?

5. Are your administration and colleagues supportive of your activities?
6. How do you look at the Los Angeles poetry scene at this time?
7. What do you think of the spoken-word scene?
8. Is it valuable to introduce creative writing students and students in general to it?
9. What use do you make of computer technology in your classes?
10. What do you think are the advantages and problems of using on-line sharing of material as part of poetry workshopping? Could you see a course organized primarily around it?

In actual practice I varied the questions slightly according to the individual. (Not everyone, for example, was an active teacher.) In summarizing the interviews, therefore, I will deal with five basic categories: (1) background; (2) teaching; (3) poetry today; (4) poetry in Los Angeles; (5) computers. The interviewees will be presented alphabetically:

ROSEMARY ADAM**BACKGROUND:**

Rosemary Adam retired last year after twenty-two years of teaching English and creative writing at Claremont High School. During that period she started a creative writing program that at one time had eight classes in it.

TEACHING:

Rosemary taught on a workshop model where students had to share everything they wrote. She thinks this is one of the reason that her classes were so popular--this and the fact that students could say what they want. Her classes were well supported by administrators because her students won many writing awards. (There were, however, some problems with censorship.)

The classes usually included all kinds of creative writing--scripts and short stories as well as poetry. Rosemary did encourage them to go to local poetry readings and also had writers of various types appear in her class room. (At one point she had Richard Wilbur, the poet laureate appear.)

LA POETRY:

Rosemary went to readings in Los Angeles and elsewhere quite a bit a few years ago, but is not too involved in them now, although she certainly is aware that there are many readings.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

She is aware that there are many marvelous things going on.

COMPUTERS:

Rosemary writes on computers or any other way that is available to her. She has not learned too much about them yet or about the issues involved in on-line publishing.

MICHAEL ANDREWS**BACKGROUND:**

Michael Andrews is a poet, photographer, and fine book publisher who has been active in the Los Angeles poetry world for years. Along with Jack Grapes, he is the editor of Bombshelter Press which publishes ONTHEBUS, one of the few Los Angeles poetry magazines to attain any national prominence. His most recent book is COFFIN LUMBER. His philosophy book, The Gnomes of Uncertainty is available on the World Wide Web. Michael Andrews has worked extensively as a computer programmer.

TEACHING:

Andrews has taught many workshops in the past, although he is not currently doing so. Like most teachers he feels that it is important to encourage students to read poetry. He also feels that poetry should be aural and that it is important for students to go to poetry readings and to learn how to perform their poems aloud. This is part of his instruction in class. (One of the most important things he feels is for poets to take enough time in reading their poems.)

Andrews is far from an "academic poet," and doesn't believe in form. He feels, for example, that any of his students' poems that

attempt to use form will always be better if they abandon that form. Andrews does, however, very much believe in revision and economy. At one time he considered making students actually set lead type for their poems to make them careful with their words. He also feels that people who write regularly learn little tricks to get into poems--what poet Richard Hugo, I believe, called "triggers"--so students need to learn their own so they can eliminate them and start their poems where they actually begin.

Andrews teaches, like almost everyone else, by the workshop method. He does use many writing exercises. One he mentioned, was to have students pretend they would die soon, and on one piece of paper write everything they had learned about the world that they wanted to tell their children. It had to be original; they could not simply repeat other people's ideas. This exercise was not intended so much as a poem as it is to give some intellectual substance to student work--to help students write something that does not simply repeat their daily experience.

In a workshop, of course, students must learn to look at their work objectively. But sometimes the teacher should be careful with criticism. Andrews, for example, approaches cliches by telling the student that they have tagged that part of the poem so they can come back and work on it later.

POETRY TODAY:

Andrews is not actively working on poetry now, and his attitude is decidedly negative. As a matter of fact, when I told him I had only been writing for a few years, he asked me if there

was anything he could say to discourage me before it became too much of a compulsion. (This is not as unusual a position as one might imagine. T.S. Eliot is reported to have told young people to avoid poetry because it led only to heartbreak.)

Like others, the new formalist critic/poet Dana Goia, for example, Andrews believes that poetry is too dominated by the expansion of M.F.A. programs. The main audience for poetry is other poets, and any art that is appreciated only by practitioners is dead. As mentioned before, Andrews feels that the "academics" are too large a force and that professional poetry is a pyramid game. (Of course, Andrews adds, almost everything else in America society is a pyramid game as well.)

Andrews is aware of many of the attempts to present poetry in different ways. We discussed, for example, The United States of Poetry series, produced by Bob Holman, that appeared on P.B.S. and received much attention.

Like other poets I have talked to, he didn't like the series, which employed many visual effects similar to M.T.V. Andrews does not think, as some do, that the image overwhelmed the poetry, but that the poetry was simply bad. Unfortunately, according to Andrews, there are too many people in positions of power in poetry who simply do not have good taste.

LOS ANGELES POETRY:

Not surprisingly, Andrews is rather negative about Los Angeles poetry. There is a lot going on, and Andrews certainly encourages his students to attend readings.

However, Andrews agrees that one of the major problems with Los Angeles poetry is the lack of publishing. The loss of N.E.A. funds may aggravate this, but the N.E.A. has never been especially helpful. The L.A. poetry would, like everything else, is very political, with some co-operation, but too many divisions. The Los Angeles Times has not been especially helpful either, especially because of its past reluctance to review poetry.

COMPUTERS:

The one thing Michael Andrews is enthusiastic about is computers and the Internet. Andrews feels that the Internet presents the possibility of undermining all elites, including the elites involved in poetry. Although large corporations are pushing the information super highway for their own purposes, he feels they will not be able to control its possibilities.

Michael has also worked with hypertext and has written stories with alternative endings. He has, as I mentioned, one work that is being published on the Internet. (It is also being published on paper because of copyright concerns.) Michael could certainly envision publishing a magazine on-line, although permitting submissions on-line would be a difficult. He and his partner, Jack Grapes, can hardly keep up with the paper submissions to ONTHEBUS, their poetry journal. If on-line submissions were permitted, "You could get 1000 in one day." One possible way of handling this, according to Andrews, might be to get everyone who submits to screen fifty other submissions.

DICK BARNES**BACKGROUND:**

Dick Barnes is head of the English Department at Pomona College. He is a widely published poet. With Robert Mezey, who also teaches in the Pomona English Department, he has just completed a long awaited translation of the poetry of the great Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges. Dick also plays the "rub board" in the Claremont fixture, "The Real Time Jazz Band."

TEACHING:

At one time Dick believed that poetry could not be taught. This is why he did not go to the Iowa Writers' Workshop, but to Harvard and studied literature. This is also why when he was first asked to teach writing at Pomona he refused to do so. Now he does teach an introductory course.

Dick still feels that students mainly teach themselves, and describes himself as a "taoist teacher." He does not use many prompts or in-class writings. He has noticed the same changes in students that almost everyone has noticed--changes in their reading ability, etc. One less predictable change, however, is that students seem to be more interested in poetic forms. He does encourage students to attend readings. There are currently many at the Claremont Colleges, such as those given recently by the distinguished Pitzer visiting professor, Maxine Kumin.

LOS ANGELES POETRY:

Dick is somewhat remote from the Los Angeles poetry world. He sees a lot going on, which is probably a good thing. Although he

was published in Bill Mohr's early Los Angeles anthology, Poetry Loves Poetry, he did not appear in Suzanne Lummis' and Charles Webb's Grand Passion. Perhaps, Dick speculated, that is his fault, or maybe he should be mad at someone.

POETRY TODAY:

There is a lot of activity going on, and some of it may be valuable. Certainly there is much activity at the Claremont Colleges, at Pitzer, for example, with their visiting writer's program. Perhaps students are interested in creative writing now because it is hardly less practical than studying literature. Dick also agreed with my suggestion that the interest in creative writing may be related to the interest in writing in general that came out of the recent composition theory. However, this is not true of Pitzer, which had creative writing as far back as the sixties, and teacher Bert Meyers.

This is not a bad time for poetry. Dick is not worried about the disappearance of N.E.A. Funding. "They never gave me any money." Poets In the Schools, a project partly funded by N.E.A. money that had practicing poets come to schools, might have been good, but one of the main things they did is teach students that poetry shouldn't rhyme. It is true that the N.E.A. might affect little magazines. But there were little magazines before there was the N.E.A., and there probably will be little magazines afterwards. They just won't look so slick.

COMPUTERS:

Except for research, Barnes is not enthusiastic about

computers. Dick writes in long-hand on yellow paper and only later puts his poems into his computer. When I mentioned that a computer makes it easier for me to play with line breaks, his response was, yes, but maybe that is something I shouldn't always do. Outside of research, Barnes sees the Internet as a time consumer, although he is currently pulling up Italian newspapers to teach himself that language. Pointing to the floor to ceiling bookcases in his office he said, "I can't even read the books in this room." Even where research is concerned, he thinks that the Internet will destroy memory in much that same way that written language affected memory in the past.

Of course, according to Barnes, for many people communication over the Internet seems special, a kind of magic. This is always true, according to Barnes, of new media. When Sequoia developed a written alphabet for the Cherokee, he used it for ritualistic formulas, in much the same way that the Norse used their runes.

Whatever Barnes' view of computers, he is enthusiastic about poetry. When I told him that my taking up poetry may be a cheap mid-life substitute for a red sports car, he said, "It will take you farther."

ALLEN BERMAN

BACKGROUND:

Allen Berman has taught creative writing at Upland High School for some time. I first met him when he and some of his students attended the open reading I facilitate at Barnes and Noble in

Montclair, and I was impressed by what good writers some of his students were. When I interviewed him he was on leave from Upland High School and working as a technical writer.

TEACHING:

Mr. Berman has taught a wide range of students at Upland High School, and has used a number of approaches. Recently he has used an approach he has learned as a student of Jack Grapes, L.A. poet and teacher.

Jack Grapes concentrates on the creation of "voice" in a poem--the sense of a definite speaker and style behind the work. This is not unusual, but Mr. Grapes approach is somewhat different. Mr. Grapes has classified a number of different voices--the erudite, intellectual one that Eliot and Pound used, for example, or "deep voice"--a mystical, orphic speech from the deepest part of the self. He has students keep journals in these various specific voices. They bring the journals to class and read from them aloud.

The students comment only on whether or not the speaker stays in a particular voice. Later students work material from their journals into their poems. Even later they make booklets of their work. Mr. Berman used this approach with his students, and, according to him, he found them very enthusiastic and their work of high quality. In particular he feels that the possibility of publication--any kind of publication--is a motivating factor for students.

Administration at Mr. Berman's school was less enthusiastic. Mr. Berman always gave students who did not want to hear some

material read the option of leaving the room--there was a class room where they could go. However, one student's grandmother complained about the material that was read in class, including one poem about a lesbian affair. As a result, students were told that poetry could no longer be read aloud in class. Mr. Berman was especially pleased with his students reaction to this incident. "It was the first time they had ever become angry on principle." Creative writing is not now being offered at Upland High School. The administration claims this is because not enough students signed up for the course, but Mr. Berman has other suspicions. He is currently on leave not because of that incident, but because he fell into a job doing technical writing for Toyota.

L.A. POETRY:

Mr. Berman encouraged his students to attend poetry readings and lately has taken to attending some events in Los Angeles. He especially enjoyed going to a poetry slam at the Midnight Special Bookstore.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

There is much going on, but Mr. Berman naturally worries about the future of poetry in a society that increasingly worries about offending.

COMPUTERS:

Mr. Berman thinks computers can be very valuable, but he did not have sophisticated equipment available for his class and made due with fairly simple word-processors.

RALPH CARLSON**BACKGROUND:**

Ralph Carlson teaches a wide-range of subjects, including creative writing at Azusa Pacific, a church sponsored school in Glendora. He is a published poet who also runs an open poetry reading at 222 Espresso Bar in Glendora.

TEACHING:

Ralph teaches a class called "Modern Poetry" that is a combination of a literature and writing course. For that reason he has not had too much trouble filling the class since it attracts English majors and students who are planning to go into teaching. He has also not had much trouble filling the class since A.P.U. has expanded its enrollment.

The students come with a variety of abilities. Some may actually have published poetry. Others may simply be taking the class as an experiment. All could read more, as is true of many students nowadays. Many students have a typical romantic view of poetry as self-expression. Others are deeply religious and seem to think poetry is the setting of psalms to verse.

Ralph tries hard to move students from a "I can do it" to a "I can do it well" approach to art. He does have students write forms in their poetry notebook, and he has them do writing exercises in class. One exercise, for example, is to free associate words that can later be used to start a sestina.

As far as evaluation is concerned Dr. Carlson uses a point system that gives heavy emphasis to simply completing the various

assignments, for example, merely writing a sonnet. Other points are given for the quality of work. The class has lecture one day a week and workshoping--the sharing and criticism of poems on other days.

L.A. POETRY:

Dr. Carlson encourages students to attend poetry readings, although he has some reservations about the open readings and poetry slams. He has a "no excused absences" policy in his courses, but students can make up absences by reports on poetry readings.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

We are living in a world in which art that does not lead to obvious monetary advantage is looked on with suspicion. Nevertheless, there is a lot of poetry activities, and that is encouraging.

COMPUTERS:

Dr. Carlson is fairly knowledgeable where computers are concerned. His students meet in the class computer lab which is networked and where they could, at least theoretically, make comments on each other's poems by computer. Few of them choose to do this. Perhaps things would go better if the entire campus were networked and students could work on their assignments from their dorms.

Dr. Carlson is beginning to be interested in on-line publishing, and he has thought about the advantageous and disadvantageous of conducting a class on-line. The advantage, of

course, would be for students who had transportation difficulties, or who worked slowly. Other students who need more personal contact would not like this approach as much.

In general Dr. Carlson finds computers an advantage, although at times they can make poor quality work seem better than it is, especially when people become overly concerned with graphics. He was involved in one publication, for example, where the graphics actually interfered with the poetry.

BRUCE KIEJEWSKI

BACKGROUND:

Bruce Kiejewski has an M.F.A. from Warren Wilson College. He is the editor of the Jacaranda Review, a poetry review formerly published from U.C.L.A. and now published out of Cal State University, Fullerton. He teaches part-time at U.C.L.A. and at Los Angeles Community College. Most importantly, Mr. Kiejewski is extensively involved in electronic publishing. He has worked for Voyager, a Santa Monica based CD-Rom publisher. Currently he is putting together a CD-Rom of Carolyn Foche's poetry, and he is also working on an on-line version of Jacaranda. Since Mr. Kiejewski knew far more than anyone I've talked to about electronic publishing, our conversation involved this almost exclusively. The categories here, consequently, will be somewhat different.

DISTANCE LEARNING:

Mr. Kiejewski sees distance learning as an unavoidable force that can alter or even eliminate the university. This is for very

simple economic reasons. The cost of faculty salaries is by no means the major expense of learning institutions. There is the upkeep of the physical plant and all the numerous support personal needed. It is not surprising, consequently, that tuition keeps climbing even in a situation where students sit in classes of 300 that are taught by graduate assistants.

It would be possible, therefore, for someone--say Bill Gates and I.T.& T.--to get into education. They could hire a foremost expert on a subject to teach a class electronically, and since they would not have the overhead of the university, easily pay them twice what they would earn at any institution.

Of course, this could probably be most appropriate for subjects that are normally taught by lecture. Writing would be a different thing because it is a hands-on subject that demands direct response and small classes.

However, writing, and creative writing in particular, could still be taught electronically. I suggested to Bruce that a poetry course would, in fact, be one of the easiest things to teach on-line. Students submit material electronically and the teacher and other students comment on it electronically instead of in person as they would in an in-class workshop. What you would have would be essentially a correspondence course by electronic means, and correspondence courses have been widely and successfully used in creative writing.

Mr. Kijewski agreed that this would be quite possible. He went on to say that Warren Wilson is a "low-residency" program that

operates largely by correspondence. Students meet briefly on-campus and then pursue their individual projects by correspondence. This approach worked very well for him and was, in fact, the best education that he had.

The major problem he sees is sound. It is important to hear poetry. In the seminars that he had during the residency program at Warren Wilson student poems were always read aloud--once by the poet and once by someone else. (This is the same approach was used by Thomas Lux in a seminar I took from him--not surprisingly--since Tom Lux has also taught at Warren Wilson.) It would be ideal, therefore, to be able to use sound with the poetry. But this would involve using "real sound," which presents certain technical difficulties. It takes up a lot of space and also students would have to be using a system, such as "Netscape" that accepts real sound. He also agreed that an initial on-campus meetings of the class to facilitate bonding might not be a bad idea.

I raised the question of whether there isn't something given up by not having the face to face class meetings. Much of communication is non-verbal and assumably a good workshop leader may respond to the subtle non-verbal communication in the group. Kiejewski responded that it is possible to misread non-verbal cues and prejudices are sometimes formed non-verbally.

CD-ROM PUBLISHING:

Bruce Kiejewski was involved, as mentioned above, with a CD-Rom Publisher, Voyager. He originally did this because he hoped this would have the opportunity to work with poetry. Instead he

worked on the re-issuing of books for Modern Library. Now, as also mentioned above, he is working on a project with the poet, Carolyn Foche. Kiejewski says that any on-line publishing must have some "added value" features to compensate for the fact that people don't enjoy reading text off the screen. There must be some way to search the material or additional video or audio. In the Carolyn Foche project he is combining the text from her books with videos of her reading her poems. He is also trying to come up with a method to scan the metrics of the lines electronically. (This is a very difficult goal that involves, among other things, the use of "fuzzy logic." It may, however, reveal much we have not realized about the nature of metrical poetry.)

The Jacaranda Review will soon be out in an on-line version as well, and Bruce Kiejewski had much to say about the on-line publishing of poetry. He feels that it is always necessary to have a hard-copy version of the magazine as well, but he does not plan to simply make the Jacaranda Review a teaser for the hard copy version. (A number of magazines do this.) The on-line version, however, will be different, and it will have some "added value" features that Kiejewski was not willing to be too specific about. One thing he will do is to contact major poets that he knows and who have books coming out. He will try to get them to give him poems out of the books and then set up a hypertext connection so the books can be ordered directly.

Kiejewski thinks it would be quite possible to set up an on-line poetry journal at some place like Mt. Sac. Probably it would

be a wise idea to make some sort of alliance with people in information technology. Even with that it could involve a tremendous amount of work. Any home page needs to be maintained, and on-line publication have a shorter "shelf-life" and need to be updated more often than hard copy publications. Moreover, just screening submissions is a major difficulty for any publication. They recently had to screen over 4000 hard copy submissions for Jacaranda. Electronic submissions would probably make things worse, which is one of the reasons that they will not allow them for the on-line version of Jacaranda.

Obviously, though, despite some reservations, Kiejewski is enthusiastic about the effect of computers and on-line technology on poetry and education. Interestingly, he does not write poetry on the computer but only rearranges what he's written by hand, nor is he enthusiastic about the use of hypertext within a poem.

RON KOERTGE

BACKGROUND:

Ron Koertge has taught poetry for nearly twenty-five years at Pasadena City College. He has published over ten books of poetry, has been an inspiration for other poets who consider themselves "standup poets", and is well-known for the humor in his work.

TEACHING:

I attended Ron's class as well as talked with him. Ron does not feel it is presently too much of a problem attracting students to his classes, although sometimes it has been a problem in the

past. He seems to have been given a good deal of latitude as far as enrollment is concerned. In 1995 he had the first week to add students to his class and was able to give wavers directly to students who came in.

Like others, Ron has noticed a drop-off in the quality of student preparation, but he does not assign reading. He feels if one wants to be a poet, he should stay away from classes in which poetry is analyzed. He has also noticed that when there was a good deal of reading in his classes, there was less writing.

This does not mean that Ron does not see the importance of discipline or of reading. Ron believes in writing every day and in not waiting for inspiration. He also believes in reading poetry aloud--in just letting it "roll over you." In periods of dryness he thinks it's especially helpful to read poetry by writers that one does not normally read, or even like.

Ron's classes are conducted workshop style. Everyone is to bring in an original poem to discuss every week. In the discussions Ron emphasizes the marketability. He will ask students, for example, if the first line of the poem is good and at which line they lose interest during the poem. He also asks the students to consider what the poem demands of the reader and why the reader should meet those demands. Unlike some teachers, he also brings his own poems and has them evaluated in class.

Ron also does not use a textbook. He prefers to concentrate on student work. He does require students to write some formal poetry since he feels this is good for their style. (At one point

he went through a period of writing a sonnet a day to improve his own work.) He does not require students to bring the formal poems to class, nor does he evaluate them in any way except on whether or not they have completed them since most students cannot write formal poetry well. Ron does not even teach these forms. He has books on them available in the library. The students read these books and turn in the poems. If the students attend class, workshop poems, and write the formal poems, they receive a B. If they want an A they have to do a further project which involves imitating a particular poet.

L.A. POETRY:

Ron also has his students attend one poetry reading and make a report on it. At one time Ron participated very widely in Los Angeles poetry readings. In fact he and his friend, Charles Webb, would often go to a different poetry reading every night. Now he does not attend many readings. Still, he is glad that there are so many poetry readings going on in Los Angeles, even though some of them are dismal.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

There is obviously somewhat less support for poetry now that the N.E.A. money is drying up. However, there is still a lot of poetry being written and published. As a matter of fact, Ron notes that it is getting harder to have material published. This is probably because there are so many M.F.A. programs.

COMPUTERS:

Ron is anti-technological. He has never shown a movie or used

an overhead in his class, nor does he intend to. Moreover, he is suspicious of computers because they often make bad writing look better than it is, and he has other things to do with his life than spend time time his e-mail. On the other hand, he thinks it would be perfectly possible to teach a writing course by computer since there are already M.F.A. courses, such of those of Warren Wilson College and Bard College, that are done mostly by mail.

GARY KROEKER

BACKGROUND:

Gary Kroeker is the head of the English Department at Los Altos High School. He has published six novels and two books of poetry. He serves as a poetry consultant for the Advanced Placement Program of the College Board and often gives workshops to high school teachers on the teaching of poetry.

TEACHING:

Los Altos does not currently have a creative writing course, but Mr. Kroeker has taught creative writing in the past. Like almost everyone else, he feels that it is essential to get students reading poetry. In particular one has to work to get students to appreciate the depth of really great poetry. One approach Gary used with an eager student was to have her write a journal entry every week on Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium." The student found that she actually could do this, thus showing the significance and depth of the poem.

L.A. POETRY:

Mr. Kroeker does not participate too much in the L.A. poetry scene, although he agrees that there seems to be a style to many of the spoken word poets. Sometimes it involves the extended metaphor, as, for example, in Charles Webb's "The Death of Santa Claus."

Mr. Kroeker does not often do public readings. He was asked recently to do one by Barnes and Noble in West Covina. He asked them in turn if they would carry his books. When he was told no, he refused.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Our discussion did not deal at length with poetry in general. Mr. Kroeker did note that the large bookstores are an increasing concern. They will only stock books by major distributors, which eliminates a lot of poetry.

COMPUTERS:

They were not part of our discussion

SUZANNE LUMMIS**BACKGROUND:**

Suzanne Lummis has an M.A. from Cal State Fresno where she studied with the distinguished poet and teacher, Philip Levine. A few years ago she organized the L.A. Poetry Festival, which gave readings all over Los Angeles. An outgrowth of that is Grand Passion, the most recent and comprehensive anthology of Los Angeles area poetry, which she edited with Charles Webb.

TEACHING:

Suzanne has taught in prisons, and in Poets in the Schools. Currently she is teaching in the U.C.L.A. Extension Program. She also teaches at Covenant House, a center for homeless children.

She feels the most important thing in teaching poetry is to overcome people's misconceptions as to what it is. Reading is, of course, very important in doing this and in general. "You can't be a poet if you don't like poetry, and if you like poetry, you're going to read it." It is also important to look at the world around one and to bring that into one's poetry.

Suzanne does use in-class writing exercises. One she has found especially successful is to have students write a brief memory and exchange what they have written. Then they write poems on each other's memories. Later they compare their imaginings with their fellow students' actual memories.

Suzanne encourages students to go to readings and asks at the beginning of her classes if there are any important poetry happenings the class should know about. Like many people, she has reservations about the "coffee house" poetry scene. There is often very bad poetry in the coffee houses, but there is also bad poetry at the Lannan Foundation--a series of readings at the Pacific Design Center where featuring nationally poets. Moreover, many of the established poets in Los Angeles were once part of the coffee house poetry world, and she is certain good poets will emerge out of it again.

L.A. POETRY:

Suzanne has strong opinions about Los Angeles poetry. She feels that there are many fine poets in Los Angeles, but not all of them have received the recognition that they should. Certainly the fact that there is no significant publishing in Los Angeles does not help. But she does not feel that the main problem lies with the "eastern establishment" in poetry, but with the L.A. media, especially the Los Angeles Times.

The L.A. Times has consistently ignored significant poets in Los Angeles, such as Bill Mohr. The "Life and Style," section, which has more "life than style," has been especially bad. Suzanne is particularly angered that the Times virtually ignored Grand Passion, even though it had nationally known poets in it, while giving more attention to less significant events. (After I interviewed Ms. Lummis, "Life and Style," printed a mostly complimentary article on her activities on May 10, 1996, and she told me recently that she regrets the strength of her remarks.)

Suzanne feels that L.A. poetry has a special contribution to make because of all the turmoil in Los Angeles--because the city burned down and then fell down. The poets need to address these issues, but they are very difficult issues to address poetically. A poet must be at the height of her powers to write on them.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Poetry in general is fairly healthy. It is not as dominated by "academic poetry" as it once was. Even Philip Levine, much honored by the poetry establishment, is somewhat of an outsider.

ANNETTE LYNCH**BACKGROUND:**

Annette Lynch taught poetry at Mt. San Antonio College for almost forty years. She has published widely, and, although retired, is still an active poet.

TEACHING:

Like almost everyone else Nettie taught poetry by the workshop method. She emphasizes clarity in the teaching of poetry, and feels that the use of journal material is helpful. She also feels it is helpful if students have a chance to see their poetry printed.

Over the years Nettie has noticed a fall off in the quality of student work. She also has noticed that there are fewer students interested in writing poetry. At one time she had sixty students in her poetry classes. During her teaching career she found that administrators were not always supportive of the teaching of poetry, but her colleagues were.

L.A. POETRY:

Nettie thinks all the poetic activity and readings that are taking place in the Los Angeles area are wonderful. She especially likes the readings put on by the Lannan Foundation at the Pacific Design Center and at the Chateau Marmont by the Poetry Society of America.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Nettie thinks that poetry is fundamental and is pleased that there seems to be a revival of interest in it in the United States.

She thinks writing poetry should be a required part of a college education.

COMPUTERS:

Nettie does not know much about computer technically, but she thinks they are very helpful

BILL MOHR

BACKGROUND:

Bill Mohr has been a fixture in the Los Angeles poetry scene for many years. He edited the first extensive anthology of Los Angeles poetry, Poetry Loves Poetry, and has worked with Poetry in the Schools and as a long-time workshop leader at Beyond Baroque. He has also taught creative writing through U.C.L.A. Extension.

TEACHING:

Bill has many comments to make on teaching. He does not normally use any in class exercises, although he does do this when working with youngsters in the schools. Here the teacher has to help the students not only with their poetry, but also with coming up with subject matter. He tries to use student writing as the examples of good writing for classes since often professional writing seems intimidating.

Nevertheless, Bill feels that reading is absolutely essential for the students, and agrees that some students are reluctant to do it. One absolutely cannot write without reading--it would be like composing music without ever practicing Mozart. One of the most

important things, in fact, that a writing teacher can do is to give students reading lists. The dedicated ones will eventually go back to them. With today's students, however, it is perhaps necessary to describe the books to give them some sort of idea why the books are worth reading. Perhaps the students are reluctant to read because, like everyone else, they feel increasing time pressure in today's world.

L.A. POETRY:

Bill has been involved in the Los Angeles poetry world for years and is somewhat jaded. He's heard repeatedly about the revival of L.A. poetry and wonders how long we're going to apply C.P.R. before we give up. The major problem with Los Angeles poetry is there is no book publishing. It's as if there were Nashville with all its musicians and songwriters, but no music industry. He also agrees that there is somewhat of a style to L.A. poetry readings--a humorous approach popularized by Ron Koertge and later Charles Webb. Nevertheless, he does think it valuable to send students to readings.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Mr. Mohr's remarks were more focused on Los Angeles poetry.

COMPUTERS:

Bill thinks computers are helpful in preparing manuscripts, but he does not have much interest in on-line publishing. He is concerned with letting go of his work by putting it on the Web. He also is attached to the physicality of a book, to its convenience as opposed to a computer screen. Although he agrees that hypertext

could be used to create a non-linear book, he has also seen fairly successful attempts at this using paper.

THOMAS LUX

BACKGROUND:

Thomas Lux is the author of thirteen books of poetry. He is a member of the writing faculty at Sarah Lawrence and a core faculty member of the Warren Wilson M.F.A. Program for Writers. He was the winner of the 1995 Kingsley Tufts Award from Claremont Graduate School for his book, "Split Horizon." This \$50,000 award is the largest award given in America for a single book of poetry. In 1995 he was a visiting professor at U.C. Irvine. During that time I took a workshop from him at Beyond Baroque. Although I did not interview Mr. Lux formally, he talked extensively on poetry and on the situation of poetry in the United States during the workshop and over lunch. I learned much and have, therefore, included his remarks in this report.

TEACHING:

Mr. Lux, like almost everyone else, teaches through the workshop method: students bring in poems, they are read to the group, and then comments are made. There are some variations that are worth noting. In Mr. Lux's workshop there are two readings of every poem. First the student reads the poem aloud, and then Mr. Lux, or another member of the workshop reads the poem. Mr. Lux feels it is particularly important that students hear how their

poems sound and encourages them to read their material into a tape recorder and then listen to it.

After the readings Mr. Lux and the group go over the poem in detail line by line. This, Mr. Lux, admits, is a very linear approach to the poem, and he seldom makes any suggestions for extensive elimination or rearrangement of material--what is sometimes called the "slash and burn" approach to poetry. This may be a weakness Lux admits, but he simply needs to operate in a linear manner.

In his comments Lux emphasizes clarity. In any poem there must be "sign-posts"--indications of who, what, when and where--so the reader doesn't get lost. This may even include punctuation. Some writers do not punctuate, or use alternative methods of punctuation. This is all right, but if one does so, she must teach the reader within the poem how to read the poem. There is, moreover, nothing intrinsically more poetic about not punctuating.

Mr. Lux feels that sound is especially important in poetry and is one of the things that a poet should pay attention to when revising. When a line seems flat and uninteresting, for example, he often finds it is because there are not enough stressed syllables in the line.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Mr. Lux had little to say about poetry in Los Angeles, or about computers, but he did have much to say about poetry in the United States at present.

Mr. Lux feels that poetry is going through a revival in the

United States. This is occurring because people yearn for something that is simple, direct, and not extremely technological. There is a great deal of highly accessible poetry being written now, which is good. Poetry has been hurt greatly by obscure, and overly intellectual "academic writing." Poetry needs emotion. In particular Lux condemns the work of John Ashbury, which he finds stultifying.

HOLLY PRADO

BACKGROUND:

Holly Prado has been an active L.A. poet for many years. Since the '70's she has taught privately. She has also taught as a master poet/teacher in Poet's In the Schools. Currently she teaches the Principles of Poetic Techniques in the Professional Writing Program at U.S.C.

TEACHING:

Holly notices that her students now are much more concerned with economic security than they used to be. They are also intellectually more post-modern--more cynical, suspicious of emotion, and, except for the older students, less lyrical. Some of them are quite well-read, but they haven't read the same things that she has. In particular, they are not familiar with Charles Olsen, whom she considers a major writer. She, consequently, includes some explication and discussion of poetry in her classes.

The most important thing she feels that her students have to learn is accuracy. Many of them have overblown ideas as to what

poetry is--that it has to be concerned with something very big. Once they can accurately represent their own experience or imagination in their writing it is generally a break-through.

In her U.S.C. course Holly tells her students to write a poem a day and to bring in the one that is most interesting. She never uses in class writing exercises--the sort of writing prompts that are popular in some workshops. She prefers that her students write real poems.

L.A. POETRY:

Holly feels that there is a tremendous amount of energy and excitement in L.A. poetry. It is true that there is much that is bad, but there is also much that is valuable. She encourages her students to attend poetry readings but lets them find the ones that are good or bad for them.

She feels, as do many other poets, that the thing most missing in Los Angeles is significant book publishing. This is why she has founded the co-operative venture of Cahuenga Press, and she feels strongly that poets need to work at getting their own books out, even if it is only a chapbook of their own that they send to 25 people. After all, Blake would never have been published if he hadn't been an engraver. For many years Bill Mohr kept L.A. poetry going with Momentum Press. One local press that is encouraging nowadays is Sun and Moon, which publishes mainly language oriented material.

Like others Ms. Prado feels that the Los Angeles Times has been very unsupportive of poetry. This was particularly true when

Jack Miles was the editor of the book review section. At one time he tried to eliminate book reviews of poetry entirely and instead just publish a poem a week.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Although there is much activity Ms. Prado agrees that this is a bad time for publishing books. The disappearance of the N.E.A. money has hurt. This is again why poets have to find ways of getting out their own material. You need to be making contact, but when you're writing better it doesn't mean it will be easier to be published. It may, in fact, be harder.

COMPUTERS:

Holly uses a computer for its convenience. She has not found out much about on-line publishing or the Web, but she does agree that it's a possible way of getting work out. Too much surfing, of course, may be a time waster. She thinks poetry could be taught on-line, but she would not want to do it. She thinks non-verbal cues are much too important in a workshop.

ROBERT RIPPY

BACKGROUND:

Robert Rippy is a poet and the head of the English Department at San Bernardino Valley College. Until recently he was the poetry editor for inside english, the journal of the English Council of California Two-year colleges. Mr. Rippy has an M.F.A. in creative writing from U.C., Irvine, one of the top creative writing departments in the United States. He did the course work for this

M.F.A. during his own sabbatical.

TEACHING:

Mr. Rippy is absorbed in his duties as the head of the English Department and recently completed a term as President of the Academic Senate, he still does, however, teach a course in creative writing, one that covers both poetry and the short story. Mr. Rippy, like almost everyone, has noticed a decline in the quality of student preparation. However, students continue to take the course, especially those who go into teaching. Mr. Rippy gives very definite structured assignments, and finds that they are helpful. When the students work on the sestina, for example, they quickly have to go beyond their own experience and into the imagination, and that is where the real poetry begins. He assigns students grades by the evaluation of their portfolios and finds that they seldom object after he explains the evaluation to them.

L.A. POETRY:

Mr. Rippy is remote from the Los Angeles poetry world. At one time there were many readings at San Bernardino Valley College. There even were nationally known poets, such as James Tate. However, San Bernardino has had financial difficulties, and there are no longer funds for such readings. There are some places where poetry is read in Riverside, but Mr. Rippy has not connected with any of them.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Mr. Rippy is also remote from poetry in general. His experience at U.C. Irvine was not good, even though he studied with

John Ashbury and was a fellow student with celebrated author Gary Soto. Now when he reads national poetry journals, he seldom likes any of the work. He doesn't write now, and sometimes he feels like a fraud when he teaches his classes.

DAVID ST. JOHN

BACKGROUND:

David St. John teaches creative writing at U.S.C. David grew up in Fresno and studied with Philip Levine at Fresno State. He later he received his M.F.A. from the Iowa Writer's Workshop. Few Los Angeles poets have received as much national attention as David. He has received many awards and most recently was a finalist for the National Book Award. I interviewed David repeatedly, took a workshop from him, and also examined the syllabi for his courses.

TEACHING:

Since coming to U.S.C. from Johns Hopkins, David has been active in developing undergraduate creative writing at U.S.C. Students there can study creative writing as one track toward an English major, and at this point it is by far the most popular undergraduate English major with over three hundred students involved.

This was not always the case. David feels the courses are so popular because there are so many excellent teacher/writers, including people like Carole Muskie and T. Coraghessan Boyle. (He feels that it is essential that a creative writing teacher be

actively and enthusiastically involved in his own writing.) He also feels that students like the courses because they are able to bond as they move through them and because they are able to work out some of their own problems of identity and maturation in the process of finding their own voices as writers. This, by the way, is the reason that technical schools, such as M.I.T., offer creative writing. Such schools, according to David, are interested in students developing a sense of community and find that creative writing courses are more helpful for this than technical ones.

As far as the students are concerned, David has noticed the same differences in them that everyone else has--their lack of reading skills and background. That is why reading is one of the major emphasizes in all the courses that the creative writing teachers teach. One cannot write poetry if one does not read poetry. In particular students cannot acquire any sense of modern poetic diction without reading modern poetry. This is one area where David feels they are especially successful at U.S.C., at least when the students follow the program. (It is worth noting in this respect that, at least in his advanced courses, David assigns not anthologies, but entire books of several writers.)

David also feels that the individual conference is one of the keys to teaching, but even here reading is important. He will sometimes suggest a particular author to a student if he feels that student can benefit from the author. However, he will do this casually, so the student will feel that the discovery is hers.

L.A. POETRY:

David is enthusiastic about the L.A. poetry world, and certainly urges his students to go to readings. In fact, sometimes he has his students go to specific readings. One of the things he likes best about L.A. is the fact that Los Angeles poetry does not seem to be as divided into separate camps as the poetry world is in some cities. There are readings, for example, where a nationally known poet may share the stage with a performance artist. Of course, David does concede that the lack of Los Angeles publishing is a problem.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

This is an exciting time for poetry. People are interested in it because there is a desperate need for authentic public discourse since the language of such discourse has become incredibly debased. David agrees with Philip Levine's assertion that simply the attempt to use language precisely is a political act in and of itself.

Of course, David realizes that there are difficulties, but there is more poetry being published than ever before. He also has strong feelings about some tendencies in American poetry, and wants it to move away from so much reportage and flat language. Nevertheless he leaves these strong critical feelings outside the class room. Some of this type of poetry may appeal to students. The best students, however, move quickly away from it.

COMPUTERS:

David looks more positively on computers than many poets. He

finds a word-processor helpful since he revises constantly, and he agrees that a computer makes one more conscious of what can be done with line breaks. He must, however, print out a poem to see how it looks in hard copy.

As far as other applications are concerned, he thinks that CD-Rom's will be increasingly important. He also agrees that hyper-text will be useful for creating certain non-linear effects. He has not noticed, however, that anyone with any particular poetic skill is using this. He thinks, also, that on-line publishing is the obvious future, although he likes the physicality of a book.

MAURYA SIMON

BACKGROUND:

Maurya Simon is a graduate of Pitzer College and U.C. Irvine. She is a widely published poet and teaches creative writing to undergraduates at the University of California Riverside, and at Cal Tech.

TEACHING:

Maurya, like almost everyone, feels that beginning students need to read more. As part of this process, one of the most important lessons to teach undergraduates is simply the pleasure of poetry. Many of them have been taught poetry badly in the past, and it intimidates them. Sometimes the very setting of the class can influence the experience of the students. Her recent class at Cal Tech, for example, went much better after she re-located it in the comfy chairs of one of the small libraries.

She uses little in the way of in-class writing exercises, or prompts, but does think they are a good idea. She has students do recitations of poems, and she has them go to readings and do reports on them. There is only a little poetry going on around Riverside, but there are frequent readings on campus, and she can screen them to some extent.

Like other teachers on the college level, Maurya notices that there are many enthusiastic students for her classes. Riverside is unusual in that it has a "free-standing" undergraduate department that is separate from the English Department, and in the last few years students in that have grown considerably. As a matter of fact, there is a plan to start an M.F.A. program, maybe an interdisciplinary one that involves several arts--one might do a cross-discipline program in performance poetry, for example.

She believes that the increased interest in undergraduate creative writing may be because the classes are important personally to the students. Much of what happens to them is disempowering. These classes give them a chance to talk about their lives and to deal with the big questions--the philosophical ones, like the meaning of life. And taking these classes is valuable to them even if they never write publish a poem. She agrees with David St. John that such classes give students the possibility of working out questions of identity in the process of finding their voice. She also thinks that it may be possible that students may be more receptive to these classes because, thus, they can avoid the critical theory that is the staple of the literature

classes. As a matter of fact, she pointed out that there were a series of letters in the student newspaper last year from students complaining about the teaching of critical theory.

L.A. POETRY:

The L.A. Poetry world is a little remote from Riverside, and it was not part of our discussion

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Maurya thinks this is a good time for poetry. It's true that there may be too many M.F.A. programs, but she thinks that this also means that there is a bigger audience for poetry.

COMPUTERS:

Maurya has yet to have much experience with computers or on-line poetry. Her students are very interested in it, of course, but she simply has not had enough time to learn much. Like most people, she does not like reading poetry from computer screens.

CHARLES WEBB

BACKGROUND:

Charles Webb is a leading figure in the Los Angeles poetry. He teaches creative writing at Long Beach State and along with Suzanne Lummis has edited the recent anthology of Los Angeles poetry, Grand Passion. In the past Webb has been one of the major figures in the "stand up poetry" movement in Los Angeles that has emphasized humor and performance. However, in recent years he has attempted, rather successfully, to gain national, academic acceptance of his poetry. One of his poems appeared in Best Poetry of 1995.

TEACHING:

Charles Webb has taught undergraduate courses in poetry for many years at Long Beach State. Recently, since they have begun an M.F.A. program there, he has begun teaching graduate students. Webb finds that one of the chief differences between graduate and undergraduate courses is that he doesn't have to deal with matters of discipline and class-room management. Webb runs a fairly strict class and does not tolerate students coming in late or not handing their work in on time. He feels this discipline is necessary to create the atmosphere in which a workshop can function efficiently and enjoyably. Once the boundaries are clear, then things can be more relaxed.

Webb agrees that one of the most important things a writing teacher can do is get students to read. Therefore, he assigns a great deal of reading in his courses, although he admits that he is not always sure that his students do that reading, since classes are often concerned with other matters. One device that Webb does use to encourage reading is a personal anthology where students write down poems they like. He also has students write a paper comparing two poetry journals.

Webb does not often use writing exercises in class, although he does teach various poetic forms, and requires students to follow them. He does encourage students to go to readings begins classes by asking students if there are any poetic events that they know of that the class should know about.

Whatever Webb and other teachers do at Long Beach State, it

seems to be successful. Students are eager to take undergraduate poetry courses, and it is possible to have an undergraduate major English major that emphasizes creative writing.

LA POETRY:

Webb, as mentioned, has participated widely in the Los Angeles reading scene. He agrees that there is much bad poetry in the coffee house world, but still finds much of the reading activity valuable.

He believes the Los Angeles poetry world is not as fragmented as it is in some cities. A nationally known poet may sometimes appear on the same stage with a stand-up poet. Webb agrees, however, that the lack of significant publishing in Los Angeles is a problem. He also agrees that the Los Angeles Times has not been helpful, but he does not feel that this is intentional.

POETRY IN GENERAL:

Obviously there is a lot of poetic activity in the United States at this point. Webb saw the recent P.B.S. program "The United States of Poetry" put on by Bob Holman, which was supposed to have been poetry "for the M.T.V. generation." He was not impressed with the program. He thinks the major problem is that the poetry was weak.

In the past Webb has been very critical of the "poetic establishment"--of the poets, for example, who read at Chateau Marmont. He has re-evaluated his attitude toward this world, however, and now tries to accept what he finds value there. He has changed his attitude largely because of his experience working with

the poet Ed Hirsch at the Aspen Poetry Workshop. He has also tried to be accepted by "the poetry establishment," and has been fairly successful. He still has not abandoned his past concerns--humor, for example--but, as he explains, "now when I make a joke, I try to make one that will make Ed Hirsch laugh."

APPENDIX II: POETRY VENUES

There are many locations in the general Los Angeles area where live poetry is presented, including open readings where anyone may participate and formal readings by professional poets. Sometimes the two are combined with a scheduled reader followed by open readers. The open readings are often amateurish. However, they can be valuable in making students realize that poetry exists outside the class room. Many teachers encourage students to attend such readings, and some require that their students do so. Charles Webb, for example, requires reports from readings, and also begins classes by asking students if they have been to any readings and complimenting those who have done so. The professional readings, such as those of the Poetry Society of America, at the Chateau Marmont in Hollywood, feature the best poets in the country. I attended many readings during the year, found I increasingly preferred the professional.

The following are comments on some of the venues I visited. I have tried to indicate the most promising venues. This is hardly, of course, comprehensive. Anyone wanting to know more about readings in the Los Angeles area might consult one of two handout newspapers devoted to the poetry world: Poetry Flash, or Next, both are available in coffeehouses and bookstores and give detailed monthly schedules for poetry readings and other events. Next even gives review of poetry venues.

A.R.K. STUDIO: 2218 E. Fourth Street, Long Beach. Readings every Wednesday at 8:30. Featured reader and open readers, \$3. Good amateur and professional spoken word poetry in a different setting.

LOCATION:

Take the 710, Long Beach Freeway, to Long Beach. Get off at Broadway, go east, the only direction one can go, to Cherry. Turn north on Cherry to Fourth Street. Go right a few blocks to the A.R.K.--Art Reaching Kids Studio. (Parking can be found on the street.)

ATMOSPHERE:

The A.R.K. Studio is the current home of the Poetry On Wednesdays reading series which has been going on for several years at a number of different locations. The neighborhood is run-down. The Studio itself consists of a large main room, part of which is given over to a stage and rows of chairs for the audience. In the rest of the studio various paintings and pop-art sculptures were displayed. There was no sound system, but the room has good acoustics. The audience was small, but attentive, mainly other poets. Since this was a studio and not a coffee house, there was no problem with noise.

PROCEDURES:

Poets interested in reading signed up shortly ahead of time. There were a few open readers, then a break, two featured readers, another break, then more open readers. Each open reader had five minutes, but the time limit was not rigidly enforced.

READINGS:

Perhaps because there is a cover charge, A.R.K. tends to have good featured readers. It also tends toward the multi-cultural and "performance" artist. Both featured readers, Jim Carrillo, and Luis Alfaro were Chicanos. Alfaro is also gay. Much of Carrillo's poetry was political. He read one piece on the Rodney King beating, for example, that repeated the word, "beat" many times. Alfaro's poetry deals with social issues, but much of it is also drawn on his childhood growing up in the Pico-Union area, and often is hilarious and touching. Alfaro is a dynamic performer--he sings, he walks through the audience, and in his final piece he took off his clothes to reveal a black silk slip beneath--an ironic, not erotic, gesture since he is fat and short.

The open readers also tended to be standup poets, who talked and wrote directly from their lives. Some of their poetry was quite good.

EVALUATION:

Long Beach is far away, but this is a good reading. The poets are unconventional, but without the hostile edge that is sometimes seen at other venues. The reading is also a frequent one, which may be an advantage for students doing reports. However, this reading may be moving to another location, so anyone interested should certainly phone before hand.

ARUNDEL BOOKS: 8380 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90048, (213) 852-9852. Readings usually held 8 p.m., the third Thursday of the

month, \$5. At this rare bookstore in West Hollywood, established and writers are presented by Los Angeles poet, Laurel Ann Bogen.

LOCATION:

Take I-10 to La Cienega. Go north to Beverly Blvd, turn east. The bookstore is a few blocks over, just past Orlando. If parking is not available on the street, there should be some on the side streets, or in the mini-mall across from the bookstore.

ATMOSPHERE:

Ardunel Books is a small bookstore on the edge of trendy West Hollywood. There are floor to ceiling shelves, often containing signed first editions. For the readings folding chairs are brought out and the reader has a podium and a good sound system. The crowds are quiet and attentive. There is opportunity to talk to the poet afterwards. Because of the limited seating, it is advisable to get there at least fifteen minutes before the reading.

PROCEDURES:

After a brief introduction there is one reader with no formal questions or discussions afterwards.

READINGS:

The readers are established poets of local, sometimes national, reputation. In 1995-1996 the readers included, among others, Galway Kinnell, David St. John, Maurya Simon, C.G. Hanzlicek, and Linda Gregg.

When I attended, the reader was Elliot Fried, the head of the creative writing department at Cal State, Long Beach. Like his friend and office mate, Charles Webb, Fried writes accessible

poetry that is frequently funny and irreverent. For example, his work, "Poem City," begins:

"HOWDY FOLKS THIS IS YOUR OLD BUDDY/ELLIOTT FRIED OF FRIED'S POEM CITY LOCATED/ JUST A FEW FEET FROM THE 91 FREEWAY/ IN THE BEAUTIFUL CITY OF LONG BEACH FOLKS WE/ HAVE A TREMENDOUS SELECTION OF NEW AND USED POEMS TO CHOOSE FROM. . . ."

EVALUATION:

A no frills venue--no wine and cheese, no avant-garde trendiness--which lets the serious student of poetry see important poets in an intimate atmosphere.

BARNES AND NOBLE, MONTCLAIR: 9041 Central, Montclair 621-5553.

Open casual readings every first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. led by Mt. San Antonio College professor, Bruce Williams.

LOCATION:

Take the 10 to Central, go north on Central. The bookstore is across from the Montclair Plaza.

ATMOSPHERE:

Like most Barnes and Noble stores the Montclair store sponsors various literary events. This reading is usually a small one for poets and by poets. There is no microphone. The poets sit in a circle near the cash registers, and at times there is some noise interference from from the registers.

PROCEDURES:

The poets take turns reading one or two poems of their own or someone else's. The reading is not a workshop, but from time to

time comments are made.

READINGS:

This is an informal reading. There is a core of regulars, mainly Upland High School students. Some of are good poets. There are also visitors whose poetry varies greatly. Anyone who wants to generally has a chance to read.

EVALUATION:

This reading is easy to get to and has a relaxed atmosphere. It is one of the few readings where people read other writers work, but this is not a place for dramatic performances.

BARNES AND NOBLE, PASADENA: 111 E. Colorado Blvd, (818) 585-0362
Open reading one Monday a month at on a theme that is announced in the newsletter near the beginning of the month. (The exact date is also announced in the same manner.)

LOCATION:

Take the 210 to Fair Oaks, go south and turn left. There is little parking on the street, but ample parking in the various public lots just off Colorado Blvd.

ATMOSPHERE:

This is large Barnes and Noble store with an adjoining coffee bar in the middle of the excitement of Old Town Pasadena. The store is generally busy and noise can sometimes be a difficulty since no mike is used.

PROCEDURES:

Readers sign up shortly ahead of time. They can have as much

time as they need, but must fit the announced theme, which is often predictable--horror for October, love for February, etc.

POETRY:

The poetry is usually that of amateurs.

EVALUATION:

Not a high quality venue, but interesting because of the location and use of themes.

BARNES AND NOBLE, WEST COVINA: 960 E. Garvey Ave., West Covina, (818) 917-6382. Open readings held the first and third Saturday of the month, 8-9:30 p.m. A large Barnes and Noble store with amateurish open readings run by members of the store staff with an interest in poetry.

LOCATION:

Next to Best Buy near the West Covina Fashion Mall. Take I-10 West, get off at Vincent, go South, turn left on Garvey.

ATMOSPHERE:

This Barnes and Noble store is larger than the Montclair store and has an attached cappuccino bar, as do many Barnes and Noble stores. The readings are run near the poetry section, and although there is no sound system, the acoustics are good, and there are no noise problems from other parts of the store. A row of folding chairs is set up for the audience, which is usually no more than the poets and their friends.

PROCEDURES:

Poets sign up ahead of time and read in the order they sign up. There is little time pressure, and sometimes poets have a chance to read more than once.

POETRY:

The staff members who run the reading are young fans of Charles Bukowski, and, consequently, the reading tends to emphasize confessional, accessible poetry. Many readers, however, are amateurish, and summarize experiences, rather than dramatize them, or write bad rhymed poetry.

EVALUATION:

An easily accessible reading where students will not feel pressured.

BEANS: 12290 Philadelphia Ave., Whittier 90064, (310) 698-0590. Open reading with featured reader(s) every Monday at 8 p.m, \$2. cover. This is a well attended reading with good spoken word readers in a pleasant coffee house in old town Whittier.

LOCATION:

Take the 60 freeway to the 605. Go South on the 605 to Whitter Blvd. Go left to Philadelphia, then left again past Comstock. The coffee house is on the corner of Philadelphia and Greenleaf. Public parking is a block up the street.

ATMOSPHERE:

A pleasant coffee house with old, comfortable furniture. The crowd was mostly young, as might be expected in a venue that was

not too far from Whittier College.

PROCEDURES:

Open readers signed-up shortly before hand. There was a mike, although some readers elected not to use it. Open readers read before and after the scheduled readers. Open readers were limited to five minutes or three poems. The time limit was not rigidly enforced, but all the open readers got to read.

POETRY:

The poetry was mainly personal, with some emphasis given to performance. Many of the poets were quite engaging. The scheduled readers were good, especially David Cooper for his short, epigrammatical work, and Lawrence Shultz, the associate editor of Next magazine for his humor. Shultz's poem on being a "sensitive poet" was hilarious.

EVALUATION:

A good venue. Students will enjoy it. It meets every week and is not too far from Mt. Sac.

BEANS AND LEAVES: 1013 Azusa Ave, Covina. (818) 966-7669. Featured reader with open reading, every third Saturday of the month at 8 p.m. in a small coffee house in a mini-mall.

DIRECTIONS:

On the west side of Azusa Ave, between Cypress and Covina Ave. Take the 210 west to Azusa Ave, and go south.

ATMOSPHERE:

Beans and Leaves is a plain, distinctly middle-class Coffee House. There is a large screen T.V. that is often in use, and even a seniors' night.

PROCEDURES:

The signup for the open reading is shortly before eight. Following the featured readers, the open readers have about ten minutes each. There is a sound system, but it is not a good one, and there is no podium.

READINGS:

I went to Beans and Leaves because I had been asked to be one of the featured readers. The other featured reader was Beth Romans, a poet who has been active in poets in the schools. Ms. Romans poems focused on the life of a young single woman in Los Angeles and dealt mainly with her relationships and feminist views. My own poems were slightly different. The audience was small, and since there were some children present, the poets had to modify their material.

EVALUATION:

This reading series is just beginning, so it will probably be better organized in the future. But this is certainly not an atmosphere that would intimidate students who might wish to read.

BEYOND BAROQUE LITERARY ARTS CENTER: 681 Venice Boulevard, Venice CA 90291, 310-827-7432. Open Readings and many other activities. Open readings usually the first Sunday on the month at 5:00 at what is one of the focal points of Los Angeles poetry. (Beyond Baroque

has been a centers of Los Angeles poetry a center for many years. There are many readings there, as well as numerous workshops, both free and for a fee-based. Beyond Baroque also maintains a bookstore.)

LOCATION:

Take I-10 to Santa Monica. Get off at Lincoln Blvd. and go south to Venice Blvd. (about two miles), then go west on Venice Blvd. Beyond Baroque is about a mile in the old Venice city hall. There is street parking and in the small parking lot near the side of the building.

ATMOSPHERE:

As mentioned above, Beyond Baroque is in the old Venice City Hall. The building is run-down, and the atmosphere is distinctly bohemian. The readings are held in a small, black painted hall with folding chairs and a cranky sound system. There is no air-conditioning, but despite this audiences tend to be enthusiastic, even raucous.

PROCEDURES:

Sign-ups are a half an hour before the reading, which lasts two hours. Usually there are two featured readers, and the featured and open readers are interspersed. Open readers are chosen at random by putting names in a coffee can and having the reading leader, Jessica Pompei, pull out names. (Often not everyone has a chance to read.) Open readers have five minutes, and if they go over that time they can be cut off abruptly.

POETRY:

Poetry at Beyond Baroque tends to be non-academic "poetry of the people," and is often avant-garde, challenging, and outrageous. One featured reader, for example, was Ellen Maybe, a young woman who is a sort of latter-day, feminist Allen Ginsberg given to long, very funny rants about her difficulties dealing with conventional reality. Another open reading became a wake for Bob Flanigan, poet, performance artist, and self-styled "Supermachoist", who died after many years fighting cystic fibrosis. As part of the reading, local poet, S.A. Griffith read one of Flanagan's "Slave Sonnets" while being whipped.

Despite a taste for shock art, Beyond Baroque is a meeting place for poets of every persuasion. And there are frequent readings. I have attended readings by nationally known poets, such as David Ignatou and Ed Hirsch, for example. The publication of books are also celebrated there. When Suzanne Lummis and Charles H. Webb, for instance, published Grand Passion, there was a reading that included such more academic poets as Carol Muske, David St. John, of U.S.C., and Ralph Angel, of the University of Redlands.

In addition to readings, there are many more activities centering on Beyond Baroque. Beyond Baroque publishes its own newsletter and poetry magazine, and it gives free, drop-in workshops on Wednesday and Thursday nights. There are also short intensive workshops with distinguished teachers. At Beyond Baroque, for example, I was able to take classes with David St. John, Thomas Lux, and Holly Prado.

EVALUATION:

Some of the rebellious posturing at Beyond Baroque can be a irritating, and it is not a venue for the easily offended, but it is one of the essential institutions in of Los Angeles poetry. Many students will enjoy the open readings and rebellious atmosphere.

THE BUZZ COFFEE HOUSE: 7623 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, (213) 623-7393. Readings every Thursday at 7 p.m. Featured reader the last Thursday of the month.

LOCATION:

The Buzz is not far from the Farmers' Market and a few blocks east of Fairfax on the corner of Stanley and Beverly Blvd. Take the 10 freeway, go north on Fairfax, east on Beverly Blvd.

ATMOSPHERE:

This is a small coffee house with a young clientele. The coffee house is not particularly crowded, and for the most part was quiet, with the listeners attentive.

Probably its most interesting feature is the neighborhood. There is a health food supermarket across the street, and two yuppie cafes, as well as a dog grooming establishment in the same block, There are also Hassic Jews in traditional dress.

PROCEDURES:

The reading was not crowded, so anyone who wanted to read could do so and, in fact, could read more than once. There was no formal procedure for signing up. There was a sound system, but it was situated in such a way that people entering the shop would walk between the reader and the audience.

POETRY:

Since there were only a few readers, it is hard to generalize, But most poetry was personal, and little of it was professional. On the last Thursday of the month, however, there are featured readers and this has included readers such as Laurel Ann Bogen, a contributor to Grand Passion, teacher at U.C.L.A. Extension, and poetry director of Arundel books.

EVALUATION:

Except for the neighborhood probably not worth the trip.

CHAPMAN COLLEGE: Chapman University, Orange CA 92666, (714) 997-6812. Steel and Ivy Poetry Readings, third Saturday of the month in the Argyros Forum, Room 208. 8.00 P.M., featured and open readers, \$4.

LOCATION:

Go south on the 57. Get off at Chapman, go east to Glassell, turn left, go about four blocks to campus.

ATMOSPHERE:

This is a casual reading with a small audience in a pleasant campus lecture hall.

PROCEDURES:

The reading focuses on the featured reader, with a few open readers before and after. They each read only one poem. There is a sound system, but it is hardly necessary.

POETRY:

The poetry is more academic, and the featured readers are

often accomplished. For example, the featured reader, one night, Kevin Hearle, was a product of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and teaches creative writing at Cal State, Los Angeles. His poetry, nevertheless, was quite accessible. Since it dealt partially with his families' long history in Santa Ana, it was naturally interesting to the audience.

EVALUATION:

A very good reading that is surprisingly close to Mt. Sac. Both Mt. SAC English Professor, Lee Brandon, and I will be scheduled there in the future.

CHATEAU MARMONT: Chateau Marmont, 8221 Crescent Heights, 8221 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood, (310) 669-2369. Readings are usually once a month on Sunday at 4 p.m. These readings are put on by the Poetry Society of America in the elegant Chateau Marmont hotel. They feature some of the most celebrated in America, \$6, seniors students \$3. Parking is limited, so it is a good idea to arrive early, especially if you would like to get one of the "comfy chairs" in the hotel lobby.

LOCATION:

The Chateau Marmont is on the north side of Sunset Blvd., just past Crescent Heights. Take the I-10 to Fairfax, go north to Sunset, turn west. In a few blocks the hotel will be clearly visible. Parking is a problem. The hotel does not allow parking in its hotel parking structure. Turn right onto Marmont Lane, the street that borders the hotel on the west. This small street will

curve in back of the hotel. There is usually parking here. Please remember that cars parked after 10 p.m. will be towed.

ATMOSPHERE:

The hotel, an elegant old Hollywood structure, is worth the trip. The readings are held in the lobby, which is a large room with a beam ceiling and lined with couches and easy chairs. (For those who arrive later, there are folding chairs in the middle of the room.) After the reading, the hotel provides wine and refreshments for the reception.

PROCEDURES:

This poetry series, called "The Act of the Poet," features some of the most celebrated poets in America, such as Robert Pinsky, David Halprin, Marie Howe, and Thomas Lux. An unusual feature of the readings is that they normally include an actor who reads poetry of his own selection before the poet. This custom is appropriate to the setting and may be a result of the fact that a number actors, including Daryl Hannah, Tim Curry, David Dukes, and Joe Spano, are on the board of the Poetry Society of America in Los Angeles.

POETRY:

These readings are well-attended and are a major event in the Los Angeles poetry world. The sound is good and the audience is attentive. For the most part, the poets are academic, but they are often good readers, sometimes better than the actors who read with them. One of the most memorable readers was Robert Pinsky, who read on Superbowl Sunday at the exact time as the game. Pinsky's

poetry can be academic--he won the Pulitzer for his translation of Dante. But Pinsky has a wonderful, sonorous voice, which adds much to his work. Just before the reading someone in the audience asked what the score was. The rest of the audience replied, "Who cares?"

EVALUATION:

One of the best readings in the Los Angeles area, although distinctly academic. Students might want to check out the poet's work before they attend.

CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE, READINGS AT THE ATHENAEUM: 385 E. Eighth Street, Claremont 91711, (909) 621-8244. Free readings of nationally known poets, preceded by dinner if one arranges ahead of time.

LOCATION:

At Claremont McKenna College in Claremont. Take Indian Hill North to Sixth Street. Go east to College, then north on college, and bear left. Park near Honnald Library and walk into the campus.

ATMOSPHERE:

Rather formal readings in a large lecture hall/dinning room. Listeners should dress appropriately, especially if they are attending dinner.

PROCEDURES;

After dinner poets read from a raised stage and answer questions, a book signing follows.

POETRY:

The poets are of national and international reputation. In

1995-1996, for example, I heard Robert Pinsky, Maxine Kumin, Rita Dove, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko. The first two poets are Pulitzer Prize winners. Rita Dove has been Poet Laureate of the United States, and Yevtushenko is probably the best-known Russian poet. The large room in which the reading takes place makes for a less intimate reading--Pinsky's reading at Chateau Marmont, for example, was much more intimate. Yevtushenko, however, dealt with this problem by striding off the stage and reciting his poetry while pacing through the audience.

EVALUATION:

First rate poets in an accessible, upscale atmosphere.

COFFEE BREAK: 10933 Magnolia Ave., Riverside 92505, (909) 688-4133. Open reading with a featured reader every Tuesday, 8 p.m. A casual, but accessible reading in a strip mall coffee shop.

LOCATION:

In southern Riverside. Take the 10 or the 60 to the 15, go south to the 91. Take the 91 east to Magnolia, go left (the only way possible.) Just after La Sierra take a left hand turn into a shopping center with a Taco Bell.

ATMOSPHERE:

A small coffee bar, with a young, enthusiastic crowd.

PROCEDURES:

Open readers sign-up before hand and read in the order they sign up. There is no mike. One special feature is that at the end of the reading poets will sometimes read poems that are responses

to poems that other individuals read.

POETRY:

Autobiographical, spoken-word poetry, usually humorous, not always high quality. The featured reader when I was there, however, was Mike Cluff, a poetry instructor at Riverside Community College. His work was enjoyable, and he brought his students, which crammed the small coffee shop.

EVALUATION:

Amateur, but enjoyable. A fairly good introduction to the growing poetry scene in Riverside--a scene that is more accessible to many Mt. Sac. students than Los Angeles and Santa Monica.

222 ESPRESSO BAR: 8 p.m., every second Saturday, 222 Glendora Ave, Glendora: This is a casual reading run by Ralph Carlson, who teaches poetry at Azusa Pacific. It is held in coffee house in the old part of Glendora.

LOCATION:

From Mt. Sac. probably the easiest way would be to take Grand Ave. to Foothill Blvd. Go east on Foothill to Glendora Ave, turn north. The coffee house is approximately three blocks up on the left. From other locations one would probably want to take the 210 freeway to the Grand exit.

ATMOSPHERE:

This is a pleasant, well-lighted coffee shop, with an outdoor patio, and an inside area that includes a small alcove where readings are often held. The clientele is mainly high school and

college students with a heavy mix of students from Azusa Pacific.

PROCEDURES:

There is no signup sheet or microphone. Usually the poets sit in a circle and go around the circle, each poet reading one poem at a time. Often people can read as much as they want

For the most part the poets read to each other, and occasionally there is some feedback from other writers. There is some problem with noise from other people in the coffee house.

READINGS:

As indicated above, the readings at 222's tend to be readings for the writers. The quality of the readings vary. There are generally a few beginners every evening, but there are also serious regulars, such as Dr. Carlson, or Kevin Thornburg, the editor of a small journal, Peck Road. Some of the readers are ex-students of Dr. Carlson. As might be expected when many of the readers are from Azusa Pacific, the readings are fairly sedate, and the poems seldom graphic.

EVALUATION:

This is a good relaxed reading that inexperienced students will enjoy. Those interested in working on their performance skills should probably go elsewhere.

THE ICE HOUSE: 24 North Mentor Ave., Pasadena, 818-577-1894.

Occasional "Poetrans"--readings of professional poets in the Ice House Annex, part of this old folk/comedy club. These are organized by poetry producer Doug Knott. For more information contact Doug

Knott (310) 854-1034, or Bob Stane (818) 794-2902. Admission \$5, Two drink minimum. (Those underage are admitted but must buy rather expensive soft drinks.)

LOCATION:

Take the 210 to Lake Ave. Go south to Walnut, turn left. Go to North Mentor, turn right. There is parking on side streets, or in the parking structure across from the club.

ATMOSPHERE:

The readings are in the annex of this old club. The room is small, and the audience sits at tables near the stage. Although there is a two drink minimum, there is a good bar to order from with a wide-range of micro-brews. Despite this the audience was serious and respectful.

PROCEDURES:

Professional poets read using a good sound system. Sometimes there is an attempt at a multi-media presentation.

READINGS:

Doug Knott schedules well-known writers who are part of the standup poetry or spoken word movement. When I went there, for example, he had Ron Koertge, Jack Grapes, and Michael Andrews. The reading was especially enjoyable since these were all old friends who had not read together for years. At another reading were Linda Albertano, Laurel Ann Bogen, Russell Leong, Doren Robbins, Charles Webb, and Doug Knott himself. Some of these poets are widely known. Russell Leong, for example, was recently featured on the

P.B.S. series, "United States of Poetry."

EVALUATION:

A chance to see professional poets in a pleasant atmosphere not too far from Mt. SAC. Some expense, but a reading that might be appropriate for a date.

JAMIN' JAVA: Central and Magnolia in Riverside. (909) 369-7152. Free readings every Thursday 6-8. A small, comfortable coffee house with a disorganized reading featuring, for the most part amateur readers.

LOCATION:

Take the 60 or the 10 to 15 South. Go to the 91. Get off at Central. Go left on Central to Magnolia.

ATMOSPHERE:

A homey, comfortable coffee house, filled with old furniture and even a house guitar and banjo for those who would like to play. The reading itself is in the courtyard.

PROCEDURES:

No mike and rather disorganized. Poets take turns reading and even write poems as the reading proceeds. Everyone gets a chance to read until they're hoarse. The audience is fairly polite, but there is a good deal of coming and going and sometimes the poet is interrupted or ignored.

POETRY:

Many of the readers were Riverside Community College students. With the exception of one young man who was trying to translate

Catallus, a worthy project, the poets seemed to be under the impression that stream of consciousness journal writing was poetry. Much vague and unfocused adolescent angst.

EVALUATION:

A pleasant coffee house, but not a promising venue.

THE LANNAN READINGS AND CONVERSATIONS: Pacific Design Center, West Hollywood, (213) 660-8587: These monthly readings, put on by a major arts foundation, feature celebrated writers in a refined atmosphere and unusual format. Not all the writers are poets, but many are. The 1995-1996 series featured such poets as Joy Harjo, Gary Snyder, Barbara Guest and Lucille Clifton. Admission is \$10, and reservations should be made in advance.

LOCATION:

Pacific Design Center, on Melrose between La Cienega and San Vicente. Take the 10 freeway through Los Angeles to La Cienega, go north on L.A. Cienega past Santa Monica Blvd. to Melrose, then go west on Melrose. The Pacific Design Center will be several blocks West on the right. For parking turn north on San Vicente and follow the signs for public parking which will lead to the parking structure next to the Pacific Design Center. Parking is \$2.25. Enter the Design Center through the main entrance and follow the signs to the Garden Theatre. Performances are usually at 7:30., but since there is public seating, it is advisable to arrive ahead of time.

ATMOSPHERE:

The Pacific Design Center, or "Blue Whale," is, of course, a famous West Hollywood landmark, and is filled with businesses specializing in art, and home furnishings. By the time of the readings most shops are closed, but just walking through the center and looking in the windows is an exercise in aesthetics as well as envy. The readings are given in a large theatre with ample, comfortable seating. The acoustics are excellent.

PROCEDURES:

The program is divided into two parts: In the first part the writer reads from his work. After an intermission the writer has a public conversation with another writer. When I went, for example, Howard Norman was interviewed by poet David St. John.

Norman is primarily a novelist and has been twice nominated for the National Book Award. He has also lived and worked in the Canadian North, speaks a number of native American languages, and has translated native American poetry and stories extensively. He read from his new novel, The Museum Guard, which unfortunately will not be published until 1997. (The selections he read were so hilarious, I was eager to read the whole thing .) St. John and Norman are old friends, and St. John's questions centered mainly on the ways in which Norman's experience had shaped his fiction, especially its exploration of solitude and loneliness. Afterwards Norman was available in the lobby to sign books and to talk.

READINGS:

As should be obvious from the above, the readings at the Pacific Design Center are high quality and academic. The

conversations, moreover, are often interesting. How often, for example, does one hear a writer talk about his experience with polar bears?

EVALUATION:

This is a very good, extremely enjoyable venue. It will give the student an acquaintance with celebrated authors in a refined atmosphere that will make going to the reading seem almost like going to a play--although considerably cheaper. Occasionally there may be readers, such as Barbara Guest, who may be difficult for students. It would probably be a good idea to help the student in selecting which reading to attend.

L.A., THE BOOK STORE: 2433 Main St., Santa Monica 90405, (310) 452-2665: Featured reader followed by an open reading, every Tuesday at 8:30 p.m, signups around 8 p.m., in a small bookstore, specializing in L.A. authors, behind Ben and Jerry's in Santa Monica. Readers are usually active in the Los Angeles spoken word scene. (This reading may be moving to a different location. It would be wise to phone ahead.)

LOCATION:

L.A., The Book Store is in the center of the trendy restaurants and shops along Main Street in Santa Monica near the border of Venice. Take I-10 West to the Fourth Street off-ramp. Go south to Pico, turn right on Pico to Main, go left. L.A.T.B.S. is directly behind Ben and Jerry's on the east side of the street. Parking is hard to find. There is some on-street metered parking,

but the best the bet is the metered lots directly behind Main Street toward the ocean. Do not park on the side streets. This parking is restricted to residents with permits and your car may be towed.

ATMOSPHERE:

The store is full of light and wood and is a good place to find books by Los Angeles authors, such as Charles Bukowski and John Fante. Readings are held in the front section of the store before the large windows that opens onto a patio where people talk and eat ice cream.

PROCEDURES:

Usually there are one or two scheduled readers whose work is sandwiched between that of open readers. The signup is about 7:50 and readers taken more or less in the order they signup. The scheduled readers are usually spoken word readers whose poetry is accessible--often drawn from the same group of people who read at the Midnight Special and Beyond Baroque. Open readers are supposed to limit themselves to five minutes, but this suggestion was not rigidly enforced.

POETRY:

Generally accessible and non-academic. One night I was there, for example, the reader was Suzanne Lummis, who, among other things, read from her series of poems written against the advice of distinguished teachers on what to avoid in a poem. (Robert Hall, for example, says never to begin a poem by talking about the weather, so Suzanne, naturally, wrote a poem that begins by

describing a rain storm.) The sound system was good, but few of the open readers were, as is often the case at open readings. Everyone got a chance to read, and no one was cut off in mid-poem.

EVALUATION:

A pleasant place to here some of the active Los Angeles in Los Angeles. However, the handling of the open read made the evening tedious. Since no real attempt was made to limit the time for open readers, the reading lasted until almost 11:30. One of the low points was listening to a young man read what was, in fact, a short story about deciding to kill someone at random to free him from the unfortunate necessity of living in this world. The proximity of Ben and Jerry's was comforting.

MIDNIGHT SPECIAL BOOKSTORE: 1318 3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica 90401, 310-393-2923. Opening Readings Fridays, 8.p.m., donation; poetry slam every third Saturday, 7 p.m. sign-up, poetry workshops, 1-4 p.m., every Saturday. The Midnight Special is active in sponsoring a wide-range of poetry activities and has begun to challenge Beyond Baroque for the leadership in West Los Angeles.

LOCATION:

The Midnight Special is in the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica. Go east on I-10. Get off at either Lincoln Blvd. or Fifth Street. Go north to Broadway, south to third street. Paid parking is available in the parking structure on third and Broadway, or in one of several parking structures on Second Street.

ATMOSPHERE:

The Midnight Special is a large independent bookstore with an excellent selection of poetry--one of the few independent bookstores that can compete with chains. The bookstore is located in the middle of the promenade, which is filled with street musicians and other attractions. Readings are held in a large back room away from most of the bookstore activity and noise. There is a good sound system.

PROCEDURES:

Open readings follow a featured reader and are very tightly organized. Open readers signup at 7:30, and then names are drawn at random. Usually not all readers get to read as the readings are very well-attended. These readers are given a "raincheck" to read first at the next open reading. The audience is enthusiastic and polite, and the five minute per reader rule is strictly, even rudely enforced. Readers are also urged to stay to the end of the reading and not to leave as soon as they and their friends have read. To encourage this drawings are sometimes held with a book or some other small prize, and readers who leave early are branded "poetry sluts."

POETRY:

Feature readers are usually chosen from people who attend the open readings and workshops. (I, for example, was the featured reader on July 12, 1996.) These readers usually experienced poets, although seldom widely published. The readers in the open reading, as always, vary. Some are young writers enthralled with the

importance of expressing their lives and inner feelings. But there are usually a few good poets at every reading, perhaps because Midnight Special also runs a workshop. Most poetry is accessible and personal. There does not seem to be as much love of the outrageous as there is at Beyond Baroque.

EVALUATION:

A good venue that students will probably like. (Just seeing the Third Street Promenade will be enjoyable for many.) Since there are readings every week, there will also be many opportunities to attend. The many other poetry activities going on at Midnight Special is also an advantage. These activities include poetry slams, workshops, professional readings, and even publication.

(A poetry slam is a competition between poets with the prize for the winner and has become very popular in coffee house poetry. Every third Saturday of the month Midnight Special sponsors a poetry slam. Poets sign up at 7 p.m., and then begin a series of "rounds." After each round the audience votes, and some poets are eliminated until one is declared champion. The prize at Midnight Special is \$50. Not surprisingly, loud, sexual poets often do well in slams, as well as those taking popular political or social positions. It is also to a poet's advantage to have plenty of friends in the audience.)

Midnight Special also sponsors a Saturday afternoon workshop from 1 to 4. Poets should bring twenty copies of a poem. The workshop, like the readings, is highly structured. Some people who regularly attend are good poets. Comments are generally supportive.

The hat is passed after the workshop.

In addition to these activities, from time to time the bookstore sponsors readings by well-known authors. Recently, for example, Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) read there.

Midnight Special has even become involved in publishing. It has published an anthology of Los Angeles writers, many of them associated with the bookstore, called Foreshock. The anthology has gotten very wide publicity because it has been associated with the fate of independent bookstores.

Midnight Special is becoming a force in the L.A. poetry.

MUGSY'S COFFEE: 522 Arlington Ave, Riverside 9750, (909) 689-8122. Open readings at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month in the patio of this coffee shop in a Riverside shopping center. Also on the first, third, and fifth Wednesday there is a drop-in workshop.

LOCATION:

Take the 10, 71, or 60 to the 15, go south to the 91. Take the 91 E. to Madison, go left on Madison to Arlington. Turn left again and go several blocks to the Harmon Shopping Center, which is also on the left. Mugsy's is behind a Denny's and next to a Lucky's.

ATMOSPHERE:

A fairly casually run reading/workshop. There seem to be a number of regulars, and the reading is run by Joel Lamore who is a part time teacher at Mt. SAC, and a graduate student at Claremont Graduate School.

PROCEDURES:

There is no mike, and most readers get to read if they want. Those who want to participate in the workshop should have ten copies of their poems.

POETRY:

There is a wide range of poetry, but some of it quite competent, and a number of the participants are also teachers of English and poetry. The atmosphere is a friendly, and the participants know each other well. As a matter of fact, when I attended one of the readings used his reading to propose to another one of the poets. The proposal was complete with poem, bended knee, ring, and an enthusiastic acceptance.

EVALUATION:

Not the strongest poetry, but certainly worth investigating.

POMONA COLLEGE: Crookshank Hall, College and Sixth, Claremont, (909) 621-8000. Monthly readings during the school year, often by well-known poets.

LOCATION:

Take I-10 to Indian Hill, go north to Sixth Street, turn east. Parking is available in front of the hall.

ATMOSPHERE:

The readings are in a small, intimate room on the Pomona campus. They are free with wine and cheese afterwards and a respectful audience--everything a collegiate reading should have, even ivy on the building.

PROCEDURES:

A good sound system as well as a chance to meet the poet.

POETRY:

These readings, put on by the Pomona English Department, often feature nationally known poets. I have heard Galway Kinnell there, for example, as well as Garret Hongo--a Pomona graduate--and Dana Gioia--poet, critic, and the co-editor of the text I use for English 1B. There are also sometimes local poets. Dick Barnes and Robert Mezey, for example, both Pomona Professors, read from their translation of the poetry of Noble Laureate, Jorge Luis Borges. There was, additionally, a reading of the poetry of Virginia Adair --a retired Cal Poly English teacher--who, although blind and eighty-three, is publishing her first book for which she has received much national attention. (A review in Time Magazine, for example, calls her the best poet since Wallace Stevens.)

Most of the work read at Pomona could be considered "academic," although outstanding, and reflects Dick Barnes and Robert Mezey's interest in formal poetry.

EVALUATION:

An excellent reading for students to attend. They can hear wonderful work in an easily accessible, pleasant atmosphere.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE: WRITERS WEEK: (909) 787-5312. A week long free presentation of many major writers, usually held in February.

LOCATION:

Readings are held during the week at several venues on the Riverside campus. Take the 60 freeway to Riverside. Get off at University Ave. Follow it to the campus. (For more details call the Department of Creative Writing at the above number.)

ATMOSPHERE:

There are many different readings, most in classrooms or lecture halls, but at least one in an informal cabaret-style setting.

POETRY:

The poets are of national and local prominence. In 1995, for example, the scheduled keynote speaker was Lucille Clifton. Other poets were Mark Axelroad, Ralph Angel, Steve Bauer, Jose Montoya, Richard Garcia, Dinah Berland, and Maxine Kumin. Most poetry was somewhat academic, but all of it extremely accessible. (Ms. Clifton was snowbound in Washington D.C., so some of the other poets gave an excellent reading of her work.)

EVALUATION:

A wonderful opportunity to hear good literature.

VROMAN'S BOOKSTORE: 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, (818) 449-5320. Poet's Corner opening reading the first Friday of every month at 8:30.

LOCATION:

Take the 210 to Lake. Go south on Lake to Colorado Blvd, then go west two and a half blocks. Street parking.

ATMOSPHERE:

An independent bookstore that attracts serious amateur poets, a few blocks away from the bustle of Old Town Pasadena.

PROCEDURES:

Poets sign-up slightly ahead of time, and read from a podium with a sound system, not far from the children's section.

Poets are suppose to limit themselves to no more than ten minutes, but there is little time pressure. The proximity of the children's section, however, is somewhat inhibiting.

POETRY:

As usual, a mix of good and bad readers with nothing too outrageous. One of the most interesting readers was the editor of the Pasadena Newspaper who read a selection of poems that he had written when he took a course from Seamus Heaney at Berkeley, years before. He was prompted to do this because Heaney had just won the Noble Prize.

EVALUATION:

A pleasant reading, worth the trip.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE, THE LONG BEACH SPOKEN WORD FESTIVAL: This is a festival of poetry and spoken word. It lasted nearly a month in September 1995 and featured many readings and concerts and included well-known performers, such as singer/songwriter Patti Smith and Richie Havens, and performance-artist, Lori Anderson. There were also readings by Los Angeles poets, such as Ellen Maybe, and a joint reading by the teachers and students in from the Long Beach

State graduate creative writing program. It was this last reading that I attended. None of the performances were free, but most were reasonable.

LOCATION:

Many different locations. The M.F.A. reading was held in the roof garden of a local restaurant.

ATMOSPHERE:

Casual, but with a good sound-system.

PROCEDURES:

Several poets read for five to ten minutes each.

POETRY:

Most of the poetry was accessible, and often it was humorous. Charles Webb, Eliot Fried, and Gerarld Locklin of Long Beach State all read and were very enjoyable.

EVALUATION:

This festival is very interesting. Since this was the first year that it took place, there is some question as to its future, but it is an event that those interested in poetry and the spoken word should watch for. Students will probably enjoy many of these events. A good contact is the Long Beach State Department of English. (So far I have heard nothing about plans to hold the festival again.)

APPENDIX III: ON-LINE POETRY SITES

Even a superficial exploration of cyberspace reveals that it is impossible to cover all the sites dealing with poetry. Moreover, sites are constantly changing. The following list, therefore, is little more than a list of favorite sites. I believe it does have, however, more than personal relevance because I have used my poetry background to pick promising sites, especially those with links to other sites that seem valuable.

AHA! POETRY

<http://www.faximum.com/aha!poetry>

This site is the product of Jane Reichhold, publisher of AHA books and the magazine LYNX, which concentrates on poetic forms, such as the renga and tanka. It has many features, including an "open mike," where individuals can post poetry, poetry books online, opportunities for writing collaborative poetry, and instruction in the poetic forms of the cinquain, ghazal, haiku, renga, sijo, and tanka. There are also links to poetry magazines.

This is an interesting site with much information, although I do not quite agree with the description given of the ghazal. I posted a poem on their open mike and got e-mail from another individual complimenting me on it. This site will probably appeal to students.

THE ALIEN FLOWER POETRY WORKSHOP:

<http://ww.somenet/web/albany/workshop>

This site is a renaming of the Albany Poetry Workshop. (Apparently there was more than one site using this name.) It is not run by a university, but by an individual who hopes to help others the same way that his instructors, such as Garret Hongo and Quincy Troop helped him. There is much information here on writing and criticizing poetry. One may also submit poetry for feedback. There are many links, most of them useful.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY POETRY PAGES

<http://www.theatlantic.com/atlantic/atlweb/poetry/poetpage.htm>

Since November 1993 the Atlantic Mostly has maintained this site, and there is much here, including a good deal of poetry, some of it with audio, of poets who have appeared in the Atlantic Monthly since 1993--Richard, Wilbur, Maxine Kumin, Jane Kenyon, W.S. Merwin, Philip Levine, Galway Kinnell, Jane Hirshfield and others. The site also contains Dana Gioia's controversial article, "Does Poetry Have a Future?" which questioned, among other things, the value of M.F.A. programs, as well as responses to the article. But probably the most interesting material in these pages is "Volume 1--Number 1--November 1857," which contains poems from the first issue by Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, and Whittier. The Atlantic Monthly Poetry Pages also contain links to other professional and scholarly poetry sites, such as the Bartleby Project at the Columbia University.

This is a wonderful site and a good place to start reading the work of professional and highly recognized contemporary American poets. It also provides very useful links and appears to be updated frequently. (Obviously some of the material referred to above may not be posted long.)

BAKUNIN

<http://www.execpc.com/~biblogic/bakunin/index.html>

Bakunin is a magazine that is published in its paper version in Simi Valley. Despite the fact that it is billed as being "for the dead Russian anarchist in all of us", it is a professional publication, and honored poets William Stafford and Sandra McPherson have had work in it. This site is only a "teaser," but it gives a good idea of what the magazine is like. Most importantly, there is a long, well-organized list of links to other web sites. The list is comprehensive, interesting, and not by any means limited to poetry. (Here, for example, you can find out how to get in to the Gnosticism Web Page.) This site is well worth looking into, although exploring the links could take months.

RICHARD BEBAN

<http://www.wcll.com/user/pse/rhpoems.htm>

Richard Beban is a Los Angeles based poet who is one of the directors of the Midnight Special poetry workshops. His pages contain selections from his poems in his recent chapbook, "Fried Eggs and Lace." It also provides a way of ordering that material

as well as a listing of upcoming readings by Richard. His work consists mainly of accessible "family poems," and students will be able to relate to them. The site provides a good example of how an individual poet can use a Web site for self-promotion.

BLACK CROSS: A JOURNAL OF HEAVY POETRY

<http://ww.csulb.edu/~wstien/> (email) wstien@csulb.edu.

This is a teaser for a Long Beach poetry magazine that purports to be devoted to "heavy metal poetry." The poetry is better and less offensive than one might imagine. (Of course, there are the graphics of nuns with machine guns riding motorcycles.) The magazine does accept electronic submissions and, unfortunately, perhaps, would definitely interest some students.

BOOKS UNLIMITED

<http://www.books.com/scripts/news.exe?skid~qpxkiguRujbduzl>

Books unlimited is an electronic bookstore where over 400,000 books can be ordered directly. But it is much more than that. It has material on a wide range of literary subjects--it had, for example, a whole page on national poetry month in April 1996. It also has links to various literary magazines, the Paris Review, for example, as well as descriptions of the material they contain. This is a rich source.

BLUE PENNY QUARTERLY:

<http://ebbs.english.ut.edu/op/bpq/front-page.html>

This is an on-line poetry journal, advertised in such

publications as Poets and Writers and Poet's Market. Submissions may be made by e-mail or snail mail. Not surprisingly at the last check the magazine was overloaded, and not accepting any more submissions for sometime. Poetry in the magazine is respectable.. Submissions may be made to Blue Penny Quarterly, Metronetics Publication 7 Elliewood Ave., Charlottesville VA 22903, or sent by e-mail to the poetry editor, Leigh Palmer, at Imlac@aol.com.

CAFFEINE

<http://ww.Hallucinet.Com/caffeine>

Caffeine is a local, magazine devoted to the Los Angeles coffee house poetry scene. The on-line version is only a teaser, but does contain some poetry and gives an idea of the kind of poetry that this scene favors. The magazine has recently begun accepting electronic submissions, at POETRYMAG.Aol.Com or POETRYMAG.CyberDen.Com, but submissions of any kind seem to disappear for months.

DUTTON'S BRENTWOOD BOOKSTORE:

<http://home.eathlink.net/~duttons/>

The homepage for a prominent Los Angeles independent bookstore. One can order books here, or find out about readings. There is also poetry by Scott Wannberg, a Los Angeles poet.

ELECTRONIC POETRY PAGES

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/epc/html>

These pages are out of the State University of New York at Buffalo. They do have a section for collaborative poetry. But most of the material is extremely sophisticated and more concerned with criticism. There is, for example, material, by Stanford University professor and major critic, Magorie Perloff.

There is also a great deal of work by poet/critic Charles Bernstein. He is a professor at Buffalo, as well as one of the "language poets"--poets who see poems merely as patterns of words. There is, for instance, a syllabus for his course, "Prose and its Discontents" --a course where students read everything from John Ashberry to Wittenstein, and where they explore the limits of prose by such strategies as two students writing alternate lines in one paper. There is also a good deal of his criticism, including challenging material on the significance of electronic texts. Finally the site contains real sound recordings of some of Bernstein's work.

There is much that is fascinating here, but it is difficult and can, indeed, confirm the prejudice that criticism and poetry is nonsense. Very academic, very cutting edge, many valuable links to other sites.

EXQUISITE CORPSE

<http://corpse.books.com/Echome.html>

This is a teaser for a poetry magazine from Baton Rouge, edited by Andrei Codrescu who appears regularly on the "All Things Considered" program of P.B.S. The magazine is very avant-garde and

well respected, but as the title would indicate, not for the faint hearted. The teaser contained a brief goodbye from Codrescu to Timothy Leary as well as "very gay poetry," by Mark Hallman. There were additionally poems by Tom Clark.

The electronic layout of this magazine seems to be well-considered, and it is much more pleasant to read poetry here than in other sites. Since the magazine comes out once a month, the site is updated on a regular basis.

CARLOYN FOCHE

<http://oesf1.gmu/~cforchem/index.html>

The homepage of a major American poet and editor of the celebrated anthology, Against Forgetting, this contains some of her poetry and links to her on-line recommendations. Very interesting.

INTERNET POETRY ARCHIVE

<http://sunsite.unc.edu/dykki/poetry/home.html>

This is a project of the University of North Carolina and the University of North Carolina Press. It is an archive that contains audio texts of modern poets, such as Philip Levine and Noble prize winner Czeslaw Milosz. It is intended for teachers of poetry and is expanding.

INTERACTIVE POETRY SITE

<http://wsw.csd.net.%7Ecantelow/poem~welcome.html>.

A number of ways to collaborate and complete poems in as haiku and free verse. Links to other sites. Poems are rather weak.

THE LANGUAGE OF LIFE

<http://www.wnet.org/lol/>

This site contains material from Bill Moyers' eight part P.B.S. series on poetry. There are poems by such writers as Coleman Barks, Sandra McPherson, Carolyn Foche, Robert Hass, and Gary Snyder. The site provides a quick idea of what the series was about, although a quick skimming of the book The Language of Life would probably be more informative.

MIDNIGHT SPECIAL BOOKSTORE

<http://www.cinenet/msbooks/homepage.htm>

This is the web page of the Midnight Special Bookstore in Santa Monica. It contains, naturally, an inventory of the books on hand and ways of ordering books electronically. It also contains a calendar of events at the bookstore. It additionally has on-line reviews of books as well as discussions of particular topics--metaphor, for example.

THE MISSISSIPPI REVIEW

<http://sushi.St.Usm.Edu/mrw>

This is an on-line literary journal published out by the Center for Writers and the University of Southern Mississippi. There is also a print version, but the two are not the same. For one thing, the on-line journal comes out every month, so there is more opportunity for publishing, at least theoretically.

A recent issue of the magazine contained mainly accessible

autobiographical material that seemed to be from the students in the program. There were also many links, but the choice of the links does not seem to have been very selective. Nevertheless, this journal is an excellent source of information on electronic poetry.

THE PARIS REVIEW

<http://www.voyagerco.com/PR/>

The Paris Review is a fifty year old major literary magazine. The on-line teaser contains work of important poets, such as, Charles Simic and Lucille Clifton. This site provides a fast way to get a look at a national poetry publication.

PLOUGHSHARES

<http://www.emerson.edu/ploughshares/>

Ploughshares is a major literary magazine published by Emerson College in Boston, and this an on-line teaser for that publication. It contains, among other things, a history of the publication, some recent poetry, guidelines for submissions, and links to other literary sites. This will give students some ideas of what goes into a major literary magazine. They will also have an idea of what kind of material they accept. Of particular help is information on upcoming issues, since they are sometimes theme issues. As is usual in major publications, they do not accept electronic submissions.

PROJECT BARTLEBY

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/index.html>

This archive from Columbia University is assembling scholarly electronic texts of the work of many poets--Whitman and Wordsworth, for example. An increasingly valuable source for research.

POETRY WORLD

<http://news.std.com/poetryworld/products.html>

A page for Chatfield Software Products. They offer various programs for teaching poetry. These include a programs that will teach the "cantona", a smaller sestina, and interactive programs for free verse and haiku. The programs range from \$25 to \$59. There is also a chance to workshop poems--receive feedback from other students for a fee of \$15. However, workshoping can be obtained for free in a number of places. The other material seems to me, a bit simplistic. (Some of this material is offered on a "shareware basis".)

J. SARGENT RENYOLDS C.C., ENGLISH 217

<http://hthsrvl.jsr.cc.va.us/course/eng217/index.htm>.

This is an on-line, for credit, poetry writing course from a community college in Virginia. The instructor uses essentially the same approach that he does in his on-campus course: read the books, keep a journal, write poems, submit them for comments and participate in making comments on other students' work. A good

example of what can be done with on-line teaching.

UCT POETRY WEB SITE

<http://www.uct.ac.za/projects/poetry>

This is a fascinating site from Cape Town South Africa. Here one can read poetry of South African poets from many different backgrounds. Not surprisingly, much of the poetry is political. Some of the poets can be contacted by e-mail. There are links to other South African poets.

THE URDU POETRY PAGES

<http://enuxsa.EAS.ASU.edu/~hysed/urdu.html>

A gateway to much information about the ghazal. Specialized, but interesting.

WRITING WORKSHOP

<http://antares.prodigy.com/ig.groups/playtime/writecoi/writecoi>

A writing workshop run by Prodigy. Some poems are posted. There is a chance to comment, and there is some literary information, contests etc. The workshop meets weekly as an interest group. This site is not highly recommended. There is more information at other sites, and the poetry here is weak. This site is included to give an idea what a commercial server might do in the area of creative writing.

APPENDIX IV: READING LIST

The following is a partial list of books I read in connection with my sabbatical. Some were read as preparation for interviews. Others were read as the result of the stimulus of interviews and readings I attended. Although this list was not a requirement of my sabbatical proposal, I have included it for personal satisfaction and because it provides a good introduction to recent poetry. Since not every reader will turn to it, I have single-spaced it.

- Ashberry, John. Can You Hear, Bird. New York: Farrar, 1995.
- Angel, Ralph. Neither World. Oxford, Ohio: Miami University, 1995.
- Beban, Richard. Fried Eggs With Lace. Venice: Canned Spaghetti, 1996.
- By, Robert. What Have I Ever Lost By Dying. New York: Harper, 1992.
- Carver, Raymond. Cathedral. New York: Vintage, 1981.
- _____. A New Path to the Waterfall. New York, Grove,
- Cavafy, C.P. The Complete Poems. New York: Harcourt, 1976. 1989.
- Clifton, Lucille. The Book of Light. Copper Canyon: Port Townson, 1993.
- Deming, Alison. Science and Other Poems. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State, 1994.
- Dove, Rita. Grace Notes. New York: Norton, 1991.
- Dubie, Norman. Selected and New Poems. New York: Norton, 1983.
- Edson, Russell. The Childhood of an Equestrian: New York: Harper, 1973.
- _____. The Clam Theatre. New York, New Directions, 1964.
- _____. The Reason Why the Closet Man is Never Sad., New York, Harper, 1977.
- _____. The Very Thing that Happens. New York: New Directions, 1964.
- Estes, Angie. The Uses of Passion. Salt Lake: Gibb Smith, 1995.
- Forche, Carolyn, ed. Against Forgetting. New York: Norton, 1993.

- Fried, Eliot. Magical Mystery Oil. Los Angeles: Red Wind, 1995.
- Gioia, Dana. Can Poetry Matter? St. Paul, Graywolf.
 _____. The Gods of Winter. St. Paul: Graywolf, 1991.
- Grapes, Jack. AND THE RUNNING FORM, NAKED BLAKE. Los Angeles: Bombshelter, 1995.
- Halpern, Daniel. Tango. New York: Viking, 1987.
- Hass, Robert. Human Wishes. Ecco, 1989.
 _____. Twentieth Century Pleasures. New York, Ecco, 1984.
- Heaney, Seamus. Seeing Things. New York: Faarar, 1991.
- Hearle, Kevin. Each Thing We Know Is Changed Because We Know It. Boise: Ahsakta, 1994.
- Hirsch, Edward. Earthly Measures. New York: Knopf, 1994.
 _____. The Night Parade. 1989.
 _____. Wild Gratitude. 1986.
- Hirshfield, Jane. The October Palace. New York: Harper, 1994.
- Hongo, Garrett. Volcano. New York: Knopf, 1995.
- Howe, Marie. The Good Thief. New York: Persea, 1988.
- Kroeker, G.W. Darkness Defined. Lancaster: Red Dancefloor, 1994.
- Kowit, Steve. In the Palm of Your Hand: The Poet's Portable Workshop. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 1995.
- Kumin, Maxine. Looking for Luck. Norton, 1992.
 _____. Nuture. Penguin, 1995.
- Laux, Dorianne. What We Carry. Brockport, N.Y.: BOA 1994.
- Levine, Philip. The Simple Truth. New York: Knopf, 1994
 _____. What Work Is. New York: Knopf, 1994.
 _____. A Walk With Tom Jefferson. New York: Knopf, 1992.
- Levis, Larry. Black Freckles. Salt Lake: Gibb Smith, 1992.
- Locklin, Gerald. Poop and Other Poems. Long Beach, MAG Press, 1972.
- Lummis, Suzanne. Falling Short of Heaven. San Francisco: Pennywhistle, 1990.
 _____. Idiosyncrasies. Los Angeles, Red Wind, 1989.
- Lummis, Suzanne and Webb, Charles, ed. Grand Passion: the Poets of Los Angeles and Beyond. Los Angeles: Red Wind, 1995.
- Lynch, Annette. Ways Around the Heart. Costa Mesa: Lithe Press, 1988.
- Lux, Thomas. Split Horizon. New York: Houghton Mifflin 1994.
- Matthews, William. Time & Money. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. Provinces. New York: Ecco, 1991.
- Moore, Jim. The Long Experience of Love. Minneapolis: Milkweed, 1995.
- Moore, Dinty. The Emperor's Virtual Clothes. Chapel Hill: Algonquin, 1995.
- Oliver, Mary. A Poetry Handbook. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

- _____. White Pine. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
- Rich, Adrienne. Collected Early Poems, 1950-1970. New York, Norton, 1993.
- _____. Dark Fields of the Republic. New York: Norton, 1995.
- _____. A Dream of a Common Language. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Rumi, Jelaluddin. Love is a Stranger. Trans. Kabir Helminski: Brattleboro: Threshold, 1993.
- St. John, David. Study for the World's Body. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
- _____. Where Angels Come Toward Us. Fredonia, New York: White Pine, 1995.
- Simon, Maurya. Days of Awe. Port Townsend, 1989.
- _____. Golden Labyrinth. Columbia and London: University of Missouri, 1995.
- Stafford, William. The Darkness Around Us Is Deep. New York: Harper, 1993.
- Willams, C.K. A Dream of Mind. New York: Farrar, 1992.
- _____. Tar. New York: Vintage, 1980.
- Wright, Charles. Quarter Note. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1995.
- _____. The World of Ten Thousand Things., New York: Farrar, 1989.
- Yevtushenko, Yevgeny. Pre-Morning. Baltimore: Vestnik, 1995.



Some of the rebellious posturing at Beyond Baroque can be a irritating, and it is not a venue for the easily offended, but it is one of the essential institutions in of Los Angeles poetry. Many students will enjoy the open readings and rebellious atmosphere.

THE BUZZ COFFEE HOUSE: 7623 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, (213) 623-7393. Readings every Thursday at 7 p.m. Featured reader the last Thursday of the month.

LOCATION:

The Buzz is not far from the Farmers' Market and a few blocks east of Fairfax on the corner of Stanley and Beverly Blvd. Take the 10 freeway, go north on Fairfax, east on Beverly Blvd.

ATMOSPHERE:

This is a small coffee house with a young clientele. The coffee house is not particularly crowded, and for the most part was quiet, with the listeners attentive.

Probably its most interesting feature is the neighborhood. There is a health food supermarket across the street, and two yuppie cafes, as well as a dog grooming establishment in the same block, There are also Hassic Jews in traditional dress.

PROCEDURES:

The reading was not crowded, so anyone who wanted to read could do so and, in fact, could read more than once. There was no formal procedure for signing up. There was a sound system, but it was situated in such a way that people entering the shop would walk between the reader and the audience.