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Josephine Miles

POETRY, TEACHING, AND SCHOLARSHIP

Regional Oral History Office
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JOSEPHINE MILES
JULY 1974

Regional Oral History Office
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University of California
Berkeley, California

University History Series

Josephine Miles

POETRY, TEACHING, AND SCHOLARSHIP

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser and Catherine Harroun
in 1977 and 1979

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PREFACE

Under a continuing grant from the University of California, Berkeley Foundation, the Regional Oral History Office has been conducting a series of interviews with persons who have made a significant contribution to the development of the University of California at Berkeley. Many of the interviews receive additional support from University departments and offices, special alumni groups, and individuals who wish to honor a particular memoirist. A list of University History interviews is appended including an earlier group conducted in cooperation with the Centennial History Project, directed by Professor Walton E. Bean and later by Verne A. Stadtman, University Centennial Editor. The University History interviews have also benefited greatly from the expert advice and assistance of Richard E. Erickson, Assistant Chancellor, Development; and J. R. K. Kantor, University Archivist.

The oral history process at the University of California at Berkeley consists of tape-recorded interviews with persons who have played significant roles in some aspect of the development of the West. The purpose is to capture and preserve for future research their perceptions, recollections, and observations. Research and the preparation of a list of proposed topics precede the interviews. The taped material is transcribed, lightly edited, and then approved by the memoirist before final processing: final typing, photo-offset reproduction, binding, and deposit in The Bancroft Library and other selected libraries. The product is not a publication in the usual sense but primary research material made available under specified conditions to researchers.

The Regional Oral History Office is under the administrative supervision of Professor James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Willa K. Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

Harriet Nathan, Project Director
University History Series

February 1980
Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
University of California
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Josephine Miles's academic career can be outlined briefly in this way: B.A. University of California at Los Angeles, M.A. and Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley, Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley, and University Professor. Beyond that however, she is a teacher, scholar, and poet of unusual success in each field of endeavor. The effectiveness of her teaching is indicated by the accomplishments and loyalty of her students. The effectiveness of her scholarly work and her poetry is indicated by the list of honors and awards they have brought her. Her bibliography indicates the scope of her work and her remarkable industry.

Because of her outstanding career, suggestions that Professor Miles be asked to create an oral history memoir came from many sources within and outside of the immediate University community. The idea was mentioned to her some years before actual discussion of such an interview began early in 1977. At first she considered delaying it until after her retirement from the University English Department in 1978, then agreed to make time for it during the summer vacation period in 1977. Consequently, the primary series of interview sessions was held weekly beginning on July 7 and ending on August 25, of that year. To those eight sessions was added a ninth on February 22, 1979. Between the eight and ninth sessions she had retired from teaching, had an illness, won a major national poetry award, and had experienced some change in routine and circumstances, as she indicated in the interview.

The interview sessions were held in the living room of Miss Miles's home near the University campus, a comfortable and hospitable room reflecting Josephine Miles's own attitudes. The interviewers had known her for some years and welcomed the opportunity to interview her. As can perhaps be deduced from the interview, they admire her and enjoy talking with her. Nevertheless, Miss Miles's attitude toward the interview was entirely professional, and she shaped it, through her taped conversation and her editing of the transcript, to the final result that she considered proper. Her candor, her intellect, and her wit are evident throughout.

In editing the transcript, Miss Miles deleted a few passages, added several, and made minor word changes, but it remains in general, close to the narrative and discussions as taped. Some rearrangement of the sequence within two sessions was necessitated, however, by a recording error which required Miss Miles's recapitulation of one section of her reminiscences. And, dissatisfied with the section headings made by the interviewers in editing the transcript, she made those which are used here.

Many of Josephine Miles's friends contributed informed suggestions for subjects to be discussed, among them Geraldine Knight Scott, Mel G. Scott, J. R. K. Kantor, and Robert Hawley. Marilyn White of the Regional Oral History Office undertook bibliographic and other research and checking, Lee Steinback

transcribed the tapes and final typed the manuscript, and Mr. Kantor, University Archivist, proofread the final work.

Individual friends and admirers of Miss Miles joined a number of organizations in making this interview possible.

Ruth Teiser
Catherine Harroun
Interviewers

January 1980
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DONORS TO JOSEPHINE MILES ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

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Mel Scott
Ruth Teiser
Luella Winkler Topping
Katherine Towle
University of California, Berkeley Foundation
University of California, Berkeley, Department of English

Names listed as printed on checks

JOSEPHINE MILES

- 1911: Born
- 1932: B.A., University of California, Los Angeles campus
- 1934: M.A., University of California, Berkeley campus
- 1938: Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley campus
- 1940-43: Instructor, University of California, Berkeley
- 1943-47: Assistant Professor, University of California, Berkeley
- 1947-52: Associate Professor, University of California, Berkeley
- 1952- Professor, University of California, Berkeley
- 1973 University Professor of English
University of California
Administrative Service:
- 1958-60: Chairman, Campus Committee on
Prose Improvement, Berkeley
campus
- 1963-64: Member, Committee on Research,
Academic Senate, Berkeley campus
- 1968-71: Member, Committee on Privilege
and Tenure, Academic Senate,
Berkeley campus
- 1968-71: Member, Chancellor's Committee
on the Arts, Berkeley campus
- 1970-71: Member, President's Committee
on Search for Chancellor,
Berkeley campus
- 1978 Professor Emeritus

Honors and
Awards:

- Phelan Fellow in Writing, 1937-38
- Research Fellow in Literature, American Association of
University Women, 1939-40
- Guggenheim Fellowship, 1948-49
- Judge of National Monroe Award for Poetry, 1950
- Judge of National Shelley Award for Poetry, 1951
- Judge of National Gauss Award for literary scholarship,
1953-54
- National Institute of Arts and Letters Grant for Poetry,
1956
- Blumenthal Award for poetry, 1959
- Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies, 1965
- D.Litt., Mills College, 1965
- Fellowship, National Foundation on the Arts, 1967-68
- Commendation, California Association of Teachers of
English, 1970
- Fellowship, Academy of American Poets, 1978

Memberships:

- James Russell Lowell Prize, Modern Language Assn., 1975
- American Society for Aesthetics
- American Academy of Arts and Sciences
- American Society for Aesthetics and Art History
- Linguistic Association
- Modern Language Association
- Phi Beta Kappa

INTERVIEW I -- 7 July 1977

Childhood

[begin tape 1, side 1]

Teiser: You were born in Chicago, June 11--

Miles: Nineteen eleven.

Teiser: You said that you had worked out your family background at one time in a--family tree, was it?

Miles: My father was the youngest of nine children, and the eldest, or the second to the eldest, named Herbert, when he was retired had nothing else to do. He went over New England reading gravestones, and he worked this out. So he sent me a copy, and I copied that down onto a small piece of paper, which I periodically lose and then find again. So I do know a little bit about what he discovered. Would you like to have me tell about that?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: Well, the two names in our background that connected were John Chipman and Hope Howland. They met on the Mayflower. [Laughing] Then Chipman was the main line that my uncle traced down to where I think it was Sarah Chipman married William Odber Smith. (I don't think you're supposed to switch like that, from masculine to feminine line, but that's what my uncle did.) This was after maybe, I don't know, four or five generations.

After the Mayflower, they lived in Providence and they were merchants, I'm sure the very worst type of sugar-triangle merchants. Then they were Tories, and when the Revolution came they all went up to Canada. So they were Canadians, and William Odber Smith was a druggist, a pharmacist in Saint John, New Brunswick. My father, though American, was very loyal to Canada.

Miles: Then, Ella Victoria Smith, who was something like Smith's daughter or granddaughter, married somebody by the name of Frederick Billing, who was I think recently over from England--another English visitor. But my grandmother married--I'm getting this mixed up, I guess. [Pause] My great-grandmother it must have been that married four times. One of her other husbands named Miles adopted Frederick Billing, and so from this my grandfather's name was Frederick Billing Miles.

They had nine children. The eldest stayed in Toronto and was a minister, and then Herb, the one that did the research, lived in North Carolina, was a businessman. There were three daughters, one of whom was married to somebody by the name of Todd. My father was the youngest and always felt a little weighed down by this family lineage. He lived around the corner from my mother around--somewhere the street names I remember hearing about are Thirty-second and Calumet and Cottage Grove Avenue in Chicago; those are familiar names, anyway. He used to pursue her to school and stick her pigtails in the inkwells, and there are many long stories about how obnoxious my father was through the years. [Laughter]

Teiser: What were your parents' first names?

Miles: Reginald Odber Miles and Josephine Lackner Miles. They I guess had a very nice group of friends, and I guess he went with one of her friends. They knew each other for maybe twenty years and were engaged for maybe five, because he had no money (he never went to college--he never even finished high school) and he was out looking for work. He finally got some little money as an insurance agent, and then they were married. My mother, meantime, had been teaching school in a private school in Cleveland. She had had a career in education. She had got a scholarship from school, a scholarship to the University of Illinois, but my grandfather wouldn't let her go there because that was oil money, Rockefeller money. So she finally went to the University of Chicago, which is [laughing] Rockefeller money too, but it was near home. I think the fact that she was going to be nearby made a difference.

Teiser: Was that grandfather given to acting on principle?

Miles: Very much so. My mother's side of the family were Germans from Bavaria and Prussia who left Germany at the famous time when they were rebelling against too much dominance. They were, while not related to Carl Schurz, they were part of the Carl Schurz group that came over. I think four brothers named Lackner came to Milwaukee, and they were coppersmiths; they had been coppersmiths in Bavaria, so you can guess what they did in Milwaukee. That was sort of fun; apparently they just all worked for one of the big beer barrel companies.

Miles: My mother's relatives, I'm not sure--I guess they came a little later. They seemed to just quietly come to Chicago or Wisconsin. Their name was something like Grossenheider; Julius Grossenheider married Matilda Hoevener. I remember my great-grandmother's name was Matilda Margareta Dorothea Hoevener Grossenheider! My grandmother, Louise.

One of the brothers, Joseph, was the father of my grandfather, whose name was Ernest. Ernest went to the University of Wisconsin, studying to be a doctor. The story is that he was drafted to come down to Chicago to inoculate people after the big fire. There I guess he met my grandmother. (This may be a fusion of incidents, but just so it gets to be in the story.) He settled down in Chicago as a doctor. Their parents stayed with them, and the parents were very dominantly German and didn't want the children even to learn English. So my mother, at the age of five, ran away from home in order to learn English. [Laughter] She went to the local kindergarten. So her portrait is one of general independence and quest for knowledge and curiosity, and so forth. My father's portrait is one of enjoyment and teasing and love of sports and general humor, and a kind of independence not related to academe (which he always made fun of). They were very much in contrast as a couple. So that's where I got born. [Laughter]

My father was then doing pretty well in insurance and was sent by the Connecticut Mutual to start an office in San Francisco, and manage an office in San Francisco. So we came out on the train when I was nine months old, and we lived up here on Le Conte, rented a nice old brown shingle flat on Le Conte. We were here for four years. The second two years we had a house on Claremont Court, and my two brothers [Richard and John] were both born here. A lot of our nice early childhood memories go back to those four years.

But then they sent my father to a supposed promotion to be head of the office in Detroit. That didn't work out so well because by that time I had really harrowing arthritis, and so I didn't do very well in Detroit. I had been born with a dislocated hip, and they hadn't known about this. One of the bones of contention in my family was that my grandfather, who was a pediatrician, didn't notice it for nine months. So it was set here by a method called a Lorenz method, which was experimental, I guess. I guess it would have worked all right, except that I got a cut--an intern gave me a cut when he was changing a cast, and he covered it up with a cast and it got infected. That supposedly--though nobody really knows--is where I got the arthritis, and that developed here [in Berkeley]. But apparently, maybe at least, the cold of Detroit made it a lot worse. So then I had a really bad time when I was, say, four and five and six and in there.

Miles: Then we did go back to Michael Reese Hospital, where my grandfather was working, and we went to other hospitals and so on and so on. Finally, they said there's nothing to do but let me be happy in a warm place, and we could go to either Miami or San Antonio or Palm Springs. My parents didn't know any of these three, so they just closed their eyes and chose in the dark. I've always been glad they chose Palm Springs. So that's where we went then, when I was about six and my brothers were four and two.

Teiser: My, that was a responsibility to uproot a family and--

Miles: Very hard. But because they said I wouldn't possibly live. So that there was no point of saving a life, but just letting me be comfortable. Yes, it took a lot of nerve. I think it was very nice, in the sense that my father had turned from being a really big-shot businessman, overworking, to being with the family a lot on the desert. We had a very good, quiet half-year on the desert, and the hot springs did me a lot of good. But the sad part was that nobody had very much good sense about what to do after that. So my arthritis did go away, and I rode all over the desert on what would be politely called today a tricycle, but in those days unfortunately was called a kiddie car. Do you remember when it was called a kiddie car?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: A little wooden contraption. I loved that independence, and I would just scoot between the mesquite bushes out on the desert and get lost, and had a really fine time. But I got stiff to the shape of that kiddie car. Then they decided I was okay, and we went back to another office insurance job in Chicago. When the winter came, I got stiff again, and then also I couldn't get unbent from this position. Then we had to start all over on how to unbend me, and then I went through, until I was about twelve, a series of casts and operations and various drastic methods because the doctors there had just got out of World War I, and what they'd learnt about orthopedics was very drastic, not very adaptive to a small kid. We had to pull up again--very sad--and come from Evanston to Los Angeles. We rented a house in Los Angeles. My father took up a new and relatively minor insurance job for him, and we struggled along for a while. I didn't get any better.

After a summer at Balboa, we came up here to a specialist named Sherman, and I got a huge floor to ceiling cast. Then we went and lived in L.A., a very charming little house on a street called Latona Avenue, which is a wonderful little street. It was a one-block street, and it turned out to have on it the most amazing group of people. My father just found it because the house cost I think \$1500. It had a beautiful view of the Pasadena Hills. Just a beautiful place in general.



Josephine ("Jo") Miles, 1915



Jo and her brothers



Keniston Avenue, 1926 or 1927
standing from left: Richard, Jo,
Josephine, John; seated: Reg

- Miles: On that street lived one of the editors of the L.A. Record, which was a really fighting liberal paper, by the name of Reuben Burough; and Madeline Ruthven, who was a scenario writer; and Francis Beebe, who wrote the Tarzan stories for the movies; and the cartoonist of Krazy Kat, and various other--
- Teiser: Oh, one of my heroes!
- Miles: Really? I should have known. He never spoke to us, see; he never became a friend. But we admired him very much. And also very nice assorted kids, especially Welda Dower who became a very good friend of mine. We roamed the hills. I had by that time a wheelchair, and this great little character pushed me all over the hills in return for my telling her stories. We'd push the chair off the tops of the hills and roll down after it. It survived. So everything got very happy around that time. We lived there for about four years. Do you want me to go right on from there?
- Teiser: Yes. How old were you then?
- Miles: We left there when I was twelve. There was a school right at the end of the street--the Latona Avenue School. A lovely place. My brothers went there too. The L.A. school system sent home teachers up to teach me. By that time I couldn't sit, but I could stand or lie. My mother couldn't teach me how to write; I read all right, but I had to have a teacher to teach me how to write. Then gradually I got a wheelchair and they let me come down there to school--I mean, a very broad-minded principal, a lovely woman by the name of Mary Nagel, and lovely teachers. I can emphasize this without sounding Pollyannish because when we moved to the Wilshire District, the school there said that I couldn't possibly come; it would be too much trouble. The Latona Avenue School really was rare. I did get an education from ten to twelve.
- Teiser: Let me go back and come back up to this point. How old were you when you learned to read?
- Miles: I was probably around four.
- Teiser: How did you happen to, do you remember?
- Miles: To learn to read? Well, I looked at the page and I said, "Hmm. I know what this says. It says 'Chicken Licken (or Little?) says the sky is falling'." And, sure enough, that's what it said. [Laughter] I'll put parentheses to this: Two years ago, when I was in Riverside, which was a very favorite stamping ground of ours when we were a little older, I had a real memory binge, and I wrote down a lot of these little things in poem form. They're not good poems, but I might show them to you some time if you wanted to see them.

- Miles: As you say, you're not interested in anything that's already written down, but this was one of the things that I started thinking about and I wrote down--I must have written down about fifteen or twenty remembrances of my youth and my past--
- Teiser: I didn't mean that we weren't interested in anything that was written down. I meant that you needn't say anything that's on the record, in print.
- Miles: Yes. But anyway, another thing that I remember--this was in Detroit. Well, in Berkeley, when I was four, I still remember being very excited with some books called The Twin Books, the Dutch Twins and--
- Teiser: When you were four?! Had anyone read to you?
- Miles: Oh, of course I couldn't read those. They were read to us.
- Teiser: When did they start reading to you, do you know?
- Miles: I must have been three or four. My mother, see, was very--I didn't mention all about my mother's education. She worked with John Dewey in Chicago. After she got her B.A. in Chicago, she went to Colonel Parker's School, which was a liberal, permissive education Deweyan school, and Dewey was there. Dewey lectured and she went to his lectures, but actually it was Colonel Parker that made the school structure. So she was very gung-ho about methods of teaching and learning and stuff, and I'm sure she read to us just as soon as we had ears. She wasn't fond of poetry, but she did read things like A Child's Garden of Verses and ballads. There was one book she read out of called Poems Every Child Should Know, which was the source of my poetry. Then these Twin books she read to us. That's all I remember, except I loved to have those read to me.

Then in the East, in Detroit, when I was so really very sick, she read to us a lot of [laughing] Bible stories. I guess she thought it would be good for me to have a little religion before I left. She had been a great seeker religiously. Her father had been orthodox Lutheran, and she had rebelled against that. She had been going around to Unitarian, Congregational churches. She had gone with I think a young Unitarian theologian for a long time who everybody said was just her type, which they didn't think my father was. So she belonged to the Unitarian church in Detroit, and she read us all these marvelous little red books of Biblical stories which I remember.

I remember them so vividly because I was so resentful of the whole religious picture, I mean of little aphorisms like "God helps those who help themselves." I felt I was working hard enough and I wasn't getting enough help from anybody. [Laughter] So my whole tour with religion was rather argumentative. I just kept saying, "I think somebody can do better by me than they are doing."

Miles: Another thing that I remember is that a cousin that I had gave me a red balloon. I was delighted with it, of course. But for some reason she said to me, "That's a balloon, and you spell it b-a-double l-double o-n." Phew! It was just like the world exploded for me! "You mean you can spell things?" I don't know why I was so amazed. But that was really much more exciting for me than the actual reading I did at that time too. And I do know--I still remember the book with Chicken Licken in it, and Chicken Little, and the trolls. A marvelous little book. We don't own it any more, unfortunately. But that was my reading book, which I read because it had been read to me so often. But that balloon thing! I don't know why that was so exciting. Oh! I couldn't believe it. It was the rhythm of it that was so interesting to me, not just the fact that you could spell, B-A-DOUBLE L-DOUBLE O-N. Oh wow.

My dad loved ragtime. He had a small Victrola and all those funny old records of that time; they were all war songs. This fitted into this too--it was this rhythmic thing that had something to do with it too.

I remember when we lived in Palm Springs we lived right next door or right near one of those corrugated iron garages where they're always beating on the corrugated iron. Rather rhythmically they were fixing cars and stuff. I just remember that I thought they were playing "Keep the Home Fires Burning" on this garage. So anyhow, I began seeing rhythms in sounds that I heard. So that's my literary history. [Laughter]

Teiser: That's fascinating.

Miles: It was exciting.

Teiser: You said that your mother couldn't teach you to write, but you did learn to write then when you went to the school?

Miles: They sent a teacher up. This was a school system that had home visitors. The first teacher they sent up was to teach me to make pine needle baskets. (This was one of the lesser successes of the L.A. school system.) [Laughter] She was a very nice person--I guess. But I sure wasn't good at pine needle baskets. She brought the pine needles, she brought the raffia, she brought the enthusiasm. And I did make six pine needle baskets. But that didn't go too well.

Then finally they sent me a teacher to teach me how to write--penmanship. It was easy once she got me--I think I did it quite fast. I don't know; I think it was that my mother's writing was rather old-fashioned and Germanic. There were a lot of letters that I'd never seen anywhere, and I just felt a little too wary of it. Or maybe I just needed--the Parker system was what I got, and that was a real system. Real simple.

Teiser: Did that open up anything to you then?

Miles: Handwriting? Let me think. No, it actually didn't. I mean, I did a lot of--but that [not being able to write] hadn't held me back.

The first poem that I wrote, I remember, was when we first were living in L.A., and it was 1918 or the beginning of '19. It was a celebration of the return of the soldiers from the war, and I wrote a poem about that. "Soldiers are coming over the sea..."

Teiser: Do you have a copy of it?

Miles: Yes, I have a copy.* I think I printed that; either I printed it or my mother printed it. But I remember sitting at the kitchen table and licking the pencil an awful lot. I think maybe I printed it. But I didn't feel held back by my lack of script. [Laughter]

That's another part of the literary scene, that when I was at Evanston--let's see. What is the sequence here? Yes. A year before I wrote that poem, when I was in Evanston one beautiful summer, there was a family of girls next door, and they tried to get me interested in the Saint Nicholas magazine. It was a very interesting resistance; I just would not be interested. I'd love to know why. I just thought it was too hard for me. They did all the jokes and puzzles. Do you know what the Saint Nicholas looks like?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: Well, you'll know, then, what a great thing it was. I'm afraid to look at it again. So these little girls, who were maybe nine and ten while I was seven and six, they showed me all this stuff and they lent me copies, and I diligently avoided reading them. It was so fascinating to know why--I just don't know.

But that next Christmas in Los Angeles, my parents gave me for Christmas two magazines. One was the John Martin's Book, which was much younger, which I loved.

Teiser: Oh, I loved that.

*Soldiers are coming
Over the sea
Coming to their land so free
Coming to the land of flowers
Coming to the land of snow
Coming to some happy hours
No war, No.

Harroun: We had that too.

Teiser: Maybe Saint Nicholas was too old for you.

Miles: I was going to say--and then Saint Nicholas again. I think just those six months did make a big difference. I don't know why my mother persisted on Saint Nicholas, but anyway that little amount of time did make a difference. So that really started me off being serious about writing, because they would assign--they would say that "for three months from now the topic will be 'Neath Spreading Boughs'," let's say. Well, I didn't dig this situation for months! I would write a poem on the current topic and send it in. I guess I probably printed these myself, and I probably did three or four of these during this winter and spring of '19. They sent them back and explained that I was supposed to look ahead and see what was going to happen next. So when I got in this cast and we moved to Los Angeles the second time from Balboa, and I had nothing else to do, everybody trotted out their Saint Nicholas thing and said, "Why don't you try for the three months ahead now?" So I did, and so I got a silver badge, which sounds pretty sensational. That was my serious writing contribution's beginning.

Teiser: Did you save all of your poems that you had submitted?

Miles: Yes. I didn't then, but we had a sitter--I had to have a nurse in those days, a very wonderful woman by the name of Miss Babcock, about whom I've written a poem called "Doll." She was terrific. She was a theosophist. She was very good at just not pushing or pulling or anything, but she would just save these things. So I do have them. I'm sure my mother or I wouldn't have saved them. My dad--the first time I got a check, the first thing I wrote that I got money for (\$1.70)--my dad would have saved the check [laughing], not the story but the check. That was a couple of years later.

Teiser: Did you go on writing poetry, then, after that?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: You just started and didn't stop?

Miles: Yes. Also anything else you want to mention that was in the Saint Nicholas--mystery stories, rabbit stories, what have you.

Teiser: You wrote a lot.

Miles: I wrote a lot. And wrote plays. This lovely school, this Latona Avenue School, they were going to have a--I forget the order, which was which--they were going to have an opening of a new building, and they asked me to write a play to help celebrate the opening of the

Miles: new building. It was Thanksgiving time. So I wrote a play about Thanksgiving. They were wonderful--no pressure. I even have a review which Reuben Burough of the Record wrote of that, in which he very nicely and ironically reviewed the whole thing, and sort of suggested that there were other people beside me involved [laughter], putting on the staging and the whole thing, but nevertheless mentioning that I was the author of the piece.

Teiser: Then you were able to write a playable play.

Miles: Yes, it was a playable play. It really was.

Teiser: Had you read many playable plays, and seen many?

Miles: If I had, they were in the Saint Nicholas, is all I can say.

Teiser: Had you been to the theater?

Miles: Nope. Oh. No, but I know what happened there. When I was so sick, in Evanston, my mother had belonged to a play reading group, a neighborhood play reading group. In the dining room was a dining room table with a white cloth over it. I would get in under the white cloth with my kiddie car--it sounds kind of impossible [laughing] that I was that little, but I guess I was--and they would sit around the table and drink coffee and read plays. This was just marvelous, of course. And guess who that was they were reading? It's amazing to think. It was Eugene O'Neill, and this was the beginning of the Provincetown Players. So those gals were really up on things, this little neighborhood in Evanston. That's where my parents were hoping to live forever, until they had to pull out of there because of the winter snows. But it was a lovely place.

Teiser: And you dug Eugene O'Neill at that early age?

Miles: Oh, did I dig Eugene O'Neill! He had a play called Oil. It's about a wife that goes crazy. The husband is a sea captain, and he takes his wife. You're not supposed to take your wife on the ship, but she wanted to go very badly. They got stuck in the ice up north some place, and she goes crazy. Oh, it was sublime for a little six-year-old. [Laughter] Just marvelous. Yes, I guess that's how I got on to the play situation.

Plus the Beebes. When we lived on Latona, then we had this Tarzan of the Apes man doing scripts; we were all in the swing of that too.

Teiser: Did you read the scripts, or did you talk to him, or--?

Miles: No, but we did an awful lot of play-acting. The Beebes had huge boxes of clothes to dress up in. They had three children and we had three children, and we just had infinite numbers of performances.

Teiser: Ah! That's where you had practical stage experience.

Miles: That's right. You're right, you're so right.

Teiser: You didn't have people entering and exiting at the same time. [Laughs]

Miles: I realize now what is going to be difficult in oral history is to stay back there because not more than two months ago I met an old lady eighty-some years old who was one of the directors of the Pasadena Community Playhouse. She and I shared memories, just this recent time, about the Pasadena Community Playhouse that would really chill your bones--how could we both remember all this! It's so hard to stay back there because as I was a child and lived near the Pasadena Community Playhouse, it's not that I ever went, really, but that I heard about the plays and the actors from my parents. Like Androcles and the Lion was one of those. And then we put on Androcles and the Lion. She was in Androcles and the Lion (and this was like, say, 1920). She became one of the directors of the Playhouse. I just have a feeling that there are all these marvelous strands that go through.

I met her down at a trailer court in Laguna. [Laughing] She was living in a trailer court in Laguna.

Okay. Where are we now? At Latona Avenue School.

Teiser: I stopped you at the age of twelve and said let's go back.

Miles: So we leave Latona Avenue School--

Teiser: Yes. After that, you had not been able to go to school for two years?

Miles: That's right, yes.

Teiser: You were studying at home, then?

Miles: Yes. Oh, it was so negative! You have no idea. My mother said to the principal down there, "Well, maybe she could do some writing at home, and you could write her, correspond with her. A teacher could write her about other--you know." So well, yeah, okay, if she wants to. So my mother decided I could write--they were studying California history, so my mother decided I could write a play on California history. I spent that whole winter in this new house in the Wilshire suburbs writing this damn play on California history,

Miles: which we then tendered to the Wilshire Crest School. (No, that's not the name of it. I've blocked out the name, maybe Windsor. Anyway.) And they just never even mentioned it! Never even acknowledged the receipt of it. I just stress it because so much of my life was so happy that it's just incredible to me how it was not the run-of-the-mill; it was just luck. There was nobody in that school that was pleasant to me, or that would let me get through the eighth grade or anything.

This was all out in the sticks, out toward Wilshire and La Brea. My father bought a house out there because he thought that when the Third Street streetcar came through, there'd be a big real estate boom. (I mention this because this forward seeking was like my father.) And the Third Street streetcar still hasn't come through. [Laughter] There has been a boom, but that didn't do it.

Teiser: Let me go back and pick up another thing before I forget it, because it relates a little to this. You said your father would have kept your first check for \$1.70. How old were you when you received that great sum?

Miles: This Miss Babcock--this was on Latona, when I was, say, eight to twelve, maybe I was ten--she had her eye on this little magazine that printed children's work, besides Saint Nicholas. It was done by the Beacon Press; I forget what it was called. I don't think it was Youth's Companion; I never cared too much about Youth's Companion. But it was another children's magazine that she got for me at the library. They just asked children to write things and hand them in. I did, and they paid me for this, to my surprise. That really delighted my father. It's not that he was so mercenary; it's just that he felt that my mother was so theoretical that it was necessary for him to be practical. This was what he kept stressing all the time--being practical.

Teiser: What was the piece?

Miles: It was called "The Princess Who Could Not Dance." A very sad little story deal. I have a faint feeling that a lot of it was copied from some place else. I have a feeling that it was not original, and that I sort of remembered it from some place, and I've always wondered where that was. But I've always had a soft spot in my heart for plagiarists [laughter], because I'm sure I didn't make up that thing from cover to cover. [Laughter]

That reminds me, though, of another important thing to mention--good things in Los Angeles--is that, both on Lucille Street, when I was seven, and Latona later, all during those five years, the public libraries near our house were absolutely angelic about helping my mother pick books for me to read, finding out what I liked and then

Miles: sending more. My mother would take a trip down and they'd find out what I liked and then they'd send me more. I kept reading this way--really constructive. I was very opinionated. One time one of the librarians wrote me a little note and said I hadn't liked one book that she'd ever sent me. [Laughter] She just wondered why we differed so in our opinions. I thought that was so nice of her. I don't think I wrote her back, but I sent a message by my mother what was wrong with her choices. I had a great fondness for her.

Also, Madeline Ruthven, the scenario writer that lived on our street, came up and read to me. About a year or two I was flat on my back in this head-to-foot cast, and she came up and read to me. A total stretch of utter boredom. She was reading me Melville (and I guess I was nine or ten), and she read Omoo, Typee, Moby Dick--thank God I got out of that cast before she got to Pierre. [Laughter] But that must have done me good, and I'm sure that some love of the classics crept in.

Teiser: [Laughter] Maybe just fortitude.

Miles: Oh, what a funny choice.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Miles: I would like to bring in one point about reading aloud. My mother read aloud to us all this time, till we moved to the Wilshire district. And so my brothers were on this too. It was kind of interesting because they didn't like it anywhere nearly as much as I did, but they did like it. We tended, because of the majority rule, to hear an awful lot of boys' books rather than girls'. I had hardly any girls' books because it was two to one. We had the Treasure Island kind of thing, but I didn't get much of the girls' book kind of thing until later. They didn't like poetry, either. So she mostly read, I guess you'd say, classics of the Treasure Island kind.

One other thing I should mention because it should not be put aside from my literary history, that I was very eager to be an opera singer, and I wanted to write the opera songs that I sang. My friend Welda Dower, who lived down the street, was a year or so younger than I am. Welda played the piano, and she had a music book with songs in it like "Beautiful Dreamer" and "Tenting Tonight" and "La Paloma," and we really went to town on those songs. [Laughter] So she would play the music and I would make up the words. None of those ever got written down because her mother felt that the words weren't as good as the music, and that I should improve before we wrote them down. But we had an awful lot of fun doing this, and I really wanted to compose words to music. That was my major ambition, not only then but all through even college, with the big bands. You may be glad to know that I was a contributor to the words and lyrics of the big band of Ted Fiorito.

Teiser: You were?

Miles: Yes. He never actually played any of them, but he kept thanking me for sending them. [Laughter]

Teiser: Both words and music?

Miles: No. See, Welda gave me the idea of using other, old tunes. Then we'd adapt--we'd get new words that we thought were more interesting than the old words for the old tunes. Then I would take some of Ted Fiorito's tunes and give them new words. Pretty awfully done, but still, he was a very nice person. He was playing at the Coconut Grove, which was near our house, and the two or three times that I did this, he would write me little notes saying, "These are very nice words. They don't quite fit our needs, but keep on trying. Love, Ted." [Laughter]

Teiser: Thrills!

Miles: Pretty nice, huh? [Laughter] So that was my movie star stage.

Teiser: Did you see movies much?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: You were in a movie environment.

Miles: Yes. On Latona, which was in the backwoods area in South Pasadena, the movies hadn't really hit yet, and we saw very few and they were very crummy. Indeed, that's when my father felt we should move from there, that it was an area that would not grow and improve, and so indeed it hasn't. It's mostly paved over now with the freeway, though the corner store where we bought penny candy is still there.

Last month I was going down the hall at Irvine, and to the fellow that was pushing my wheelchair I said, "Where did you grow up?" He said, "I grew up around Sycamore Grove in South Pasadena, and nobody's ever heard of it, on Avenue Forty-three," and I said, "That's where I grew up." Coming toward us in the other direction was a professor who said, "What did I hear about Avenue Forty-three and Sycamore Grove? That's where I grew up." Isn't that an interesting coincidence? That was this hole-in-the-wall place, a place where Chicano squatters squatted in the river bed, in the dry arroyo.

So it was a very interesting area, and my father was right to leave it and to go to the Wilshire district, but it was a terrible wrench for all of us, just a terrible, terrible wrench. So that gets us back to the movies and when I'm fourteen, because now we did

- Miles: go to the movies because we had nothing else to do. Now suddenly we had no friends, no nothin'. So we went to the movies, because we were now near Hollywood and the Ritz Theater and La Brea and Wilshire.
- Teiser: You and your brothers were quite companionable?
- Miles: Yes.
- Teiser: Liked to do the same things in spite of the little gaps in age?
- Miles: Yes. There wasn't too much we could do together, but that was the thing we did do together, was go to the movies on Sunday afternoon.
- Teiser: And listen to stories, be read to.
- Miles: Oh, that's true. When we were still on Latona, my father had the boys help him with the yard work. It was always very awful because he always lost his temper. But then as a reward, after dinner, he would take us to Grauman's Egyptian Theater. It was a big event! I remember now. In other words, there was no movie near us, but we'd go way over to Hollywood. So, yes, the Egyptian and the Chinese Theater were absolutely major events in our lives.
- But then more when we went together, just my brothers and I in the Wilshire district. When we were in our teens, we went just to the local theaters. That's just when talking was coming in. This wasn't the big epics kind of thing, but this was more Clive Brook. Remember Clive Brook?
- Teiser: Yes.
- Miles: Really neat English comedy.
- Teiser: Did the movies influence you in any way?
- Miles: I can't think how. [Laughter] I've written a lot of poems about movies, though. But I don't think I have a very cinematic mind; I don't think I'm all that visual. On the other hand, I don't think the movies are very much interested in--what would you say?--low key dialogue, which is what I'd be interested in. [Laughter]
- Teiser: I'm just thinking again of your lyrics for Ted Fiorito. I'm curious that you should have picked that up. Well, I suppose perhaps not, in view of your father's ragtime and--
- Miles: It was very much my father. It was also Welda, my good friend. But she had to practice the piano every day. And the fact that we both thought we had beautiful voices, and we would get together with this book of songs and sing them together. Oh, it must have been a nest of singing birds. [Laughter]

Miles: A sad part--oh, a really sad part was that in school they never really learned that I couldn't read music for this very reason. They would teach us "do, re me so, fa me so, la so," and that would be the way to read the notes that went with that tune. But I would just learn that immediately, and they didn't know I didn't know what I was reading. And I never have learned to read music, and it's been a really mental block in my life. So now I should jump ahead and tell you how I didn't learn to read music when I was on sabbatical a few years ago. You don't want me to do that now, do you?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: You want to do it now? Well, when I took my sabbatical, since I couldn't go to Europe, I would go onto the campus by another gate, so that nobody would know I was there. One of my sabbaticals was to learn how to read music. It was very hard to find a course that was easy enough, because I didn't have piano. That was one big thing--the problem that I couldn't play piano. My brothers didn't want to; if we'd had a piano around, it would have been nice, but they wanted sports.

Finally, the wife of a colleague and I, who were both looking for something very, very easy, found the really depth of simplicity in the whole Music Department, a course for teachers, Music 110, taught by Jack [John M.] Swackhamer, a really nice guy. He did it by voice. So he would just have the students sing, sight-sing the notes, and sometimes go up to the piano. He gave a lot of little quizzes, which I faithfully took. The most I ever got was 40 percent, but that was not too bad, considering the mental block I'd built up all those years. I cannot hear the difference between a high note and a low note. If I say "do re" I don't know which is higher and which is lower. At the end, he wanted us to compose a tune to our own words. I had loads of words waiting for tunes, but I'd never composed a tune, you see, as I said before. So I had these words that I was very fond of. I had a kind of tune in my mind, but I didn't know how to get it onto paper. This was one of the most exciting things I ever did--it was kind of like Helen Keller [laughing], except it didn't work out so well.

All night long I tried to think what would be the right notes for those words, for what I was trying to do. I didn't really believe in tonic and dominant. In the Music Department, people are always saying, "Obviously you can't end there," and I would want to say, "Why can't you obviously end there?" I didn't have any of the conventions. So I decided I'd start with three's and I would have a beginning and ending on three instead of on one. I thought it would sort of float.

Miles: I'd wake up in the middle of the night thinking, "Oh, but that seventeenth note in there, that can't be that; that has to go more down."

Anyway, I finally got this thing down on paper and handed it in. When it came back to me, Jack had marked it in red and said that it was very interesting, and he said, "It has a floating quality. I don't know if you realize that." Well, that was very complimentary. He said, "It's not really orthodox enough to do much with. It's kind of a fragment and one doesn't quite know where it's going." Well, it was all okay. I agreed that was about the best I had done. He marked one place as being very bad, which I knew, another place as being very good, which I was thrilled by.

I was reading this, and I was in a department meeting of ours. Somebody tapped me on the shoulder, and here was Bud [Bertrand H.] Bronson sitting behind me, who is a very revered and austere figure in our department, and one of our elder statesmen and, as you probably know, a really marvelous musician and an authority on the ballad. He said, "What's that piece of music you're looking at, there?" I said, "Oh, Bud, forget it," and I put it in my book. But he reached over, took it out and looked at it, and chuckled during the rest of the meeting.

Then he got up and came around after the meeting and said, "This little thing of yours reminds me of something. I don't know whether you know it or not, but it has very many of the qualities of another well-known piece of music." I said I didn't know. He said, "Well, I'll sing it to you," and he hummed this beautiful thing. Oh, I loved it! Tears came to my eyes, and I said, "Bud, you know, you're a very sardonic man, but this was pure kindness, pure sympathy. What is it?" He said, "The Japanese national anthem. [Laughter] Isn't that funny--sad?"

Teiser: [Laughter] How curious!

Miles: I thought that was good. I was so taken aback. You couldn't get a better character study of Bud Bronson than that story, because it has all the sympathy but all the barb in it too. It was a real shock for me, but it was funny. I think that's the last thing I've done with words and music.

Oh no no, I didn't. That's right. During Cambodia, Jack [Swackhamer] asked me to write some words to a piece that he wrote. I did, and that was very thrilling. The kids rewrote a whole concert to protest Cambodia. All the pieces were new; they just didn't do anything they had been planning. The chorus did this piece, with my words and his music. I was sitting next to a colleague of Jack's who told me the whole thing was no good, but I was in seventh heaven--I thought it was beautiful! [Laughter]

Miles: Oh yes, that's right--he wrote the music to my words, by the way. Yes, he turned it around.

So I guess that's the end of the story of my music career. A very important story in my life, feeble as it is.

Teiser: It's not really so separate from--

Miles: No, no. All these strands keep going through.

So now you want me to go back to when I'm fourteen?

High School

Teiser: Now back to fourteen.

Miles: We lived near a new junior high school where my brothers went to, but it was too far for me to get to. So I was sort of stymied out there in the oat fields. It was interesting because they were building new little gerry-built houses, and the sound of hammering--just a sense of construction going on. But it clearly stood out as a depressing year for me. I was supposedly taking exercises, taking trips over to the other side of town to get some exercises, which I was sure weren't doing me any good. By this time I had braces on. I had plenty of energy, but I didn't like the exercise, I didn't like the trip on the streetcar (my poor mother lugged me on the streetcar, on the bus), and I was doing this writing for this school and I knew they didn't care. I was thirteen, and nothing seemed to be adding up in any direction.

Then we went down to Coronado Beach for the summer, which we had done before. We stayed in a place called Coronado Tent City. Were you ever there?

Teiser: I've seen pictures of it.

Miles: Yes. There's a hotel. They ran this tent city down on the strand below the hotel, and they had hotel service--linen service and so forth--every day. The cottages were made out of palm thatch and canvas, and they had little tents behind if you wanted to cook, which my mother did. Very delightful, simple, informal summers. Nice and warm. These did me a lot of good. I learned how to swim. Again, I couldn't learn from my parents.

My father's idea of how to teach you to swim was to hold your face down in the water until you struggled enough so that you'd come up for air or something. After a few bouts of that, we quit. But

Miles: we got a college student to teach me, who taught by teaching how to float, and I learned actually to swim about a hundred yards, the side stroke. She would help my mother during the summers, one of the best of our many-odd mother's aids.

Across from us lived a family (I don't remember their name at the moment. [Added later: It was Schuck]) They had two daughters who, by coincidence, were going to L.A. High, which was about two blocks from where we lived, and where my father had been aiming for all along when he bought this house, because he thought eventually we could all go to L.A. High. Well, these two girls were going there now, so they took me under their wing. They said, "Sure, she ought to go to L.A. High. She's smart enough to go to L.A. High, even if she hasn't been through the eighth grade."

That seemed to be just idle chatter. But when we went back, it turned out that one of these girls was on what was called the Girls' Senior Board, which was an elected, very august group of senior girls, and she had mentioned it to the girls' principal, who called my mother up and said why didn't my mother come over and check it out, and maybe I could come there. Wasn't that good?

So I was rescued from my ivory tower, and she said that she could let me into L.A. High on the basis of these papers that I'd saved, the stuff that had been printed, the Saint Nicholas stuff mostly.

One big thing I had won. My eighth grade teacher, the one I was pulled away from when we moved, was a kind of old battle axe, a marvelous kind of teacher you read about, with a shirtwaist and that stiff, ironic presence. She gave me a magazine called The Bookman. Did you ever see The Bookman? It was a rather stylish, Clifton Fadiman type of thing of the twenties. She brought this to me and said, "Why don't you read this? There's a contest in here for young writers under eighteen, on favorite books that they might have."

Again, I avoided this, I resented this magazine--it was too hard for me. After all, it was an adult magazine. But I did finally settle down and write that favorite book thing, and I won it. So this really did impress Miss Wolverton.

Teiser: What was your favorite book?

Miles: Oh, come on, now. Don't ask me that. [Laughing] This is embarrassing. It was called Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard. I really did love that book. It's by an English writer; I can't say her name, which is very bad of me. [Added later: Eleanor Farjeon] The prize was another book, and what I asked for was The Three Musketeers. It showed that I had grown up slightly between twelve, thirteen, and fourteen.

Teiser: That impressed the high school?

Miles: Now this was high school, yes. I guess I went four years to L.A. High, '24 to '28. They didn't let me skip a grade, but there were freshman subjects given (I guess that's the way it was). I can't remember whether I was there three years or four, but I know I had to take all the beginning stuff, which normally I would have got in junior high, like algebra and beginning Latin or beginning French, and grammar and all those things. This vice-principal wielded a certain amount of power over me, which I had a hard time with. She thought, since she'd let me in, she could make me take a real classical course, which I wouldn't have chosen. So this way I willy-nilly got a lot of college preparatory work done--except they didn't make women take math in those days, which they should have. Now they realize that's a great difference between women and men in education, in jobs today.

Teiser: I didn't realize that.

Miles: Oh yes. There are some beautiful statistics on the subject. It's right there, after algebra and geometry, that women get sidetracked into low-paying jobs forever after. That was okay with me; I wouldn't have been an engineer anyway.

Teiser: Did you like Latin and French?

Miles: Well--let's see. I didn't like English; teachers were very sentimental. I loved chemistry--mostly the nature of the teacher. I didn't like Latin very well until I got just a marvelous--the best teacher I ever had. His name was Dr. Walter Edwards, and he taught Latin and Greek. I took everything he taught.

Teiser: Greek too, did you say?

Miles: Yes. The story was that he had a Ph.D. and that he preferred teaching high school students. I don't know what actually was the story. I think he had dyspepsia, and maybe he just didn't have the health to teach in college, or maybe he didn't publish enough. Anyway, we accepted the idea that he liked us better than college students. He was such a marvelous man, and not in any way that I can define. He was not encouraging or enthusiastic; he just assumed that you were very interested and the stuff was very interesting, and you would do an awful lot of work and he would do an awful lot of work. We published a Latin paper called The Nuntius, and everybody would write in Latin for that. It was just a kind of quiet, crabby assumption that things would go on in this way.

- Miles: In my Virgil class, there was--I can't say his name quite, but he became editor of the Christian Science Monitor--Kevin somebody--Hendricks? He was editor of The Nuntius. John Cage, the famous music guy. And a man who's a demographer at Berkeley, in history and sociology, Woodrow Borah. So there were four of us, just contemporaries there, who turned out to keep on working very hard in the literary world. So it must have been a pretty good class, and he probably did get quite a bit of work out of us.
- Teiser: You were reading Virgil in high school?
- Miles: Yes. We read Virgil, Ovid, Cicero, beginning Greek. So I was going to be a classics major. When I got to college, when I went to UCLA, a very nice man there, who taught all those things, did not inspire me any at all, and demanded memory work, which I didn't have. So I quit being a classics major overnight. But it shows--
- Teiser: You really were, through high school, going to be a classics major?
- Miles: Yes.
- Teiser: What were you going to do with it?
- Miles: I didn't know! I didn't have any career plans. I don't remember talking about career, even with my brothers either; I think we just talked about schooling at that point. I don't think the job market was quite as oppressive as it is now. I don't ever remember thinking about what any of us would do with these things. All I remember is that my dad would say, "You must get away to college. You must go somewhere to college where you get away from home and get some new experiences and somebody else can help you beside your mother. The boys must go to Stanford." Those are the only things I remember at that level.
- Teiser: Your mother had a great deal of theoretical education, and he still wanted education for all of you--the best.
- Miles: Yes, despite the fact that he made fun of it.
- Teiser: Stanford was expensive.
- Miles: Was it really?
- Teiser: Pretty expensive for most people. It was for your family [speaking to Harroun], it was for my family.
- Miles: Really, was it? In the thirties? This would have been '28, '29.
- Teiser: Oh, yes! You were in the class of '29, were you? [to Harroun]

Miles: You must have been there before Dick and John were. Two things: One was that my brothers ran a laundry business there, and so they earned quite a bit (it was easier to earn money then). And secondly, it was the Depression, and everything was so rock-bottom anyway that my mother didn't know where the next nickel was coming from because my father had died in February of '29, which was like a month before the crash. When things went into probate, my dad was feeling pretty well off, and feeling that he had done pretty well by us and could get us to college. But when things came out of probate, which was in that fall, we had nothing. But my brothers were on their way to college and--

Teiser: By then were they established there?

Miles: Well, no! Mother just thought she'd be phoning and having them come home any minute. But that money was funny money. You know, I mean you kept eating on less and less, you kept spending less and less, and they kept stringing along on their laundry. They never even borrowed from Stanford. I know she didn't have much to give them. It was curious. Many people have said that they don't remember what they lived on. But dividends persisted.

We do remember as we reminisced about it, one big event was that whoever was home, like in the summer--I know my brother earned a dollar a day for a long time on an ice truck, one of my brothers, and my mother got up at five o'clock to take him to work. This kind of thing, you know. Our big event was to go out to dinner on Sunday, and that dinner cost a dollar, and that we just ate for hours. So you see how different. [Laughter]

I sort of skipped over high school here, but I guess that's enough.

Teiser: Let's go back to high school a little more. You didn't like English classes, but did you participate in any other literary journals besides the Latin one?

Miles: Yes. I was involved in the literary stuff. The high school was divided by floors. The sciences and the languages were on the second floor (I had to climb up one flight of stairs), and English and History were on the third floor, which was really very hard for me to get to. I could climb stairs then with help, but it was awfully hard. So I postponed as much of English as possible and did a lot of languages and sciences--whatever I could on the second floor.

I remember writing a poem at the end of my junior year which was called "To Dr. Edwards, on Going to the Third Floor." This said, "I am going now to the third floor/Where sniffing flowers gracefully is the thing to do." I'll spare you the rest of it, but anyway that was my attitude. Everybody up there was just very appreciative and symbolic.

Miles: There was a woman, to whom I'm always unfair, who had studied at Columbia under Hughes Mearns, creative writing. He was one of the first to stress teaching creative writing to children, and free verse. I've never looked into that book. I took her course in creative writing, and somehow it was unfortunate; I was rebellious against it. I did show her my work. My mother kept thinking she should see my work, and I took the course. But I sat in the back with the boys, and we would make fun of all the poetry about sentiment. We kept telling her, "Why don't you let us play 'Muddy Waters'?" Finally she said, "If you wish me to, I will leave the room, and then you can play 'Muddy Waters'." And we all said, "Hooray!" [Laughter]

This is nothing that I think of with great pride. On the other hand, I still do resent the kind of teaching that she did, which was so sentimental.

The other influential teacher was a sorority woman who stressed college excellence and getting to college and being a Theta and getting all A's, and was a really wonderfully rigorous teacher. She was our senior teacher, and she taught Beowulf and Chaucer and Shakespeare wonderfully well. This is where all my friends and I were together, and we worked on the literary magazine and the literary annual--no, that's right--we didn't work on the paper, we worked on the annual.

I remember it was my idea that instead of having all us A students in the interview, we should talk to the kids that never got into the annual. They were represented by those who were always found off-bounds smoking at some place like Marchetti's or something, which was down on Vermont Avenue and supposed to be a very bad place to be found out of bounds. My idea was we interview these guys. So we had rather a struggle over that annual.

My best friend, a friend who was editor, was both pulled in my direction and pulled in Miss Lavayea's direction. That was a very interesting tension between lady-likeness, which Miss Lavayea was always stressing, and having fun, which I was stressing.

Teiser: You were on the having fun side.

Miles: I was on the having fun side. The girls in that high school were so nice. I belonged to the rival club, not to my best friend's club, not to Miss Lavayea's club, but to a rival one called Scribblers. [Telephone rings] So these were literary clubs, definitely.

Teiser: Who won? Did you interview the boys off-bounds?

Miles: Yes, we did. But it was all toned down; it was milk and water by the time we got through with it. But we did do it, yes.

Teiser: What was your friend's name?

Miles: Which friend?

Teiser: That you were just saying--your best friend who was in the other club?

Miles: Her name was Franklyn Royer. Her name is now Franklyn Bradshaw. Just to show how my theory is that things extend in curious ways, she's coming to see me on Saturday. I see her maybe once a year or something like that. She's retired from teaching, and her husband is retired from editing, and they live in Los Angeles. I saw her when I was down south, and she's a really interesting person still.

A lot of my senior year in high school--I mention this because I suppose it was literary, and I suppose I wrote a lot--but it was so sort of torn between a lot of this feminine club rivalry kind of, people hurting people's feelings. I had some friends that were kind of light hearted and satirical. I was known in my high school senior year as being just much too cynical for my own good. You know, I was about as cynical as Snoopy [laughter], but that's the way they put me down there so I wouldn't make too much trouble.

(While this is on my mind, I suppose I might as well go into it.) Then my dad said, "You need to get away and get with a more lady-like society. You should go to Scripps and have a girl help you there, and get away from home." So we went out to Scripps and looked it over. I was all applied and in and accepted and went out to see the dean and see the place. I took one look--do you know what Scripps looks like? Well, it's got a nice, high wall and a bunch of banana trees--Spanish cloister kind of thing. I said, "No. Uh-uh." Then cried.

This was on the way to the desert where we camped a lot. All during this time, my father was a great camper and swimmer. We were either always at the desert or the beach. They thought being at Scripps would be nice because they could stop and see me on the way to the desert. I really didn't buy this whole picture. I remember the sense then of making a real decision that day that I just definitely wasn't going to Scripps, I was going to UCLA.

So I went on to UCLA with all my friends.

Teiser: I'm going to tell you that you've been talking for an hour and a half and--

Miles: Can I talk for fifteen minutes more?

Teiser: You certainly can, but I don't want you to be too tired. I want to give you a chance to stop if you feel like it.

Miles: Miss McKinney [the housekeeper] has to leave at a certain time, and I have to be ready for her to leave. So that's my only barrier. I have to stop at five to five.

Teiser: I'll stop you when this tape runs out, which will be about ten minutes.*

Miles: All right.

So we all, us literary people, traipsed out to UCLA, which was still on the old campus at Melrose and Vermont. We had a nice bunch; there were about four women and three men, three boys, who were good friends and worked on literary stuff. We graduated [from L.A. High] together and had a nice graduation party. The next day we had to go and take the Subject A exam at UCLA.

I remember that it was famously said that the high school literary people always flunked the exam. I was so curious as to why this should be. Here was this lovely auditorium. The sun was filtering in, and this nice professor was explaining to us. They handed us the list of questions. It came over to me, and it was absolutely clear why the literary people flunked--because the two alternatives for topics we were to write on were, one, "Music in the Home" (which I knew all my friends were going to write on, and which I by this time had learned to avoid), and the other was "The Uses of Science," about which I knew very little. But obviously I knew that I could pass. In other words, it seemed so funny to think with all the trouble we've had about--and I've been involved with Subject A ever since all these years--it was so obvious then, and it's been obvious ever since, how much trouble is made by teachers not understanding what they are handing a student!

So all my friends fell for this absolute trap, which was music in the home (which wasn't meant to be a trap, of course), and they all did flunk, and I passed. I said, "The uses of science are fourfold." Now, I didn't know any more about what the fourfold was going to be than the man in the moon. But I just sat there chewing my pencil till I thought of four, and then those were four paragraphs. So I was a clear thinker.

Teiser: But the people who chose music just waded around formlessly?

Miles: That's it--just waded around.

*But the interview was actually continued on another tape.

Miles: We might get over with, in this short time, something that goes with high school. A very hard part of my life was that my father had very high blood pressure and felt that he should get compensation from his insurance companies for his disability, and that he should retire; he couldn't work any more--that's what the doctor said. The insurance companies didn't want to give it to him because it would make a precedent, because he didn't have anything visibly wrong with him and high blood pressure wasn't understood in those days (I guess it still isn't, too much).

So we went through, in my high school years, very, very difficult illness by my father and persecution by the insurance companies. (I'm sure if I had more time, I would take too much time with this, so I won't.)

It was a real cops and robbers thing. They rented a house that we had for rent, and they took me out for rides and pumped me. It was a real spy story. We would drive to the desert, and they would follow in another car, and report on what my father was driving, how fast he was driving. We finally had a trial, at which my father won. But then the lawyer laughed at him and said, "Well, just collect. Collect from the Aetna Life Insurance Company."

So that made kind of a running accompaniment to two or three of my high school years, where I would often go to high school in tears, as would my brothers too, because my father would have been so sick the night before, and my mother wouldn't know what to do. He'd be determined to fight this battle and talk to his lawyer and--oh my, it was very hard. Yet all the time we'd keep going away on these holidays, to beach and desert, where he would feel better and he would relax.

Very briefly, what happened was that finally a young lawyer--this lawyer that won the case was so bad, but a new young lawyer sent him to Johns Hopkins. There was a very famous psychiatrist there by the name of Adolph Meyer, and then Meyer wrote a letter to the Aetna Company saying that he would hold them responsible for my dad's life. So he was paid up, and that's probably where we did get the money to send the boys to college, except that, as I say, much drained away in that crash of '29. But my father did die within a year. In other words, we didn't get much money because that was supposed to be insurance that would go on with a disability. Having won his case, so to speak, and having settled down and felt happier for about a year, he did have a massive stroke and died. At the beginning of our college lives, we were left with, in a way, a kind of peace and quietude because it was wonderful not to have those terrible headaches around us all the time, but on the other hand with a tremendous empty space, and then also with my mother's responsibility financially and so on, that she couldn't cope with.

Miles: Women in those days were just laughed at in terms of jobs. She would then have been in her forties, and they paid no attention to her teaching record. She tried to go back to UCLA summer school and get teaching work, and everybody just laughed.

So that's kind of a sad theme that runs through. I don't know how it affects the literary scene at all. I just really don't know. Yet I think it's important to mention because it colored our lives very much. It probably brought my brothers and me closer together too.

Teiser: Let's start next time with UCLA.

Miles: Okay. We were supposed to get there today. [Laughter]
[end tape 1, side 2]

University

[begin tape 2, side 1]

Teiser: Now back to UCLA. What happened to these other kids? They had to take Subject A?

Miles: They had to take Subject A, all these literary people.

Teiser: Was there no objective test that pulled them up?

Miles: I can't remember, but the essay test was what really counted. It still should. It's all such a farce they didn't do well. But we should have been prepared, we'd been taught so well. But the question wasn't--I mean, a kind of inoculation never took place to what is clarity, what they wanted--I don't know, it's hard to explain. But they're still doing it.

Anyway, this was on the old campus, a marvelous old place. Whenever I find people who went there, we always get sentimental. It was ivy-covered and small, and green lawns, and had quite an old university atmosphere.

Teiser: Not at all like Scripps.

Miles: Absolutely not. It absolutely looked like an adult spot. That could have been a hard year for me because my friends were rushed to sororities and everything, whereas I didn't have any sorority function. So I just went to classes. But they would take me to lunch and tell me all their troubles. [Laughter] So I had a really

Miles: very nice year, whereas they didn't; some of them were miserable. In fact, Franklyn left UCLA and went to Arizona where she could go into a better sorority. The sorority problem just ate them all up. But I've always thought it was very nice that they sort of bridged things over for me.

Teiser: Where did you live?

Miles: Where did I live? Oh, I was at home. My parents felt this wasn't good for me, to live at home. But the alternative was that we got a boy--well, that was very nice too. My mother was going to drive me over, which was not a good idea. I was sitting in Dean [Charles H.] Rieber's logic class, and the boy who was sitting next to me, with whom I fell just totally and utterly in love, turned out to be president of the DU house. He said, "Why don't the DU's help you through college? It would be a good job for them, and it would be good for you." I said, "Great." So he said, "Okay. What's your address? I'll send one around tomorrow." From then on, I had boys helping me*, and he just started that out, just like that.

The first one's name was Clarence Sansome, and I fell in love with him too. I had two tremendous admirations there. Clarence, however, was suspended or failed or something for using the word "raspberry" in a comic article he was writing; that was considered off color. So I lost him for a while, but later he came back.

They drove me out there, and then I'd have lunch with my friends, Roberta Denny, Dorothy Ayres, Frances Williams, Franklyn Royer. I just found college so exciting in the sense of--not literary, though--it was just exciting in terms of geology and astronomy. I had a professor from Lick Observatory up here, an interesting geologist. Ralph Bunche was there; he was a T.A. in political science. Just all these doors and windows were opening.

Then we went on to the new campus, which was just two, three, or four buildings, dusty, Mexicans ploughing the ground, not much in town. But this lovely ride out every morning with these nice boys, nice to talk to, interesting. I think that year the boy played on the football team--Frank Lowe helped me--and we talked a lot about the football team. Of course that was great. I used to go to the games.

Then I did send in some poems to the campus literary magazine, and they were accepted. A fellow by the name of Armine Mackenzie was editor of the literary magazine, and he accepted the poems and told

*For a list of helpers, see Appendix.

Miles: me I was a very good writer. I had a feeling the world was mine, and I admired him very much too. I fell in love with everybody all over.

That's just about all that happened. The English courses weren't all that great, and an advisor had told me not to take English--take everything else but English. I took that seriously.

Teiser: On what basis?

Miles: Well, he was the math advisor, and he just told me that. You know, you sit at a trestle and the kids go through, and you tell them things. He told me, "If you want to write, don't take English."

Teiser: Judging from the fact that you were a writer?

Miles: Yes. I told him I wanted to be a writer, I guess.

Teiser: Did you consider yourself a writer by then?

Miles: I don't know. Maybe I did. It sounds as if I might've.

Teiser: You'd written by then more than most people write in their whole lives, I suppose. [Laughing]

Miles: I hadn't printed anything anywhere, though, except in the high school annual. But this math man just said, "If you're interested in literature, take other stuff." I don't remember thinking of myself as a writer, but maybe I did.

So I took a lot of interesting courses in other fields. I even remember making a bet with a boy that I could pass an accounting course if he could pass an English course. We did things like that. I took accounting. Just funny stuff. Just had a lot of fun.

Then, in my junior year, it turned out that there were upper division clubs. One was the Women's Honorary in English, and one was called the Manuscript Club, which was coeducational. I remember going to class, dropping a pencil, and this boy who was walking by me picked it up, handed it to me, and said, "We want to ask you if you'll become a member of the Manuscript Club." Oh! He's a good friend of mine still, and he's just retired from teaching at Fresno. But that was so marvelous. And the women asked me to belong to this women's club [telephone rings]--

Now I was sort of plunged into both Women's Honorary kind of thing, which had a nice sorority feeling; we were just nice as friends, as women. But we also put on plays and read Shakespeare and talked about books. There was not much inventive writing. I don't remember anybody much that was an original writer; maybe one or two.

Miles: The Manuscript Club was full of goofy people. We would meet at night at people's houses all over the area--Santa Barbara, down the coast, driving to hell and gone. We came back now to the Pasadena Playhouse scene; we went to a lot of plays in Pasadena. I just remember those last two years about being in a car, talking our heads off about literary things, putting out not too much writing, but talking a lot about writing. So that's really about all there is to say. I think I had some poems printed, and I think I won a \$5 prize. I don't think I sent anything out. I don't think I had any sense of the outside world of literature. I don't think I read many magazines. I don't think I'd ever heard of T.S. Eliot, though it was now 1930. I can't imagine who we read. We were reading maybe Edmund Spenser. It was very un-hip. I think I was reading Walter Savage Landor, and one of my good friends was reading Pierre Loti. We were kind of esoteric about things. Oscar Wilde was very influential still, Swinburne was very influential. Los Angeles was not exactly up on things, because this was '29, '30, and '31. We should have been aware of Eliot and...

The magazines were rather unhelpful. My mother took a magazine called The Outlook, and there was some current stuff in that. But, as I say, I can't remember that we were very exploratory, but of ourselves. We'd read things to each other, and that whole sort of thing.

Teiser: Were any of the faculty people friendly with you? Did you meet them socially?

Miles: That was just coming to my mind. Since there was no graduate work at UCLA, the faculty was rather aloof. We weren't the substitutes for the graduates; they just didn't have graduates. When we came to the point about going to graduate work, I had no idea that I wanted to. (That answers your early question.) I simply didn't want to be a student or a scholar or a writer or anything. I think I wanted to read books and write poetry and have my friends.

I asked my favorite professor, "What should I read in the next years after I've graduated?" He said, "Just plunge yourself into [George E.B.] Saintsbury." I can't imagine a less helpful suggestion.

Teiser: [Incredulous] Saintsbury?!

Miles: Saintsbury. But he was thinking of Saintsbury as an aesthetic critic, you see.

My friends, then, had to think of jobs. They finally went up to Berkeley. Oh, I know--I then was supposed to have some operations, which I had put off till I was twenty-one. The surgeon wanted to do them when I was twenty-one. So I was committed to a year of hospital

Miles: and operations. That was another not too happy year because the operations didn't work very well and, as you know, the therapy is kind of a drag. My brothers were away, and my friends were away.

I did, however, start reading books then of a new type that got me interested in scholarship, like [William] Empson's Seven Types of Ambiguity, and novels of Kafka. I probably grew up a little bit in that year in terms of my reading, because I began thinking about poetry in a different way, so to speak. A man by the name of Owen Barfield wrote a book called Poetic Diction that I was crazy about. That too has had interesting later repercussions. There are now in the world, and in Berkeley, and in Santa Cruz, Barfieldians, who consider themselves a rare breed. Just a few people in general have read Owen Barfield and been inspired by him.

Teiser: Had you then, in that year, been reading and thinking along such abstract lines, along such theoretical lines?

Miles: That year, you mean?

Teiser: I mean until that year.

Miles: No, no. This was a big thing. I don't remember much of that. In our college, we had a major English three-hour, six-hour comprehensive that we worked towards for two years, where we were supposed to know all of English literature. It was that kind of thing, you see. The history of English literature was our guide--it came up to Hardy. So, to come into the new--

Teiser: Maybe he was pointing you in the direction you later took when he suggested Saintsbury.

Miles: Maybe that was at least a step forward. But fortunately I didn't take it. [Laughter] But yes, I got into a more modern world. I went down to the L.A. Public Library when I could; part of the time I could walk, and part I couldn't. I went down to that wonderful L.A. Public Library, which I could get into by the back ramp. So I started educating myself, reading down there. Then my friends came home and said, "Well, Berkeley's not very good. We knew more at L.A. than we know at Berkeley, but you'd better come up there. You're just languishing down here, so you'd better come back with us."

So I did, which was very, very hard on my mother because she didn't want to come up here. She had a world in the College Women's Club. Yet by that time there was no real way for me to try to break away from family; I needed her and she needed me by that time. Furthermore, my brothers were at Stanford. So that conspired to help me break away from UCLA, which was good. I'm very glad I didn't get stuck in Southern California without a sense of--the next year

Miles: they did start graduate work at UCLA, and they were awfully hard on their new people. My friends who stayed there took years and years, and gruelling courses to get through. Whereas, we came up here and again had a very good time. And we were pretty good because we had had this very hard comprehensive. So we all got our master's in one year, which was considered unusual here. Not that we did all that well.

Teiser: To go back to your doing well, you were Phi Beta Kappa, were you not?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: Were you selected in your senior year, or before?

Miles: No, it was in my junior year.

Teiser: You were getting good grades down there--

Miles: My mother was a Phi Beta Kappa, and she kept getting letters from them. So we just threw this one away, because she didn't pay much attention to them. [Laughter] I didn't know I was Phi Beta Kappa until it was almost too late [laughing] because we threw this thing away. I might have been looking for it in my senior year, but I certainly wasn't in my junior year. A lot of these writing people were already Phi Beta Kappa, so that it was no great change; it was almost the same group of friends. That was when I had the bet with my friend that he could pass English and I could pass accounting. But the true blue merit showed up in that we both passed!

I needed good grades because I got very impatient with certain courses, and some courses I just didn't do well in.

Teiser: Like what?

Miles: English. [Laughter]

Teiser: The perfect qualifications for an English professor! [Laughter]

Miles: Right, right. So UCLA was--I'm just so glad it happened because it was a very liberating and freeing influence in terms of friendships and all types of people, much more varied people than I'd known in high school, very strange people, strange problems--it was just a fine, human place to be. But I think I learned more myself in the following year, though I wasn't so happy doing it.

Teiser: Were you writing that year too?

Miles: Yes. That's when I think I started writing fairly seriously. When I came up to Berkeley, it was that work that people at Berkeley looked

Miles: at, and it was that work which, so to speak, made my literary friends at Berkeley. From then on, the writing that I did was more of a kind. That's what I feel--I haven't looked back to see if that's true.

Teiser: Was it published?

Miles: Now there you have a new story. The story of Ann Winslow is a beautiful story.* That should start a new time.

[end tape 2, side 1]

*See page 49.

INTERVIEW II -- 15 July 1977

[begin tape 1, side 1]

Teiser: There were a couple of things that we were wondering about, from things you spoke about last time. One was, you said that when you were a youngster being read to, because you had two brothers, you heard mostly boys' books. Then, you said. Did that imply that later you went on to reading girls'--

Miles: Yes. When I could read by myself, I gorged myself on all the Betty Barton in the Andes kind of things. In Coronado, where we spent the summers for about five years during those years, as soon as I was able to walk around on braces, we would go into town. There was a marvelous little library in Coronado. You know that great Carnegie free library thing? Well, here was just a model--one small building in a little park, one aisle straight down the middle to the back, where sat a little old librarian in a green eye shade. On either side were shelves, maybe twenty shelves on each side; one was fiction and one was nonfiction. I would always turn toward the fiction side, and she would always say, "Tsk, tsk, tsk," from down the back aisle. [Laughter] I read just series after series after series, when you do, around nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Just really ate up series of girls' books. [Tape off for a moment]

When I went to L.A. High and had this rather free program, because I was not in any special grade level, I spent a couple of hours in their library every morning, just reading. That was so exciting because these were semiadult books, and I could wander around this big room. There were books there for high school students, but they were at the level of--oh, who would you say? Well, Jack London and--who was the woman who wrote The Bent Twig? I know Fannie Hurst was one (that's not the one I'm trying to think of). Ruth Comfort Mitchell is the name that comes to me, but there's a better name. So I read these more adult, I suppose--who knows why they were in that library? Maybe because they were considered easy. But Fannie Hurst was very exciting, and The Bent Twig person--Dorothy

Miles: Fisher--and James Cabell, and lots of names I forget now because I never went on with them later. But I would just go around the room picking out all these strange names, and these would mostly still be fiction. That was great.

After having all these, until I was about eleven, I suppose, having all these books brought to me or read to me, the independence of walking around a room and picking them myself was just out of this world. Really fine.

When I was at UCLA, the library was unavailable physically; it was just too hard to get into. So it was not till when I could use the downtown library that it got very exciting again. That was a wonderful place, that downtown library in Los Angeles.

Teiser: You mean UCLA had closed stacks?

Miles: No, no. I just mean it had a lot of stairs. They didn't build it personally for me, that's all.

Teiser: I see. You said that one of the reasons you didn't like your English in high school was that the teacher was sentimental.

Miles: Most of them were.

Teiser: How do you define "sentimental" in that use?

Miles: Most of the teachers that I related to English were--it's hard to think of the right terms, except in that poem to Edwards quoted earlier [p. 22] where "sniffing and sniffing thoughts is the thing to do"--appreciative, isn't this lovely--the traditional thing, you know. Fading into the sunset, symbolism, all that kind of thing. It wasn't a direct observation of what was going on in the text, but immediate overresponse, and so on. Whereas the Latin professor, Dr. Edwards, was so good because we didn't sit around talking about how great it was--we just read it. That was what was so good. Let it speak for itself, in other words.

Teiser: Does that fit in with your high school reputation as a cynic?

Miles: Yes, that's why. I kept fighting back on this. They would say, "The stars in this poem indicate aspects of eternity," and I would say, "The stars in this poem indicate stars." This was considered cynical. [Laughter]

Robert Frost was very nice on this later. He was here visiting, and somebody said to him, "Isn't your apple-picking poem really about death, Mr. Frost?" He said, "Boy, I know how to spell death: d-e-a-t-h." That was my attitude in high school.

- Teiser: After our last interview, off the tape, you were telling us about the fact that when you sought admission to UCLA, the dean of women said that it would be impossible. Would you tell that again?
- Miles: When I decided to fight the battle of the big university, along with my friends, instead of going to a small college, I went with my mother out to see the dean of women, because that was the tradition, since the dean of women at L.A. High had let me in and had been the one that had helped me. I did the same thing at UCLA, but the dean there said she wouldn't advise it because I'd have to ask too many favors, and she thought it was right that I should go to a small college where I could be protected. So I was weeping heavily as I went out the gate. The cop had let me in, and so this cop--I guess he was waving us on and then he sort of stopped and said, "What's wrong? Why are you crying?" I said, "Because the dean of women wouldn't let me come here because I'd ask too many favors." He said, "What favors do you have to ask?" The ones that were on my mind, of course, were very trivial; it was just a matter of registering. I said, "I'd have to stand in line to get registered, and I'd have to get permission to drive on the campus." He said, "You get somebody to stand in line for you, and I'll let you drive on the campus."
- So he did, for the rest of the four years. In other words, I guess he reported this to the police authorities and nobody ever bothered us. A friend did stand in line. Later I was invited to talk at some YWCA party and met the dean of women there, and she literally said, "What are you doing here?" which I thought was very funny. (UCLA was already so big that she hadn't even noticed. Oh, she probably had.)
- But it was curious. I have to speak in tribute to the cops, since I had so many fights with them during the sixties. [Laughter]
- Teiser: I think I said something about the fact that persistence pays, or determination pays, and you responded with a larger--
- Miles: Generalization? [Laughing]
- Teiser: What was it you said?
- Miles: Oh, well, this is a common thing to say: I think determination probably makes room for luck. I did have some determination, and I certainly had an awful lot of luck.
- Harroun: Do you remember the name of the dean of women at UCLA?
- Miles: Let her be nameless. [Laughter] I'm sure she was a very good dean. Deans of women were never the thing I got along with best.

Teiser: You said that, I believe it was, that as an undergraduate at UCLA you were somewhat impatient with the English courses. Did you say that?

Miles: Well, let me see. That isn't quite the way I would put it. As in high school, I don't think the English Department was the best department at UCLA. After all, aside from the poetic and sentimental side of English in high school, we had very good college preparatory work from this senior teacher that I said was so involved in hierarchy and so on. But she was a very good drill master. We really read Chaucer, Beowulf, Ruskin, and so forth, with great intensity and thoroughness, and learned how to write about them. UCLA was using young men getting their master's at [U]SC, for instructors in freshman English. One of them read The Rubaiyat to us all term, for example; there was a lot of slack in that. There was a woman in sophomore English who graded us on how well we pasted up our notebooks; I didn't paste up my notebook very well, so I didn't do too well for her.

There were two or three very stunning teachers there, one of whom I missed by sort of accident, and that was Carlyle MacIntyre. He was a poet and a very good poet. But by the time I could have taken him, I didn't because my friends were all taking him, and he said to them that I had some reputation for poetry but nobody could write a poem who couldn't take to the road. So I felt sort of abolished from his cosmos. That was the days when people did say, "He's a poet. He's worked on freight trains and garbage trucks and has had experience."

I took this very seriously, and I felt that I was in a sense doomed by not riding the freights. This was the slight early Whitman-Pound side of poetry at UCLA, and I really missed it. It's too bad, because I just felt put off by this guy.

Then there was this really stunning lecturer from Harvard whom we all worshipped. Very good. (Do you want names of these people?)

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: His name was Alfred Longueil. Every lecture was a treat. These friends and I in these two clubs that I belonged to would faithfully go to his classes and take everything that he taught. He did a beautiful job. Probably the most famous person was Lily Bess Campbell, who was a Renaissance scholar, in tragedy. Again, I didn't get into her good graces very well; I wasn't a Renaissance scholar in tragedy, and I wrote poetry which she thought was kind of a threat to scholarship. The very nice woman who taught creative writing--well, these two women didn't speak to each other. I didn't want to get caught on either side of that trap, so I just took both of their courses steadily. Also Carl Downes, a true teacher.

Miles: There was no "in group" because, as I said before, the undergraduates didn't function as graduates there; nobody paid all that much attention to them. Miss Campbell was nice to us, and she invited some of us over to lunch and talked about our future. When I said I might do graduate work, she said by no means; she said I was interested in poetry and you shouldn't mix up those two. The nice lecturer, Alfred Longueil, said, and everybody sort of said, "Don't mix up poetry and scholarship." And so, of course, would MacIntyre have said that. So there was a pretty unanimous feeling. I listened to them, and I didn't plan to do graduate work. But, as I said, my friends went up to Berkeley to get MAs or to teach or whatever, and perhaps to get PhDs. Then after a year of a couple of leg operations which didn't work out, I think the person who most encouraged me to go to Berkeley was my doctor, because he wanted me to get out of the moping state I was in and just get out of there. He noticed I had done well with education in high school. He was a very humane man, John C. Wilson. He was head of the American Orthopedic Society. He wasn't a butcher type, as some of my earlier doctors had been. He very humanely said--just honestly said, which they probably wouldn't do today because of malpractice suits--that the second operation he did he shouldn't have done, it was too experimental, it didn't work on me, and so on (it was on my other hip). So I was really discouraged, because these were the operations that were supposed to have put me back into commission so that I could get up and down, and so on. So I felt pretty stuck, and he said, "You'd better go with your friends up to Berkeley and study because at least you can study." That was the advice counter to what I had from all the academic people who were so intelligent about it. Lily Bess Campbell said, "If you go anywhere, don't go to Berkeley." They considered at UCLA that they were very professional and scholarly and that Berkeley was rather aesthetic, critical, and so on--criticism in the sense they didn't think much of. She said if I went anywhere, I should go to either Harvard or Chicago. That was impossible because of the weather.

Looking back, it sounds like a pretty terrible dilemma. But when you're young, I guess, you've just got to take action. I was aided by the circumstances that my brothers were at Stanford and my mother thought it would be nicer to be nearer to them. And my friends were very helpful and encouraging. That is why I went into some sense of doing scholarly work. The more serious nonsuperficial or nonpractical reason is that I got excited by these books I'd read in this year I was at home, and suddenly knew now what I would like to ask to study, and that is the function of language in literature as Owen Barfield had talked about it in his book called Poetic Diction and as Empson had talked about it in Seven Types of Ambiguity. So now I knew really something I wanted to study, and that was naturally important.

Teiser: These were the two central books. Were there others at the same time?

Miles: Maybe John Livingston Lowes's Road to Xanadu. And I.A. Richards.

Teiser: Were you reading poetry too?

Miles: Well, you see, this is an interesting question. I was in a curious kind of limbo because UCLA really hadn't caught up with the modern world of poetry. We were very well trained in Shakespeare and Renaissance drama and Spenser. In the Renaissance course we read no John Donne whatsoever, which shows that they hadn't even caught up with new trends in old poetry. I was in a very good scholarly world from UCLA--I mean, in a sense of literary history (sources and analogues was always the big question). But I had my own makeshift world as far as modern poetry went.

I had bought for myself some years before a book that meant a great deal to me and probably conditioned everything I did for years. It was called the Home Book of Modern Verse by Burton Stevenson. Then I imagine that there was an awful lot of fairly easy lyrical poetry in that book. So that's the poetry I was still reading. I was a little stuck there. I had read all the standard--I mean, you know, the people in high school, and we'd heard--Vachel Lindsay had come to read to us, and I knew about [Carl] Sandburg and I knew about [Edna St. Vincent] Millay, which I didn't like at all (she was my teacher's favorite), and so on. I mean, I knew the modern world, but I suppose the only living connection I had with it was that I still took this magazine, The Bookman, which my eighth grade teacher had started me out on. They had poems often in The Bookman which I really loved. They were by people who today I would not consider very good; they were people of too easy lyrical a turn. One name I think was maybe Dana Burnet, is what occurs to me; I'm not sure that's right. I can still say some of these: "Here all the valleys now are dim with sleep/And roadways have forgot the feet of men." It's that kind of poetry--much like what we heard yesterday.*

Teiser: [Laughter] By the lover of Millay.

Miles: Right! You put two and two together.

There were others I remember. Lynn Riggs was a poet I liked very much. Lynn Riggs later wrote Green Grow the Lilacs, which became the basis for Oklahoma! So you see there was that kind of musical lyricism.

*At a reading by Martha Bacon Ballinger, held in the English Department lounge.

Miles: My reading was not very sophisticated, and my writing too then was rather a kind of my own because I wasn't writing in any particular context. I didn't know any poets but my friends who were poets; we were all ignorant together, so to speak. I think I had met Hildegarde Flanner, who lived in Altadena. I think we had lunch together. I liked her work very much (I can't remember whether I liked it then or later.) But for that year, I don't think I learned much about poetry; I learned more about literary criticism. But I wrote quite a lot. People like Margaret Widdemer and Sara Teasdale and Elinor Wylie. [Interruption]

Teiser: You were discussing the poets whom you were reading, and having lunch with Janet Flanner--

Miles: Hildegarde, her sister.

Teiser: (Sorry.) How did you happen to meet Hildegarde Flanner, incidentally?

Miles: My L.A. High teacher took me to a meeting of the American Pen Women, a lunch of the American Pen Women, and she was reading there, lecturing. So she was very nice to me, and I always liked her work very much.

Teiser: But there seems to be an indication in what you say that you were recognized as a young poet--

Miles: By this L.A. High teacher, yes. She belonged I think to some Los Angeles group, and I think she sent a poem of mine to a magazine, where she had a friend, called Lyric West. But my sense was that-- how do I say it? I had no sense of poetry in that city or around me. I was very, very upset by those upholstered League of American Pen Women people, and I was fighting back for some reasons; I'm not sure what they all were. But as I say, I didn't like the kind of poetry my teacher liked, and I didn't like that luncheon at all. Hildegarde Flanner was okay. I didn't have any real sense of what was going on in poetry. I had heard of Poetry magazine and I did send some poems to Harriet Monroe during that year I was at home, and she sent them back and said, "These are interesting. Send some more." You talk about my determination. I mean, that killed that right there! I would never have dreamed of sending another poem to Poetry magazine. That was just total rejection as far as I was concerned.

So I was really inexperienced and really unrelated, and I just didn't have a sense that there was poetry in that town, except for what my friends and I were writing.

Teiser: Did you have a sense that there was elsewhere?

Miles: Oh, not too much. The Bookman was it. I would cut poems out of The Bookman and I made a kind of collection, and I knew that the writers who were in my anthology, my Burton Stevenson, I knew they were alive and writing.

Oh yes--another thing I did, I remember now. I sent a batch of poems to John Farrar, who was editor of The Bookman--this was my Bible--and said, "Are these any good? Would you consider these were good poems?" He said, "Well, they aren't yet but they probably will be some day. Why don't you put them away in your desk and let them rest for a while," whatever that meant. It was a nice enough letter, but again it closed a lot of doors for me. So I made these little tentative attempts, but they weren't anything very much.

In a way, I stress this because the contrast with Berkeley was so great. When I got to Berkeley, suddenly everything and everybody was just in on the act up here, writing.

Teiser: This was what you didn't know existed, really?

Miles: Yes.

Study at Berkeley

Teiser: When you came to Berkeley, you were going to study English?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: You were going to get a master's?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: Were you going to get a Ph.D. too, do you think?

Miles: Not especially. I was doing this pretty blind. I agreed with my doctor--I wanted to get away from the town. And I wanted to be with my friends, and they encouraged that. So I'd just give it a whirl. It was just really a little adventure, that's all; a chance to get unstuck.

Teiser: You had lived, of course, in Berkeley earlier. Did you still have--

Miles: That was another good motive too: I was eager to get back to Berkeley. I had always loved it, remembered, had good remembrances of it, yes, marigolds, brass, Chinese dishes.

Teiser: Had you had associations with university people at all when you were here earlier, in any way?

Miles: I was three years old when I was here. [Laughter]

Teiser: Oh, I'd forgotten that.

Miles: I went to something called the Partheneia, which was dancing in the Eucalyptus Grove in Greek costumes, which was supposed to be very famous. I remember being present in that. Yesterday, Martha Ballinger said that she too was terrifically impressed by that when she was a child.

Of course, my family knew people who were connected with the university--not necessarily university, though. So when we came back up here, my mother knew--the only one I guess was May Cheney, head of the appointment services. She was related to a whole lot of Cheney's in Chicago. Bishop Cheney was the one that I was christened by. There was that tenuous little connection.

May Cheney was a little discouraging after my first year here (I didn't do very well, and I didn't like it very well). She said, "Well, did you get all A's?" I said, "No, I didn't. I hardly got any A's." She said, "Then don't bother to stay, because you have to get all A's here if you're going to get anywhere." She was kind of the horse's mouth, but it was a little discouraging too.

Teiser: Did you say you got your master's in just a year?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: So although you didn't get all A's, you still worked hard?

Miles: Well, I was so well trained from UCLA--we all were. There was a group of maybe five or six of us. Do you want their names?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: They were good people. There was Earl Lyon, Jim Wortham, Clair Hamilton, Bob Orem, Howard Crofts, Jewel Holder, Mary Alice Jaqua--just a group of five to ten people. We had all studied for this comprehensive at UCLA together, which was a six-hour comprehensive that we considered very hard, and we'd spent a year studying for that together. I mean, it was easy enough; the master's was just more of the same.

Teiser: You were strong in the history of English literature. You'd had those basic courses--

Miles: That was good old UCLA. They're still good on that; they're still very strong on that.

Teiser: What more was required of you here for a master's, or was that about it?

Miles: That was it--just an hour and a half oral exam.

Teiser: Did you have to write a thesis at that time?

Miles: No, just course work and this oral exam. I didn't do too well in the oral exam, but we all did well enough. We were not, any of us, terribly impressed by this master's because, as I say, we felt we'd learned it all already, and we didn't feel we learned all that much more here. This is not Berkeley; I'm describing our arrogance and defensiveness, and we were arrogant and defensive. The courses that we felt were where you learned the most and were hardest and best were in medieval studies. We had very distinguished professors here--J.S.P. Tatlock for Chaucer and Medieval Latin, and Arthur Brodeur for Anglo-Saxon. The people from UCLA who had preceded us, an earlier generation, were in that field. I again was making wistful attempts to get modern, so I said I wouldn't go in for that; I would go in for Modern American.

Here again, I did not hit it off with the big shot in American literature. His name was T.K. Whipple. I never can quite say why I don't hit it off with people. I think part of it is just that they fear that I'm going to ask favors. I think that's kind of a reaction that some people have. I think when I didn't do a good essay for him, a good study of American literature--and I didn't know how at all; I had no idea of graduate study--when I didn't do a good essay for him, I said, "Why is this a B and not an A?" Instead of teaching me how to write a research paper, he just said, "I thought you were going to put up some kind of protest here." That was sad, because I was really very thrown back by that. It took me a long time to find anybody to teach me how to do graduate work. That really took determination, because they weren't very much involved in teaching people how to do anything; they just expected them to learn how to do it by the seat of their pants. It was too alien to me.

Teiser: In a sense, then, although Berkeley opened up a great deal, you still felt rebellious?

Miles: Very, yes. And my friends were too. Most of them didn't stay. Marjorie Thorsen, which is a name I didn't mention before, who was my most admired friend, if not closest, was rebellious about the whole year. Many of my friends had wanted to work for the movies when we went to UCLA. We had all gone every Friday night to the Filmarte Theater to see--I forgot to tell you this before when you were talking about shows--we all went to the Filmarte to see the foreign films. It was early Russian stuff. I also forgot to remember to tell you before, one aspect of the movies that--you

- Miles: asked was I influenced by the movies. Well, no. But a marvelous thing, when we were little children, we watched movies being made all over town--we sat for hours watching Harry Cary jump his horse over a rickety bridge and land unharmed, and we watched Francis X. Bushman and Theda Bara make love on a rock for hours. [Laughter] I was thinking of influence, and this wasn't influence as far as I know, but it was tremendous entertainment when we were kids.
- Teiser: Let me just ask you another question before you move on from this. Not very many people are given young the insight into movie-making, or anything else, that you would have by seeing things remade and remade and remade until they were right. Most children don't have a concept of how things are arrived at in that way. Did you think that that stayed with you?
- Miles: That's very perceptive, and very important. Where I became conscious of it is the way my friends differed from people up here, or got along with people up here, in terms of criticism. We were all thoroughly imbued with criticism now in our own sense of criticism. "Well, let's go to this thing called Old Siberia at the Filmarte Friday night, which is supposed to be absolutely terrible, to see how they handle that scene where the cossack comes down that road." In other words, that famous buggy going down the stairs in Potemkin--this was something we were aware of. That shot, which is now a famous shot, I remember talking about when we came out of the Filmarte. So my friends were very oriented to this. I don't know whether they'd watched films being made as I had earlier, but they wanted to write for the movies.

Marjorie went back and got a job answering the phone at MGM, and she worked herself up to head of the reading department, which was a very big job. Later she got married and went back to the East Coast, leaving all that interest behind.

But that was an alternative to many of us, and Marjorie threw over a scholarship here for going back and doing what a lot of us had wanted to do anyway, which I wanted to do too, except I didn't know how. (My niece, Jody, just won a UCLA award for film!)

A couple of other friends went back and became principals of grammar schools. Some of them went back into social work. There was still a lot of that in the thirties, with the Depression. Clair Hamilton went into real estate in Lafayette, a second home for us. I think only Jim and Earl stayed on. Earl was determined to get a PhD. Jim didn't know, finally went to Princeton. I was just sort of floating.

Mary Alice was the daughter of the president of Scripps, and her father wanted her to do this, so she was doing this sort of for him, I think, and was really not wanting to.

Miles: So we were not the most enthusiastic bunch you could imagine; we were just sort of slaving away. Earl Lyon, who was very, very poor, had to make a world for himself, I guess, and he loved scholarship--he loved music even more--I think he was the earnest one, the one that sort of held us together, mostly by being very critical of everything we did. We never did things well enough.

So we gradually all learned to work hard, those of us who stayed, to get out of the modern field, where we didn't know how to operate, and to get into medieval studies, and to work on the Medieval Latin Dictionary. It was quite a stepping into cold water that we all had to do there.

We're there talking about the scholarly side. I could go on with that a little further, or I could also say that there was another side to my life, which was poetry. Which would you rather have me do at this point?

Teiser: Whichever you think follows better.

Miles: Maybe I could just say briefly that, to go a little further fast, at the end of my first year I was really so uninterested, and I didn't know what to do. I guess it was inertia that kept me here, plus the fact that everybody said, "You've taken all the trouble to move up here, and the house in L.A. is rented, and you sure can't go back home right now." So I decided to even take a course in summer school just to cheer myself up. I had this lovely Professor Willard Farnham. He thought of summer school as teaching teachers, and there wasn't much point in being very hard; he just told everybody to do something they'd like to do. I decided to study George Meredith, who was a poet I liked. I apparently did that well--at least he was perceptive to see that I cared, and he was very, very comforting and nice about that paper. That was the first kind word I'd had up here, really. Well, no, that's not fair: J.S.P. Tatlock, the medieval man, wanted us all to work on the Medieval Latin Dictionary, and I didn't want to get trapped in that. He said, "Look, the only future for you is to do research somewhere. You might get a job on this dictionary and be a dictionary worker." Great, great! I couldn't have cared less. I still wasn't thinking about money or work because my father had left his will to my mother to say that I should get all the money there was in the family so that I didn't worry about working and so that my brothers didn't have to be responsible for me; that they were supposed to be absolved of all responsibility for me by not getting any money, which I think is good psychology.

So at none of this time did I have any sense of, "I've got to earn my living," even with the Depression, because I was cushioned by the family structure here. I didn't want to work on the Medieval Latin Dictionary, and I said, "Oh no, Mr. Tatlock, I'm only

Miles: interested in poetry." So this nice man, big shot as he was, came up to my house with a whole stack of terribly obscure medieval Latin poems that he'd unearthed from the Rolles Series and so on, so I could be happy working on his dictionary but doing poetry, which was really charming. I'm telling you this because you see how colossal our arrogance was, that though I did that, I never really did take him seriously.

In my second year, then, however, I did plunge in more to this whole business of trying to do what I wanted to do, which I was doing so badly, which was just to talk about the language of poetry. Arthur Brodeur, who was the other big man in the medieval field, said, "What you propose is nonsense." I don't know whether he or I said, but we made a bargain that I was supposed to work the first half of the term on what I wanted to do--this was some study of medieval poetry--I should do a paper for the first seven weeks on what I wanted to do. Then if he saw no merit to it, he would tell me and I would do another paper his way, in order to get a grade.

So we did that. That was really, I think, fascinating, and very broad-minded of him, and he was not a broad-minded man. So I did this paper, and I felt that I did very badly, that I didn't find out what I wanted to find, it was all impossible, I just didn't know where I was at, it was a swamp. He said, "You're right--it's no good. Let me tell you what to do now. Do this whole material my way." I did, and it was fascinating. I got all excited about doing it his way, which was the orthodox way, and he was very much impressed with the paper. He gave me an A and said, "This is just fine, great, great."

In other words, I finally got happy by giving in to this, collating of four Morte d'Arthurs. This was the first time I'd really done the scholarly method, because the summer school was just a sort of pleasant essay. Now I had two steps in a good direction. Now we were all still to be medievalists.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Miles: So we all worked away on this. It was all languages and chores and languages and chores. We had fun by going to San Francisco and doing all those great things that you could do in San Francisco for 50¢ an evening in those days, like Italian restaurants and good-time music. But we all worked very hard. These boys, Jim and Earl, were so hard up for money. They were getting \$50 a month, and they had to live on that, as teaching assistants. So we did everything very sparingly.

Then a shift came for me in that I took a seminar from Merritt Hughes, who left here and became pretty famous as an editor of the Milton concordance; he went to Wisconsin. Now I could combine

Miles: interest and method for the first time. He was helpful. We had a wonderful seminar with awfully good people in it, including Francis Drake, and Barbara Gibbs from Stanford, who belonged to the whole [Yvor] Winters school, and others of her friends. It's that thing you come to graduate school for--the excitement of what you can call professional work as distinguished from amateur. That is, the amateur, which I had been for so long, was just liking things and doing them my way. But this professional--you know, relating to a whole hard-working field. Hughes was very good at telling us how to do this.

Hughes did say that we would never work among the big timber; that that had all been worked over, and all we could do was work among the underbrush. That was his sense of scholarship in the mid-thirties, which is interesting because it didn't turn out quite that way. So working among the underbrush in seventeenth-century poetry, we did some fascinating stuff.

I knew that was good work, and so I wrote him a note and asked him if I could do a dissertation with him. I really wanted to. Well, he didn't answer me and didn't answer. So, kind of despair set in. I figured I still hadn't learned how to do it right, I guessed, and so on.

Then one day he came up to me. I was sitting in the car waiting to go home. I remember so vividly he came up to the car and said, "I didn't answer you because my whole life was in doubt. I've been considering this position at Wisconsin, and I didn't know what to say," and so on. I said, "Well, I guess I'll go back to L.A. because I don't know who to work with here, and I don't want to get trapped in all this medieval research forever." I felt that it would have been rather too clerical for me. He said, "The man to work with here is somebody named B.H. Lehman." I said, "Oh, him!" like that because he taught the modern novel and I had no part of that. He was also supposed to be sort of a playboy and a psychoanalyst, and a lot of things I wasn't interested in.

He said, "Don't say, 'Oh him.' He's the man around here that's got the energy to make something of this department, which is still struggling out of years of depression and lack of money and lack of leadership. He's going to be the leader, and I'm just telling you this way ahead of time. I would suggest you go and take a seminar with him and work with him. While he knows nothing about what you want to do in poetry, he will listen--and he will help you."

This was a great message. I then went and asked Mr. Lehman if I could work with him and he said no. He said I wasn't mature enough; I just didn't know where I was at yet. Come back later. Even so, somehow I had a feeling I could eventually convince him, so that didn't discourage me too much. Then I don't remember quite

Miles: what happened. I was still working along in other courses, and maybe three months later, at the beginning of the fall or something-- I don't remember--he wrote me a note and said he'd read some poems of mine in the New Republic and decided I was now mature enough to take his seminar. That began a long many years of working together.

Poetry Groups

Miles: This might bring me back, then, to poetry. Is that an okay transition?

Teiser: That's a swell transition. [Laughter]

Miles: Now I go back two years or three years to 1933 again, when I came up in the fall of '33. Some friend--I guess maybe Earl or Jim or somebody--had shown some of my poems to a fellow graduate student named Francis Drake, who had liked them. He was a poet here and in the Yvor Winters group here with Howard Baker.

When I came to town, Francis Drake, after maybe a couple of weeks or a month, called me up and said, "I'm a graduate student here at Berkeley, and I would like to invite you to join our poetry group." Well, this was old familiar stuff, and I said fine. "We work with Yvor Winters and Howard Baker, and I must tell you frankly we feel you're a good poet and we'd like to have you join the group, but you're going to have to change your style a good bit to feel comfortable in this group."

Again with this arrogance that I look back on with such dismay and amusement, and which I always remind myself of when I talk to graduate students who are the same way now, I said, "Thanks anyway," and hung up. So that didn't pan out, and I'm really glad it didn't because I would've had to change my style. And I would've enthusiastically because those were fine people. I would have got very much caught into that, and I just am glad I didn't.

Then, there was a younger group of young professors on campus that weren't in this hoity-toity graduate stuff at all. They weren't teaching graduate courses; they were teaching freshmen and stuff. We called them the Boy Critics, and their names were [Gordon] McKenzie, [James M.] Cline, [James R.] Caldwell, and [Bertrand H.] Bronson. As you know, most of them have since become well known, and were a great quartet.

Miles: We graduate students--not only me, but the rest--we never even gave them the time of day. You know how graduate students are to young instructors--nobody could be lower. So we didn't even speak to these gentlemen because we were so busy cultivating Arthur Brodeur and J.S.P. Tatlock, and T.K. Whipple, who were the three big men, all of whom were very good and outstanding in the whole country but who represented a tradition that was different.

Jim Caldwell was married to Katherine Caldwell, whose mother was Sara Bard Field, who was married to Charles Erskine Scott Wood. That was a whole literary group, related to the New Masses, to Robinson Jeffers, to the Benéts, to liberalism in the Bay Area, to George West and Marie West and the fighting newspaper in San Francisco, the Call-Bulletin. George West was editor of this. Which reminded me of my old friend on the Record in Los Angeles, my neighbor. (That was a bit later.) Anyway, that was a whole working group of friends, good friends.

Jim Caldwell read some of my poetry, maybe through Francis Drake; I don't really know. Jim invited me to his house. I think he was the sponsor of a little poetry club on campus that was rather struggling and not very active, and he was trying to resuscitate it. So he invited this group and me to his house. We read that evening some poetry. I don't remember whether Francis Drake, who was the real leader in poetry here, also came to that or whether he limited himself to the Winters--I think he was in both.

Anyway, that evening was very exciting because this particular group liked my poetry, and Jim and Kay [Katherine Caldwell] liked it. I remember Kay passing me a cookie and saying, "This is the first time that I've really thought that I wanted Jim to work in poetry around here, because it's not the thing to do; you're supposed to be a medievalist. But now I think maybe, after hearing all you people, poetry has a future at Berkeley." That was exciting and fun. This was still all in my first autumn here.

But, you see, it developed so separately because it was never really part of my chore of figuring out how to do the graduate work. And it burgeoned at a much faster speed, so that everything opened up in poetry right then, early. It was different from the scholarship, which took me about three years to figure out.

Teiser: Where does the Ann Winslow story fit in?

Miles: It could come right now, it could come right now. In my Anglo-Saxon class, which was filled with people that we from UCLA all said, "There's nobody here that we even want to say hello to," because they looked so grubby--everybody looked so grubby to us! We were more Hollywood types, you see!

Miles: One of the grubbiest was a woman named, indeed, Verna Grubb. She was a little lady, all sort of wirey, with her hair skewed up in a knot on the top of her head--just looking like a cartoon. She came up to me one day in the Anglo-Saxon class and said, "I hear you write poetry." I said yes. She said, "Can I see some of it?" My attitude was, "So why bother?" But I brought her some, and she said, "This is very good." I said, "I'm glad you like it." She said, "I have decided to start a magazine called College Verse. I don't think enough time is spent on young writers in this country, and I'm going to spend some time and edit this magazine called College Verse."

I'm so angry with myself that I never found out more about her--who she was, where she came from, why she had these ideas, what her backgrounds were, how much she had done before she came to Berkeley (she came here to get a master's). I simply wasn't curious, which is maddening, because I was fighting her off all the time because none of us felt that Verna Grubb was a very important part of our life.

She then also organized this poetry club that Jim Caldwell was sponsor for, and he wasn't too thrilled with having Verna Grubb organize his club either. She was humorless, she was just a grinding little lady pushing things through that nobody wanted to push through. She was really fascinating. I often have thought I would try to write about her, except we all ignored her so much. We related to her only when she related to us. Fascinating thing; we just never learned about her.

She developed this poetry thing into an every other Friday night thing or Monday night thing or something, at Senior Women's Hall. We invited speakers. We immediately had the Stanford people up. Winters read his poetry, and Janet Winters read her poetry, and Kenneth Rexroth. Immediately we were in the soup--I mean everything was circulating. Jim was pretty breathless, but he went along with it. He taught a class in poetry then, and I went to that class, as did Jeanne McGahey. I don't think I took it for credit.

Teiser: Was this an undergraduate class?

Miles: Yes, it was an undergraduate class. As a graduate, I think I just audited. But he was a very, very fine teacher. We met at the Caldwells' house now and then, and that was always nice to have that feeling of knowing somebody in the faculty.

Then Verna Grubb announced she had changed her name to Ann Winslow because it was a prettier name [laughter], and that she was going to do an anthology of modern younger poets. So we all said, "Oh, come off it." The College Verse was bad enough, and we didn't like the work in it too well either.

Teiser: She had actually published it, then?

Miles: Yes. I don't know whether this was volume one that we saw, or whether she'd already done it--I'm vague about that, I'm sorry to say. She wanted us all to be in it, and we didn't want to be in it.

Teiser: Were you not in it?

Miles: No, no. Oh, you didn't ever say no to her. I mean, you might say no five times, but the sixth you gave in. We didn't want--I didn't want and I think some of the others didn't want to be in a college verse [publication]. We were now graduate students; we wouldn't bother with college, and so on.

She was going to do this anthology, and she was going to write to leading teachers of English and poets all over the country and ask for nominations. Then she was going to write to the names, and they were going to send their stuff, and she was going to assemble an anthology and get somebody to publish it. This all seemed to us so absurd.

However, I remember a year or two later being up in her attic, which was really an attic--you could hardly breathe up there it was so low-ceilinged. She had manuscripts spread out all over the floor of this place, manuscripts staggering from pile to pile. These were the manuscripts that people had sent her. This process had worked: These English teachers and poets had sent her names, she had written them, they had replied (showing how desperate everybody was, because they knew nothing about her). She had meantime got an okay from Macmillan to publish it, and she was now making up the actual paging.

I apologized to her. I really said, "I can't believe what I see in front of me. I can't believe you pulled this off, and I think you're terrific."

I have it in front of me*, and I might read you some of the names of these unknowns that she pulled out of the hat in 1935. If I just quickly read you the--would you like to have me do that?

Teiser: Yes, yes!

*Trial Balances, Ann Winslow, ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935.

Miles: George Abbe, Ben Belitt, Anna Bennett, Elizabeth Bishop, Charles Butler, Martha Champion, J.V. Cunningham, James Dawson, Reuel Denney, Chloe Double, Helen Goldbaum, Beatrice Goldsmith, Alfred Hayes, Philip Horton, C.E. Hudeberg, Lillian Inke, Hortense Landauer, Milicent Laubenheimer, Robert Lowe, James McQuail, Josephine Miles, Clark Mills, W.R. Moses, Kerker Quinn, Theodore Roethke, Muriel Rukeyser, Winfield Townley Scott, Don Stanford, Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Jr., Lionel Wiggam, and T.C. Wilson.

Now, there's about forty poets, and over twenty of them are widely known today, so widely known that they have long bibliographies. How did she do it?! -I think that's absolutely miraculous. When you think of all she rejected! I mean, she got hundreds more. But she must have had just some wonderfully instinctive, driving taste.

And then, furthermore, she wrote and asked leading critics and poets to write introductions to these (that's what sold it to Macmillan), and for a wonder they accepted. Mine was introduced by Jessica Nelson North at Poetry magazine, to whom she [Ann Winslow] had sent some of my poems from the previous year, which they had published. She started doing that; she started going around saying, "I like these poems. Let me send them to Poetry--" or New Republic or wherever. And then they would be accepted! It was an open-hearted time for writers. I think maybe things were sort of dead in L.A., and it wasn't all my fault. Maybe they had been briefly up here too. I'd have to do more study to find out (this is what I was interested in yesterday). If they were reading the Iliad to themselves, maybe things weren't popping exactly up here either [laughter], in the wake of the Witter Bynner era.

Teiser: [Laughter] You're talking about members of the English faculty at Berkeley who were reading the Iliad for recreation.*

Miles: At the same time, at the same time, you see. Maybe things weren't exactly quick and popping then. There must have been some reason why all the gates were open to us, besides just her energy.

So Macmillian did this, and these very nice people wrote these introductions. As you might guess, Marianne Moore did one for Elizabeth Bishop; Wallace Stevens did one, William Carlos Williams did one--they were all so generous. And these are fun to read now, looking back. I guess Yvor Winters--well, you know, all sorts of people. It was a very thriving little thing.

*Mrs. Ballinger had mentioned that her father, Leonard Bacon, and another faculty member had often read the Iliad together.

Miles: This book came out and was very well reviewed. Then a particular break happened to me, which was a little embarrassing because I think it was too close to home, Sara Bard Field said she liked these poems. She was a judge on the Shelley award, which is a national award, and she proposed my name to the other two judges. I don't know who they were, but they accepted this nomination, which I'm sure they wouldn't have thought of all by themselves. So I got the Shelley award that year for the poems that are in this book. I think that was pretty flukey, but nevertheless it was a big help. That was in '35. A big help, that is, in getting my first whole book published, which was then in '39, and that Macmillan.*

So that's how easy that was. Isn't it funny how some things are hard [laughing] and other things are easy? You just never know.

Teiser: Was it easy, or was it just that it was cumulative?

Miles: Well, I don't think much had accumulated, though. I came up here with a few poems, and I came up here with a lifelong habit of writing. But it was all fairly juvenile. I did win this \$5 prize at UCLA for our literary magazine, and that poem is in here, "Sea." So it was fairly adult. But I didn't have much to go on, like publication or acceptance or associates or anything like that. It seemed pretty much out of the blue, I would say, when I got here-- that is, the recognition and the circulation.

Ann Winslow sent some poems to [William Rose] Benét at Saturday Review, and again I think maybe there was a little in-group clout, because the Benéts were great friends of the Caldwells. I later met Benét at their house. And to be treated as a "poet" was just really heady and very interesting and exciting. It didn't help at all with my scholarship, however, [laughing] as you know.

Then, even more exciting, she sent--the best response that I enjoyed the most was Malcolm Cowley at the New Republic. He accepted a batch of poems and wrote me a wonderful letter. That was really tops for me. I think Scribner's accepted some, and various other places, I don't remember.

Then Hildegard Flanner was made a visiting editor of poetry for the New Republic. She asked for one of mine, and that sort of brought our friendship back into play.

Now you'd better ask me a question because I'm at this peak of success [laughing] and I don't know where to go from here. [Laughter]

Teiser: I'm surprised that the Winters group was so important in Berkeley.

*Lines at Intersection.

Miles: That's because of Howard Baker. Howard and Dorothy Baker were here doing graduate work.

Teiser: I see.

Miles: Howard was very loyal to Winters.

Teiser: And I believe in the interview by Rob Wilson in the Daily Californian of February 1, 1974, you spoke of the collision, or the contrast or whatever, between the Berkeley people (your group) and the Winters people.

Miles: No, it wasn't that. Berkeley was more of a mixing ground. The contrast or the clash--I don't know what I said there*, but you can read it to me if I deny it this time--the contrast was between Rexroth's group in San Francisco and the Winters group. That developed a little later; I'm not quite sure of the date--maybe in the forties.

Let's see. What did I know about San Francisco in the thirties? I don't think I knew much about San Francisco in the thirties. I don't know who was over there and who was active. Maybe Rexroth was. But San Francisco versus Stanford was the contrast.

Berkeley was all mixed up, because we had not only the Bakers, we had Lincoln Fittell, who was kind of a Winters-ite. Then the other side, of course, was Colonel Wood and the Caldwells, and this relation to the Benéts; I guess that was the San Francisco people. And George West and his wife, though that, as I say, came a little later.

That San Francisco group was radical politically and, as I say, they published in the New Masses. They published the free verse Whitman tradition, which Winters wasn't fond of. The Colonel and Sara Bard Field, his wife, were I think rather loyal followers of Whitman. She was also a rather loyal follower of people like Edna St. Vincent Millay and Genevieve Taggard and Sara Teasdale. In other words, she also had a more crisp, lyrical style, so that she was part of those two groups as they sort of intersected--a kind of woman's group and a kind of liberal group. She published two or three books, as I remember, through Random House, and was really a strong representative--I mean, if I were ever doing an anthology of early twentieth century poetry, she would be, I would say, an important part in it, partly because she's herself and partly because she's very typical of a way of writing which the Yvor Winters group, which was just developing down at Stanford at that

*For what Miss Miles did say, see the copy of this article in the Appendix.

Miles: time, was opposing. They talked about those long, loopy lines as being careless and sloppy. They talked about Jeffers as not being the best model. There are these conflicting values.

Philip Rahv in the Partisan Review once wrote an article called "Paleface and Redskin," saying there were two traditions in American poetry or literature, and Redskin was the Indian-Whitman tradition, Paleface was the T.S. Eliot-rather anemic library tradition. Though Sara was ladylike, a recluse to some degree at "The Cats" [the Woods' estate at Los Gatos] with her husband, nevertheless she belonged, charmingly enough, to the Redskin tradition. She had been a suffragette and chained herself to lamp posts, and was a real fighter, and followed in the Whitman line that her husband followed in.

That was the scene I came in on, and in all its changing forms, that's still the scene. That is, in the fifties, what we're talking about with Sara and the Colonel is what Allen Ginsberg renewed. As you notice, he was able to renew it in this area, because this area is always rather receptive to it. Whereas other writing going on in this area in Ginsberg's time, in the fifties and sixties, was a much more conservative, neat, and controlled style.

I don't want to overdo this, but since you raised the question, it is kind of interesting. I mean, I don't like dualisms; I don't believe in things being split in two. But what I do believe in-- I think that a lot of vital action is taken in rejection of things, and so you often do get one mode that's kind of fighting another and thriving just because it's fighting it. These aren't really dualisms, but they are leading trends and then minor oppositions coming in which they themselves grow. Those can change from time to time.

The neat tradition (these names are--I should have thought of more constructive ones) would be something like the haiku tradition, as one kind, or the Yvor Winters tradition, as another kind. Or Jim Caldwell's tradition or--who are people writing now? Leonard Nathan writing now. Or a lot of the middle range of poets today writing. James Wright, [Richard] Wilbur, say. There's a kind of control to their forms.

Then if you take, on the other hand, Robert Bly and the surrealists and the whole Spanish-American tradition, that would again be on the other side.

So, without forcing it, you do get the pull and tug between kinds of control and kinds of widening out, exploration of new ideas. So us chickens were just wandering around in here in the

Miles: middle, in Berkeley. Berkeley didn't have a center. We met with all of them, and we wrote these various ways. Through Barbara Gibbs and that seminar, I got to know J.V. Cunningham. I think she was married to him at that time. They were putting out a magazine called the Magazine. Achilles Holt, and so on. That whole group was strong right then--Don Stanford and--you can tell me the names. One of them, Charles Gullans, teaches at UCLA now. One is Alan Stephens at Santa Barbara.

I remember later when J.V. Cunningham was editing poetry for the Chicago Sun he wrote me and said, "I'd like to print some stuff from California except, as usual, the stuff in California is so loose and sloppy, and the lines are so long, and it takes everybody so long to say anything." I wrote back and said, "Yes, most of the poems that I know, or the friends that I have are writing that way." I sent him I can't remember now what; I don't think he did print any of it. But that's the way that tradition continued. The long line versus the clipped line, if you want to be really oversimple about it. But Winters came over here and read to us, and so did Janet Lewis [Winters]. So we weren't quarreling with them. They'd come up and talk to us. But Berkeley was just--Winters always said, "Why is Berkeley such a mess?" That was his attitude. But we weren't coalesced as opponents or anything like that.

Later Rexroth did sort of stand up against him. Then, in the forties, we developed that whole different set of poets that was related to San Francisco, under Rexroth, like Tom Parkinson, Robert Duncan, Philip Lamantia, Madeline Gleason, James Broughton, and that brings in a whole other sector. They were the ones that welcomed Allen Ginsberg when he came. That's the San Francisco poets. Also the activists--Rosalie Moore, Jeanne McGahey, Robert Horan. Berkeley was always a little too academic for the San Francisco poets and not academic enough for the Winters poets. So we were always a little bit in the middle.

Teiser: But you yourself went your own way. You were not writing in a group, really, and nobody else was writing like you.

Miles: I don't feel that I was in a group, no. Tom Parkinson has often wisely said that this was a good thing; that except for the Winters people and a certain fidelity to Rexroth, we've never had factions. We didn't have factions or feuds--everybody has accepted everybody. [Michael] McClure has asked me to read at his class, I've asked McClure to read at my class, and you know how different we are! It's a really nice general openness about poetry. When you hear about all the fights and factions in New York, say, on the whole I think we have been able to avoid that.

Teiser: Your speaking of reading poetry, was there a tradition--for instance, did anyone read poetry at UCLA when you were there?

Miles: Read aloud, you mean? You mean having readings?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: I can't think of anything farther from their thoughts.

Teiser: When were you first aware of poetry readings here?

Miles: In this club that Jim Caldwell and Ann Winslow worked on.

Teiser: As I remember, the method of reading of Winters and Cunningham and so forth--

Miles: Was rather crabbed. [Laughter] Well, yes, that took a long time. When we did read at this club--by club I mean it was about a hundred people that would meet there--we'd stand up and read a poem and sit down; it was that kind of thing. There wouldn't be readings, except when Winters came, or some visitor. Then he would read for a longer time.

I see now. You mean "reading" in a special sense of how to read the stuff aloud.

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: It was assumed that a poet was not a good reader of his own work, and that it was rather a curiosa to listen to a poet read, because we knew he would be bad. Winters was not good. Jeffers was not good. Nobody thought of themselves--I thought of myself as absolutely terrible, and I don't know anybody who felt he was a good reader. Except the tradition there was the Vachel Lindsay tradition, and then I'd had that at high school. (By the way, we had Frost come and do that, and Sandburg. But that's very special.)

In about 1940, Harvard published a list of a series of records called Harvard Vocarium--I think it was about then--and I bought all those for my poetry classes. We would play them, and they'd come over here on an afternoon and we'd run through these Harvard Vocarium records with the point, "You're not going to hear a good reading, which we don't know what that is, but you're going to hear the poets' voices and that'll be interesting." Williams was very dry, Cummings was rather interesting in an odd way, Elizabeth Bishop was really dry, Marianne Moore sort of impossible, and so on. We didn't have yet any [Wallace] Stevens.

Maybe this is an example of when things got exciting: Some of my students were over in a record shop in San Francisco--and I think it's records that did this; the kids were going more to record shops--they were in a record shop in San Francisco, and the

Miles: man who was running the thing or the counter said, "Here's a curiosity. Here's a record of James Joyce reading 'Anna Livia Plurabelle'." Well, James Joyce was already, was very, very big and important to the students. He played the record, and as he took it off the machine he dropped it and it broke. He broke a slice out of it, so that there were still a few lines around the center that were operable. One of my students asked him if he could take that part home and bring it to the class. That was the golden nugget of our class for five or six years. [Laughter] We would play the little inner grooves of that Joyce record! I think that's the first example of what you're really asking: When did reading become a kind of treasured thing? Because he read beautifully, so interestingly.

Now when I play a whole real Joyce record, I get ho-hum, yawn, yawn. The kids couldn't care less, because he was old fashioned, the recording is old fashioned; it's not in stereo, you know. It's funny to think how much these meant to us and how now they've all been wiped out by stereo.

An interesting thing is that Robert Duncan, who grew up at Berkeley but was a little anti-alma mater (and I use the word advisedly), also felt that my poetry class was too alma mater, and he would kind of ride herd on this so that I didn't spoil any of the good possible students coming along. He and Jack Spicer would always come over when we had our poetry records here, because I would say, "Listen, now listen. Doesn't William Carlos Williams have a tin ear?" That made them furious, because they felt that William Carlos Williams read his stuff beautifully.

That has been a major development--[Robert] Creeley, you know, and this sort of Williams tradition of reading where you're sort of choppy and effortful, which I didn't care much for. But they wanted to be sure that my students were not subjected to my tin ear, and so they sort of chaperoned Williams through my classes [laughing], all during the forties and fifties, or however long we went.

Later, of course, recording increased immeasurably, and now we have all sorts of poetry. The big poetry reading, as I remember, began in the forties at--you can help me with the name of this gallery. Madame--

Teiser: Marcelle Labaudt, Madame Lucien Labaudt.

Miles: Madame Labaudt. That gallery is the first that I remember. Madame Labaudt had poetry readings there that we crossed the Bay to listen to. Robert Duncan was again a leader, Madeline Gleason, Jim Broughton was very important. Those were very exciting. Then when

Miles: did the Poetry Center start? Ruth [Witt-] Diamant and the Poetry Center brought Dylan Thomas out, you'll remember, and that made a big difference.

Teiser: This is the Poetry Center at San Francisco State?

Miles: Yes. And we had Dylan Thomas here too twice, and that was extremely exciting. So I'm sure he did much to foster the--

Teiser: You didn't consider Dylan Thomas retrogressive?

Miles: We didn't? No! No. But that's a good point, Ruth. I think he was, but at the time we didn't know it. I think the reason he was hailed with such total abandon by us all was because he wasn't all that new and he wasn't all that hard to take. He was just new enough so that we could feel he was new and just love him dearly, because it wasn't hard to adapt. He just really swept the town.

Teiser: It seems to me his poetry is almost made for reading aloud, while so much of poetry, particularly contemporary, is hard to understand in a single reading.

Miles: Imagism, yes. Imagism wasn't meant for it. On the other hand, something like Creeley, who's loved as a reader, but his poetry doesn't look as if it was meant for reading aloud. But that very chore-like effortfulness is for him part of the pattern.

Teiser: I just wonder how much poets have written for the page and how much they've written for the ear through this period--just what the effect the popularity of so-called poetry readings have had upon the actual creation of poetry.

Miles: Probably quite a bit. This relates to something again that would take us backward. It's very complicated and I don't even know how to talk about it too well. But yesterday, when we listened to Martha Bacon Ballinger's talk, she said that her father was interested in metrics in the twenties, and that she was still interested in metrics. Well, I think that was an era of being interested in metrics. I was too young to say I was interested in metrics, but I was certainly interested in aloudness, or in sound of the Vachel Lindsay type.

I think this went back to the tradition of [Charles Algernon] Swinburne. Swinburne was very alive at UCLA in 1930 in many ways. That is, he was really an operating, critical force, through Oscar Wilde and Housman. And that sound! I thought there was nothing greater in the world than the sound of Atalanta in Calydon. In the Saint Nicholas I think a great deal of the poetry was very interestingly metrical, with lots of dactyls and anapests; that is,

Miles: with a lot of that lyrical skipping sound that began, according to George Stewart, with Coleridge and "Christabel."

Somebody should do a really interesting, exciting book on anapests and dactyls and this whole lyrical skipping quality of poetry up until imagism, and of course, through imagism and after, because it didn't just die when imagists hit it. But Pound certainly put a big brake on it, and Eliot still has got it very, very strongly but pretended or sort of implied that he didn't; that is, people didn't treat Eliot as a lyricist, they treated him as a free verse writer.

But free verse was a great blow to this anapestic-dactylic tradition. In high school, I was excited by the Saint Nicholas tradition, and Walter de la Mare, A.A. Milne, Kipling--these are what our ears heard, and that's what I like--the strongest beat possible. The poems I memorized were like that, like G.K. Chesterton's "Don Juan of Austria." I could rattle that thing off with all its whatever-they-were (it's triple beat--dactyls).

This never did get squashed in me, and I've never been able to be a free verse poet. That has put me apart, really, from a lot of people a lot of the time, because I just cannot write free verse. I don't even want to. And I've done lots of experiments with stress verse and so on, and I don't write metrical verse, I guess. But whatever I do, it's got much too strong a beat for an awful lot of modern poets.

This leads into reading, in the sense of Pound and the imagists, remembering that they all were still influenced by their grandparents and still were being pretty lyrical--as Martha Ballinger was saying, when she talked to Richard Aldington, she found that he was just lyrical all over the place. (By lyrical, I mean stressing a song-like quality.) And that they didn't get away from that all the way they intended. But more and more through the century we have, until we've come to something like Ginsberg, which is a strong, chanting beat, and it isn't little songs at all. That's what it shifted to, and a strong, chanting beat is for rendition, for the more bard-like rendition. So it was Thomas and Ginsberg and his whole bunch of friends and relations and descendants who have stressed the chant as distinguished from the song.

Teiser: Thomas?

Miles: Dylan Thomas; he was very strong on the chanting side.

You asked about other visiting authors--a subject in itself! I think I remember Vachel Lindsay at high school--a lively chanting auditorium full of students! Little at UCLA except Mary Austin, very

Miles: impressive when I was a freshman, and a Scots educator speaking on Burns and asking for the power to let others see us as we see ourselves--very impressive to me too! Then at Berkeley I just missed a very famous visit by T.S. Eliot, but heard a charming James Stephens who stretched his wings and crowed, and a very sober Thomas Mann. Many of our visitors, tired after circuits of reading, weren't sober and weren't as articulate as Dylan Thomas, so I can't tell much about them. One evening [W.H.] Auden spent much time at the faculty club reminiscing about plumbing facilities he had known, and when my helper helped me up to leave, he insisted on helping me too--so we flew, me off my feet, through a forest of dining tables to the back stairs, down which Auden fell, while my helper got hold of me just in time. Not daunted, Auden came to say goodbye, and we had a nice correspondence after that.

The [Stephen] Spenders stayed for a year, and I went to keep Natasha company while she practiced, all the doors closed, the piano reverberating, stirring resonance. Once as Natasha was fixing "vegs," a job she hated, we were asking Stephen about his editorial work, and what would be his ideal coup. An article by Hitler, he said, which surprised me.

[Robert] Frost and [Carl] Sandburg were pros as readers. Frost could hold the whole Harmon Gym in the palm of his hand--"Think of the Gods, think of the Titans," he said--"you remember the Titanic?" Pure Frost. W.C. [William Carlos] Williams was old and ill when he read, but sterling. Marianne Moore was lively, on the tip of her toes to eight hundred students, illustrating rhythm with a fork and pie plate, going on to hear Rexroth read to jazz somewhere in the city. [Kenneth] Burke, [John Crowe] Ransom, [May] Swenson came, Al Young, and Michael Harper. * Some came to my class and were unforgettable in their grace. [Galway] Kinnell for one, and Roethke, and Robert Peters. [Richard] Eberhart, Muriel Rukeyser, [Robert] Lowell, and [William] Stafford were old friends and came more often. The San Francisco group--[Gary] Snyder, [Robert] Duncan, [Michael] McClure, [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti, [William] Everson, [Robert] Creeley, later [Stan] Rice, laid them in the aisles, as did many of the later benefit readings when the great names were taken over by lesser but often talented and popular and experimental ones.

One other celebrity I enjoyed was Imogen Cunningham. Her friend and mine, Griswold Morley, suggested she take my picture and she arrived with all the briskness described in Elvis Richey's essay, sitting me with a book and photographing flat out. I liked the result, but Griswold said no, so she insisted on coming again and tossing over me that very cape which Richey mentions, sort of making me up--quite a contrast! We met various times, at the Minerva Restaurant, at Blanche's, at Intersection, at friends', and I felt I belonged to her in some way. In her downright way she was

*Added later: [Léopold Sédar] Senghor, [Jean] Genet, [Pablo] Neruda, [Jorge Luis] Borges!

Miles: not mannered; she was fun, unlike many photographers I've met. I'm not easy to picture, so only a few, like my cousin Estelle and niece Jody and friend Betty Guy, and you interviewers can make it easy.

Oh, another remembrance I was thinking of--when I was about nine I was reading a lot of adventure stories and told the family at dinner that the natives threw their old and lame into the river. My mother said not to overgeneralize; my father said some natives; one of my brothers said some rivers. I remember each of us seemed pleased with the way this came out.

[end tape 1, side 2; begin tape 2, side 1]

Teiser: Do you have a full bibliography?

Miles: Yes. Two or three people have made them, just as exercises, at various schools.

Teiser: Do you have copies of them?

Miles: Yes, at the bottom of a barrel some place. [Laughing]

Teiser: It doesn't look as if the University library has all your work.*

Miles: An interesting point I can make there: The University library couldn't care less about my work until Jim [James D.] Hart, because the head of The Bancroft was a Spanish historian or something. I couldn't even give them my stuff for years. It's only when I was able to force it on Jim Hart [laughing] that I got some stuff in the University library.

Teiser: He's wonderful at collecting material.

Ph.D. and Los Angeles

Teiser: Back to when you were working on your Ph.D. When did the idea of your present dual career occur, or did it occur? Did it just develop?

Miles: No, that is a really wrong concept. I never had a sense of a dual career. When all these people in Los Angeles said, "Don't go up to

*This is an error; copies of all Miss Miles's major works were later found to be in the University library. See page 176.



Addressing a high school teachers' group at John Swett High School, Crockett. March, 1965
Photo by Ruth Teiser



Photo by Imogene Cunningham



Josephine Miles reading notes at interview of August 11, 1977
Photo by Catherine Harroun

Miles: Berkeley and do graduate work; you write poetry, and that's enough." I didn't think of that as a career and I didn't want to. I mean, I had no desire to ever make poetry a career. I just wanted to write poetry as an avocation or whatever you want to call that. You know, as an avocation or--what's the word?--vacational [laughing], as a recreation. I never wanted to do anything to systematize it in any way, even to the degree of writing book reviews. I never had any idea of wanting to be working in the literary world, and I was quite defensive about that. So that's one reason I guess I did do scholarship, because it felt far enough away from poetry that it wouldn't intrude.

When I read the books that got me interested in analysis of poetry in a scholarly way, that still felt far away. It was a way of reading poetry to understand something about it, which I hadn't understood before; that is, a sense of how an individual individualizes himself in his use of language. It was this whole interest in language that started growing up. But they were quite separate in my mind. I mean they were intentionally separated in that, whatever I did with my life, I didn't want to mix poetry up with it in the sense of my writing.

So when I came up here saying, "I want to analyze the language of poetry" (and nobody particularly knew how to help me do it), I thought of that as quite technical. But I didn't have any technique, and that was what was so hard because scholarship wants a technique, but they didn't have any technique in this direction. It was hard to invent one and nobody, as I say, was very good at helping me because they didn't know what I was talking about in the first place, and I wasn't very articulate.

Jim Caldwell, for example, who was so nice in poetry, said, "Well, I don't know what you're talking about, and I certainly wouldn't want you to work with me because I don't think you can do what you're talking about."

This man Ben Lehman, whom Merritt Hughes recommended to me, had some tremendous ability to listen and convert into practicality. So I did a paper for him, when we finally got to our seminar. This seminar now was all my old friends. This seminar had five people in it, and it was a delight. For a year we had this seminar with Jim Wortham and Mary Alice Jaqua, Bob Orem, and me, and a guy who later became editor of Sunset magazine, Ken Cooperrider. We would meet at Ben Lehman's house and read papers, and I kept struggling with this seminar paper on Wordsworth's language.

They all kept saying, "Oh, no. You should write about Wordsworth the man." And Ben said, "When are you going to get around to writing about Wordsworth the man?" I said, "I don't want

Miles: to write about Wordsworth the man. He's a dumb man! I want to write about Wordsworth's language." I'd already tried this, you see, with Merritt Hughes in the seventeenth century, so I'd had some practice there, and Wordsworth didn't fit the seventeenth century at all. The questions you could ask about the seventeenth century you couldn't ask about Wordsworth. This baffled me, and it still baffles me, in that there's a student at Berkeley now--working for someone else, not me, because I told her not to--who wants to compare seventeenth century and nineteenth century lyricism. For some reason, they're noncomparable in very curious ways.

So I was stuck with this, I remember, one whole summer. I did nothing but work on this, and got nowhere. But gradually I developed this idea that, very strangely enough, what Wordsworth apparently is doing is talking about his feelings, which is what imagists don't want you to do. Imagists just want you to imply, present, not discuss. In other words, the tradition I had been raised in, and the current tradition, was to imply rather than to discuss. Wordsworth was discursive and discussed.

A book like George Moore's Pure Poetry talks about the poetry of the present as being pure because it presents. He gives Wordsworth as an example of how not to do it. So that was helpful.

So I wanted to ask the question, "What did Wordsworth think he was doing? If we all agree that poetry shouldn't discuss and make statements, what did Wordsworth think he was doing? Why did he think it was okay?" This developed into a study of his statement of feeling and why he was so explicit on his feelings. Wordsworth had almost a formula, which was, "I listen to a bird sing, it makes me feel very happy, and that makes me feel that the world is unified." This kind of very bad but sort of basic summary that I'm giving of the way he thought was interesting psychologically and went back to Locke and the psychologists of the eighteenth century.

Now, I suppose, in a way, interestingly enough, I could say something that hadn't occurred to me before. But now, in what you might say was my fourth year of study at Berkeley, scholarship and poetry did come together, not so much in terms of my writing of it, but the understanding of it, in that I took a lot of seminars in philosophy from Will [William R.] Dennes and Stephen Pepper. They were talking about eighteenth century philosophers, and those were a very interesting background for Wordsworth. So I began seeing how people thought, and things began to jell a little better for me. I suppose the Middle Ages had been too far away.

I had read one marvelous book on the Middle Ages called the Rhetoricians of the Thirteenth Century, edited by E. Faral, which I do want to mention because I ran into that when I first came to

Miles: Berkeley and it was kind of a landmark in my life because it was such a gold mine of difficult material. That was usable too even in relation to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

So I started studying all of Wordsworth's poetry, and more and more methodically saying how he stated his feelings--metaphorically or literally or exclamatorily or in question or whatever. I developed a method for doing this which involved counting, because I wanted to show actual proportions, that he did very little else but just state literally. I worked away on this in various forms. I think I rewrote (speaking of determined)--Ben Lehman had me rewrite one chapter on this thirteen times. I just never thought I could get it clear enough, because I was always writing it too poetically. I was always sort of dreaming away, and I was always using figures of speech that led me down deceptive paths. He was patient enough to really teach me to try to write this analytically, which I didn't know how to do; I'd never learned freshman composition. All this struggle through my graduate years had been that I really didn't know how to do what I wanted to do, and nobody even listened to what it was I wanted to do. So I had to learn their way, but that wasn't satisfactory to me. So he was good not only for me but for others in this way.

Then, while I was working on this, which would be a dissertation gradually, I also took a seminar from--the Young Critics start now. We petitioned to have our Young Critic friends to teach seminars. Bud Bronson did one which was in the eighteenth century which was just marvelous. So that came together too. The others found they didn't like it; Jim Cline was miserable in the one he taught. But the other two did some, but especially Bud did this first eighteenth century one. And again there were people from Stanford and we all worked very hard. It was really exciting.

Teiser: What aspects of the eighteenth century--just poetry?

Miles: Every aspect. He took it decade by decade, which I'm sure influenced me later. He said, "Okay, now, there are ten of you. Each of you pick one aspect of this decade and report on it." Like the architecture, the music, the pottery, the social conflicts, and so on, differently for each student for each next decade. This was all chore work that we did, but it was chore work that we learned to do well. I learned tremendously much how to do things in there. He later used this for a massive bibliography of eighteenth century work.

At the same time (this would be 1935 to '36) I think I might now mention something in relation to poetry, which I skipped over. There was a new spirit in poetry in the land, relating to the seventeenth century, to historicity, through Eliot and John Donne. Eliot was having this influence. The Southern Review was established by Huey

Miles: Long and by Robert Penn Warren and by Cleanth Brooks. Anyway, good people on the Southern Review. In 1940, the Kenyon Review was established to follow. But anyway, the Southern Review wrote and asked me for some poems. This was a big thing because it was going to be a big new magazine, and very handsome and good looking and full of zing and so on.

I sent them some poems, and they accepted them with enthusiasm. That pushed me way, way over into a new world of poetry, which was the seventeenth century. Strangely enough, I would define that as falling in love with [W.B.] Yeats--a kind of metaphysical tradition of Yeats and George Herbert and John Donne. I'm not sure how much this changed me, but it certainly meant a lot to me consciously. It was somewhat under their influence and the influence of another kind of poet; I'm not quite sure who these would be. W.R. Moses was one I used to correspond with. Clark Mills was another. I think this happened to me more than it happened to my other colleague poets. I don't think it happened to Elizabeth Bishop or so on.

Oh--I know. It happened to the next generation much more than to me. It happened at Kenyon College, it happened to John Berryman, Robert Lowell--that group. That's where it happened, with Ransom. Some of the Winters people went along with some of this too. So for me, consciously it was a big step. I don't know, as I say, actually how it worked.

Then Ben Lehman decided to get married and go to Europe, and that sort of pulled the rug out from under me again. So we decided this time we would leave Berkeley and go home, and I could work on my dissertation there if I wanted to--with some sense that maybe I wouldn't, you know. My mother had had a very good time in Berkeley because she was active in a club that she enjoyed, and she worked very hard in the League of Women Voters. So by now she was reconciled to Berkeley. But we still had this house that we owned, and my brothers were now back there. There seemed no point in staying here since there was nobody to work with, and I didn't know whether I'd ever finish this thing, and just a lot of things pushed us away.

I took my qualifying exam a little early (that's the big hurdle that we had in those days)--

Teiser: Was that a written exam?

Miles: No, it was a three-hour oral. It was very easy to fail and very hard to study for.

Teiser: Was that your final oral exam?

Miles: Well, they still had a final in those days. Now it's the last one. So I took that a little early, I forget the date, somewhere around '36, the fall of '36 maybe. I took that, and I passed it rather miserably because, for one thing, as I complained to them later, they didn't ask me questions past about 1400. They just got stuck in the Middle Ages. That was kind of unfair since that was not my field. But I passed. I think only one man didn't want to pass me, and that's because I didn't have the right answer to "What's the theme of King Lear?" I said it was something like regal dominance, and I was quoting--this is sort of fun, I think--I was quoting what I'd learned from Lily Bess Campbell, the great Lear authority at UCLA. I still remembered this "regal dominance."

Well, the professor here thought it was ingratitude, which I gather is sort of a nineteenth century idea of the thing. [Laughter] Regal dominance was just like a red flag to a bull for him; anybody who said that King Lear was regal dominance, and didn't say it was ingratitude, just couldn't pass that exam.

They finally stood around in the hall for a while and talked him into letting me pass if I would go and let him give me a lecture on ingratitude. That was kind of cute, because of the personal conflict [laughing]. My UCLA training never worked very well up here. They didn't agree, even on a subject like that. [Laughter]

My brother had just got through something at Stanford, a master's degree in business administration or something. So we went over to Julius' Castle and drank more martinis than we should've. I remember, driving home, we confided to each other the point that maybe other people didn't know it, but both of us really knew everything--nothing left to learn! [Laughter] The problem might be that our total knowledge wouldn't be appreciated, but it was clear that we had everything there was to know.

So we went back home, dragging our theses behind us, and tried to rescue this poor little house that had been wrecked by the renters since we'd been gone. It raised the interesting question, which everybody here raised to me--you can't go home again. People up here don't go back there. You can't go home again. You talk about L.A. still as home, but you can't go back there. UCLA was now a new place because it was starting a graduate school and I didn't know anybody in it, and your friends are all in social welfare or something, and it didn't seem like a very good idea.

I had a talk with Ben Lehman and he said, "You should finish this dissertation. After all, I'll be back from Europe some time. I don't know when. Also, I never brought this up before, but it's nonsense for you not to try to teach." I said, "Well, nobody has ever said that before. I've never done it, and I've never tried to."

Miles: He said, "There's no reason why you shouldn't teach. When you get your dissertation done, we'll work on getting you a job." That was the end of that. I didn't take it too seriously because he was the only one that said this.

But I did go home again, and it turned out to be one of those happy surprises. I recommend one can go home again. I just had a terribly good time for a couple of years, from '36 to '40, really four years. We did over our house with the help of a nice young architect and made it pleasanter to live in, and it was exciting to do too. We went a lot to the Hollywood Bowl. My UCLA women friends were still interesting. They were all working. We'd get together every Saturday afternoon for lunch. We gave ourselves the name of the Little Thinkers, and we would get together Saturday afternoons for lunch at some restaurant, and we'd spend the whole rest of the day and night talking, reading. These had been friends at UCLA, and we still were reading--guess! Modern poetry? Absolutely not. We were still reading Shakespeare. They never did climb out of that UCLA syndrome.

Later I sent them Accent, which was a little magazine. They never accepted. They were still historians in their approach. But this was delightful to go back to that. They were great people. Jewel Holder Brandt--some of them had been up here--was in social welfare. Some of them were teaching. I can't remember who all was doing what. But ever since, even when I go back now, they have all just been so important in their fields. When I go back, I get excited all over again about what those women are doing. They've become authorities on geriatrics or insane asylums or ESP or politics or psychedelics. They are a wonderful group.

It's a strange thing when I say "are"--most of them died within the last couple of years, right after they retired. I've kind of lost them. Oh, it's really amazing how few are left. Anyway, in the past, just recent years, even going back there, it's been so exhilarating. A really lucky group.

Anyway, that turned out to be fun, and I finished my thesis with no trouble whatsoever, where I had just got kind of tired of it up here. I shouldn't say "no trouble," but I mean I rattled it off. Ben was away and I wrote to Jim Caldwell and said, "Okay, I'm sure I've studied enough of Wordsworth here to be true about what I'm saying. He's written fifty-three thousand lines, and I've done thirty-two thousand thoroughly. Don't you think that's a fair proportion?" Jim wrote back--typical academic side of Jim Caldwell, academic side of poets--wrote back and said, "It's absolutely useless unless you do all fifty-three thousand lines."

Miles: So I spent months and months getting up every line--and, you know, no recognition there was such a thing as sampling in those days. So I did all fifty-three thousand lines, put them in another chapter. Then I got a letter from Ben Lehman saying that he had come back to Berkeley and his marriage was on the rocks (he was married to Judith Anderson, you know)--or, no, I shouldn't say that; it wasn't yet on the rocks; she was still there. But that I should hurry up and come up there and get my degree and work on teaching.

At least I thought I'd better come up and get the degree. It was the time of the World's Fair here, and that was fun too. We stayed at the Durant Hotel and went to the fair a lot--or that was a year later--and passed my dissertation chapters around to everybody, and everybody thought they were okay. Certainly no trouble with the dissertation. So that was okay. Then it was a terrible job, of course, to get it typed and collated and this and that, and proofread. I spent hours in the library in the stacks looking up footnotes. Merritt Hughes had been very scornful of my footnotes because I tended to put down the page that preceded the page it was on. I mean, for some reason I would read the left-hand page number rather than the right-hand page number. So I had to be awfully careful about my footnotes.

It rained the whole time; went to Wing King's for a five o'clock 35¢ dinner. Got all that chore done and got that thesis in, and got four wisdom teeth pulled because I never expected to come here again and there was a nice dentist here. So I got my wisdom teeth pulled and my thesis done at the same time, and went home for good, because I thought they were crazy about the job situation.

Ben and others said, "No, we'll get you a job at Mills. That's a nice, quiet school, and you can come and go there. Or Occidental, which is down your way, if you insist."

Meanwhile, I had decided that what I would do, going back to J.S.P. Tatlock, is I would be a research scholar and work at the Huntington [Library]. I got an entree to the Huntington. I was going to go out there, commute, three days a week. I knew the research I now wanted to do, in nineteenth century pre-Raphaelites, and I was just going to chug away at the Huntington until I got some books done. I wasn't thinking about money, but I was going to be a scholar. I had developed this protective line at Berkeley because I enjoyed graduate study more than my friends did because they had to get jobs. I would say, "Look, try to be a little more like me: Just try to do it because it's interesting. Try not to always worry about the job." I tried explaining, "You have time to read this book. It's an interesting book. Don't feel it's not going to be bread and butter." This was a kind of protection thing--that I'm a research scholar. I'd picked up this phrase. So I went to the Huntington to do this.

Miles: I hated the Huntington. The Huntington was all the things I'd been fighting all my life. There it was again, all this pomposity and guarded snobbery and so on. That's not fair to the Huntington; when I'm off-balance, that's the way I feel things are. I worked out there three days a week, and the pages would come up to me and say, "You say you want the following seven books. Now, five of these are unopen and uncut. Do you really want them that much?" I didn't have enough confidence to say, "Yes." I'm glad I didn't, because they're probably still unopened and uncut, and they've gained an infinite amount [laughing] of monetary value that way. But that side of bibliography didn't interest me, you know.

So I struggled along with the Huntington. This was a settled thing that I was supposed to do, and it clearly wasn't working out well. Jim Wortham now had become an instructor at Occidental. He said, "Oh sure, we'll gradually get you in. I'll take you to a bunch of concerts over there, they will get to know you, and then we'll get you into Occidental." Earl Lyon had been a professor at the University of Utah and was now at Fresno. At Utah he'd met Lila Brimhall, who was one of the great Utah families, who was an actress. She came down to act at the Pasadena Community Playhouse.

All the lights went on again for me, which meant the Pasadena Community Playhouse, and I remind you that I wrote a play for the Latona Avenue School. Now I suddenly realized that was my career, to write plays, not to do research at the Huntington.

Jim and Earl and Mary Alice and I went--I don't know how this fits into the Little Thinkers, but every Saturday matinee--in summer probably--we went to the Pasadena Playhouse to hear the plays and hear Lila. Lila was an absolutely marvelous, dynamic acting-type woman who did the mother roles. She was the size of a barrel, with a loud booming voice, a great enthusiasm for life. We'd go to the plays and the matinees, and then we'd go out to dinner with her, and just had tremendous fun.

Gradually it occurred to me that maybe I could study playwriting. My friend Marjorie Thorsen was now head of the MGM reading department, and she said, "Well, you need more practice. You've never written a line in your life. Why don't you write some plays?" The way I could do this was to listen in on rehearsals at the playhouse.

Meantime, something I've skipped in all this is that in the summers we had a cottage on the outside of Malibu, the side that doesn't cost. Our cottage cost \$50 a year rent on the land, and \$300 worth of lumber, as my father built it. So it was a very sleazy, unenvironmentally acceptable cottage. But we loved it dearly, and we spent a lot of time down there. I thought I could go down there and write my plays.

Miles: Then somebody suggested, "Why don't you talk to Gilmore Brown, who's head of the Playhouse, and see if he'll let you come and listen to rehearsals," which seemed like a beautiful idea. So I applied to that and asked him. None of them had ever thought of that. They did have trainees in acting, but they'd never had a trainee in writing.

This started a whole new thing I was going to do. Now where am I in time? You asked me to think about--oh yes, now I'm home with my Ph.D., right? You asked me about a fellowship I had.

Teiser: Yes, the Phelan Award.

Miles: That was not that Phelan. It was just a local campus Phelan. It was just \$500, to write poetry.

Teiser: Oh, it wasn't the full year of writing.

Miles: No, no. But I know what I did do. Yes, I know. Before this playwriting bit, or during the same time, I decided to apply for an AAUW fellowship because George Potter, who was a very nice man here, suggested I should write a--he was on my dissertation committee and he said that it was clear that a certain book should follow that dissertation, which was very creative of him and very good, and I agreed. So I wrote, since I was going to be back in L.A., to apply for an AAUW fellowship to write this book. Lily Bess Campbell, who was still at UCLA, supported me in doing this. (By the way--well, I won't go into that. I was going to say that for a while I thought of finishing up my Ph.D. at UCLA, but they figured out [laughing] I'd have to do it all over again.)

Anyway, she supported me in that. I guess a woman by the name of Helen White was on the AAUW. I got the fellowship and wrote that book during that year of '38 to '39, or '39 to '40, I guess roughly maybe both. Anyway, I met Helen White too, who was at the Athenaeum during that time, and had a nice talk with her about scholarship. She didn't think I could get a job. She thought that was foolish of those gentlemen up at Berkeley to think I could get a job. I mention this because this was as a whole true of women, and I've never quite understood why that was.

I did an interview. Ben Lehman--this is a very strange afternoon. I came up to visit (this is maybe when I went to the World's Fair). Ben Lehman asked me to come up to have an interview with Aurelia Henry Reinhardt of Mills. The Occidental College thing hadn't worked out. Ben had a lot of influential friends, and he persuaded Remsen Bird to interview me for a job at Occidental. Remsen Bird couldn't have been more unhappy, and so he spent his time talking about scandals in various literary families he had known.

Miles: We didn't talk about me at all, or jobs, or anything. He said, "Get in touch with me later." Well, it was embarrassing, very embarrassing.

They also made me go to May Cheney and get a dossier made up, which was very embarrassing because she didn't think I should try this. I don't know what it was about the women; I've never understood that.

Anyway, Ben had a party for me and Aurelia Henry Reinhardt, and Judith Anderson was the hostess. That was really some party, with Judith Anderson's two dachshunds, and me in a hat, and a lovely fire and great refreshments. Otherwise, it was very, very chilling, the put-down by Reinhardt. So Ben, having seen with his own eyes that I wasn't sabotaging myself, but something wasn't going too well in this interview bit, decided that maybe they should give me some practice at Berkeley so that they could say that I could teach because everybody said, apparently, as he told me later, that I was too delicate to subject to the rigors of teaching. That was the phrase that they all used.

I also had an anthropologist friend by the name of Martha Beckwith. I don't know whether this was then or later, but anyway she thought I should teach at Smith. She persuaded the head of the English Department at Smith to interview me, who used the same phrase, though this was a couple of years later--that I was too delicate to subject to the rigors of teaching.

Ben decided that they should subject me to those rigors and then prove that I was still alive. But he didn't want to do this too drastically, so first of all he persuaded Earl Lyon, who was at Fresno, to let me come and teach a few classes at Fresno. Well obviously, I mean, you know I could teach. I mean, this was something I had no doubts about personally at all; I just had doubts that anybody would be interested. But I didn't have any doubts. I had plenty to say to Earl's classes, and they had plenty to say to me, and we had no troubles whatsoever.

That was very good of Earl to help me out on that, and then he reported to Ben Lehman that it was okay. I don't know what the whole story is. Part of the whole story is that Carlyle MacIntyre had been transferred to Berkeley because he'd had a fight with Lily Bess Campbell. He'd been transferred by Robert Gordon Sproul, and as I understand it, they figured that if they could have one poet in the department, they could have two poets in the department. Oh yes, and my book [Lines at Intersection] by this time was published by Macmillan, and it had been actually reviewed in Time magazine, and I don't think that did any harm. That was an odd--I don't know who did it. Anyway, now I could be called a poet, and they could say they'd like to have two poets in the department, representing different schools of thought, the Whitman school and the John Donne school (which is the way they looked at it).

Miles: So they worked on this. Will Dennes in Philosophy was very, very helpful, and Jim Caldwell, and so forth. I don't know how they worked it out. It took some finagling, I imagine, but they decided to ask me for a year. You probably wouldn't believe this, but one day in the mail, one morning in the same mail there was a letter from Gilmore Brown of Pasadena Playhouse saying that yes they would allow me to come there and be an apprentice in playwriting if I would promise to come regularly every day, and a letter from the English Department at Berkeley asking me whether I'd like to come and try teaching for a year. Long pause. That was such a vivid experience to me. I just sat there looking at those two letters. I don't know what you think about these two roads, but for me there was no problem. It wasn't that I wanted to do one equally to the other, or vice versa. By this time, I was so imbued with what I'd been spending my time on, versus what would have been a wild and woolly experiment, that I didn't hesitate. So I decided to come to Berkeley.

My poor mother! Here we went through this all over again--selling the house, coming up here again. It was really hard on her; that move was really hard on her. Both of us had renewed all our friendships, very good friends in Southern California, so we both felt very, very sad about leaving that time. But I just decided, "This is something I've got to try."

Gilmore Brown bought our house at the beach, which was funny. That was purely coincidental. We had an ad or something, and he answered the ad. So I got to meet him; I'd never even met him up till then. Mother gave him an A-frame pipe to put on the chimney, and I've never forgotten the gingerly way Gilmore Brown handled that A-frame. So that was the end of Gilmore Brown and Pasadena Playhouse.

Though I might jump ahead to say that in the 1950s I did write a couple of plays, and one of them was staged at Cal, in the Studio Theater, in a triptych. Three of us had written one-act plays, and Bill [William I.] Oliver staged them as a triptych. Mine was called House and Home or something like that, some domestic title. They were a really big success. The whole series was a success. They kept renewing them, which they normally don't do at Cal. People standing in line way down to Oxford Street. They put mine on KRON. KRON came, and I went over to KRON and watched them adjust it to television. It was just a major event--1960 I think this was--a major event in my life! And also wiped out all regrets and hesitations I might have had, because I realized I couldn't stand the strain of seeing people interpret my characters their way. I would have been absolutely chicken in the drama. As much as I loved what Bill did, and as much as I loved the results and what KRON did, and all the applause and all the success, those weren't my characters. I was spoiled by the fact that you don't know what readers are doing with your poetry. Oh, it was torture!

Miles: So that was a happy ending to that.

Teiser: Lucky you didn't write for the movies. It would have been worse.

Miles: Wouldn't it have been! Oh, I often wondered what I would have done. Maybe I could have strengthened my heart. I still am friends with a young man and woman who played the major parts in my play. They teach at Irvine now, and I go to see them every time I'm down there, and they still laugh about this. They knew they weren't doing it my way.

Teiser: That rounds out your career as a playwright. [Laughter]

Miles: And it brings me on the verge of coming back to Berkeley.

Teiser: My word! What an exciting few years those were!

Miles: Weren't they! Yes, very tense, very intense. Of course, I'd bottled up quite a bit, just as in that year I'd had at home when I was lying on my back all that time. I suppose I had a lot of energy saved up. My leg had got well enough so that I could walk about the way I do now. Well, I shouldn't say that because I was much stronger until these last ten years. But I mean I had about the same kind of motion. I could walk around the campus--with help--and I could go shopping in Oakland, and things like that. So I did have lots of energy and a certain degree of--

Teiser: Independence?

Miles: --ways to spend that energy. The word "independence" I've often thought of, because independence today, especially in relation to disablement, means physical independence or personal independence. It's very curious, but really, neither of those crossed my mind very much. I never really got a break on the physical independence. The doctors that I'd had that put me into hospitals with stretchers and paraplegic devices were so awful that I was scared off of that and I never came back to it at a more advanced stage. The most advanced state I ever came back to was just some physical therapy. But I never got any encouragement in that direction, and as far as the personal, I think the death of my father and the fact that my mother couldn't get a job and was so interested in the League of Women Voters and all that meant that it was perfectly easy for us to live together and for her to help me, which she did till she was eighty. We always got along. We didn't agree on interests or approaches on things, but we really got along very well. So that kind of dependence didn't bother me, and my mother gave a sense of her own freedom very earnestly and gallantly.

Miles: My independence began to be, to get enough money, to earn enough to be independent that way, and to give my brothers the money that my father had left for me. That was fun--to be able to pay them back. What should have been by theory inheritance, I was able to pay that back. So that's the way my sense of independence went. But it's funny, isn't it? Today I'm almost embarrassed when I think how little I've done with electric wheelchairs. I feel a little gap in my life that I haven't cooperated with this whole mechanical world more.

Teiser: Just think--you might have used a calculator too on counting words in Wordsworth.

Miles: Oh, I went very deeply into that when I was teaching here. George Potter, who was then chairman, said at one point, "You use concordances so much, and so much counting, you ought to be able to handle this sixty-three shoeboxes of cards for the Dryden concordance which Guy Montgomery left when he died." That led me into years of studying computers, and I did make a computer concordance. (This is later. We'll come back to that.* That's much later.) But yes I did, I did go into that kind of machinery.

[end tape 2, side 1]

*See page 124.

INTERVIEW III -- 21 July 1977

Beginning to Teach

[begin tape 1, side 1]

Teiser: Did you ever correct papers or work as a teacher's aide?

Miles: No. As I explained, I guess I never wanted to push into that area and be rejected; I don't know. Then my father's attitude was so nonpressurized, that is, that I wouldn't work, that I just never did. I don't know. I would've liked to; it wasn't that I didn't want to. But I used to explain to my friends how lucky I didn't have to because I could be interested in things in an altruistic way and didn't have to apply everything to meal ticket and job getting and so forth, and that was true. When I really got interested in the work, I could do a lot that I never would have had time for if I'd had to do more teaching assisting and all those things. Looking back, it's rather absurd because of course now everybody has to teach in practice. But not in those days. I just felt too much on the fringes of things. I was having a hard enough time getting anybody even to accept my papers, much less correct other people's papers. [Laughter]

Teiser: George Stewart, in his book on the English Department,* said that when he started teaching, they just said, "Go ahead and teach." Nobody told him what to do or anything.

Miles: That's true. The first batch of papers I had as an instructor I really didn't know what to do with, and I asked George Hand, who was head of freshman English, if I could read a batch of his papers to get the drift, idea. He was really shocked and very angry. He said that the way he corrected his papers was none of my business. We younger--this was now in 1940 when I was first teaching--we

*The Department of English of the University of California on the Berkeley Campus. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968.

Miles: younger instructors (really I was the only instructor, but the teaching assistants and I) would get together and correct papers. It was not done in the department. The department was very, very lofty; it didn't bother with us chickens very much.

Mr. Bronson, until his retirement, I think he really felt that any ostensible open discussion of ways and means of anything was obscene. It was just not the gentlemanly way you worked!

Teiser: At Stanford, what little experience I had there, which was about this same period, I think nobody in the English Department would have told anybody how to teach because that would've sounded as if they were in the Education Department, and that was anathema.

Miles: That's part of it. Well, to tell you the truth, that probably influenced me. This first sophomore teacher I had at UCLA, who was so big on pasting straight--she was the woman for teacher education. By one of those ironies, the way you do it--well, no education [courses] in method for me ever, because she was so bad, I thought, that I steered clear of education from then on.

Teiser: I think there was a legitimate split, wasn't there, between method and subject?

Miles: Well, I don't know. To me it's not legitimate, at all. I think it was just unawareness of method, or assumption of method in a limited way. It was interesting. It was ironic because Bud Bronson was one of the great pioneers in new methods, in the use of computers in his ballad studies. They never have been followed up. He was a pioneer without a following, and I think this is why. I mean he did a beautiful job. The other day I met him and begged him to tell somebody about this. It's published and it's known now, but he always felt it was something he just knows, pretty weird stuff, and he wouldn't talk about it much. Very strange.

Teiser: Let me go back to the possible teaching at Mills.

Miles: I think that's when the Lehmans realized that they weren't going to get me into a select women's college. I think before that they thought, or he thought, that I'd been stalling or preventing something in that way, but I think then he realized that it wasn't my doing; that they were really taking a line about this "too delicate to teach" that they really believed.

A nice aftermath of that story is that they later got a woman to be head of the English Department there who had polio.

Teiser: They also gave you an honorary degree.*

*Litt.D., 1965.

Miles: Yes. So in one sense the next generation sort of benefited from my experience.

Teiser: Then you were speaking of teaching at Fresno. How long did you teach there?

Miles: Oh, that was just a day or two.

Teiser: Oh, you mean just a day or two?!?!

Miles: Yes. My friend Earl Lyon, Ben Lehman asked him to invite me to a class. So I just went up and spent a couple of evenings in Fresno, as we often did because it broke the journey between here and L.A. So I went over to his classes I guess one nice, hot, summer day in May, or something like that. Went to a couple of classes. They were lots of fun, because he was a very nice, humane person, and the classes were very lively. So there were no problems.

Teiser: Did you talk to the class? Did you teach them--?

Miles: I forget what I talked about. You know, the best thing to do with a bunch of people is to throw a couple of ideas into their midst and then let them develop them. That's what I usually do. I forget now what it was all about.

Teiser: But by the end of it, you were experienced. [Laughter]

Miles: Yes. Well, you know, they proved I didn't fall off my chair or something like that. Or I think that Mills people and other places maybe thought the students might be afraid of me; that the students would be panicked or something--who knows? It was kind of experimental.

The first class I was going to teach, it was very nice when they did start me out at Berkeley when I came up in the fall of 1940 to try it. They just said, "Bring a box of books and a suitcase, and don't plan to stay because it may not work." But the nice thing was they gave me a regular load. I mean, they just didn't give me one class, they gave me four classes! [Laughter] Two on Monday, Wednesday, Friday afternoon, and two on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning at nine o'clock. That was the program they gave the new people, and I thought that was really smart of them.

I remember my first class was going to be Monday at two, or something like that. Jim Caldwell just accidentally dropped by as I was eating lunch and said, "What are you going to do in your first class?" I said, "I have no idea." He said, "What are you going to teach for your first class?" That was a freshman IB, and I said,

Miles: "I'm going to start out with Hamlet," and he said, "That's a good idea. A good way to start Hamlet is to ask the students to read a little of it aloud and see if they're getting the meaning underneath the words, so to speak." I thought that was just so nice of him to just drop by like that--"I was just walking by and thought you'd like to talk about your first class." Wasn't that great?

I wasn't really afraid or anything, but I did question a bit. It's true, my brothers said, "No, Jo, you can't teach because you can't control the students. It needs a heavier hand than you have. You have to be able to stand up and kind of walk over and lean on them before they'll stop reading the Daily Californian." [Laughter] So mainly we did think it wouldn't work.

I did have a little consciousness of this back row, which in those days the football team would sit in and also would read the Daily Californian during the hour. So I worried a little bit about that, but not too much. I asked a couple of fellows in the back row to read the first scene (that's the "Halt! Who goes there?" scene in Hamlet) and, as Jim Caldwell well knew, they read it very wrong because they were just reading words on the page. As I well knew, they were smart enough to realize themselves that something had gone wrong, so one of the other guys in the back row said, "Hey, wait a minute. That doesn't make any sense." So they themselves went back over it and read it again right. When you're lucky, that's what you get for a good class, and it was a very good class. I had no more problems.

The back-row syndrome lasted maybe eight or ten years, and I had a little bit of trouble in the oath controversy: the boys in the back row would go around challenging people on their attitudes toward Russia. So we had little classroom fights about loyalty and so on, but it wasn't anything very much.

Then, after the war, when the new paperback texts started coming out, it was a whole new world. I really think that was a revolution, when we didn't have to read out of these big old black texts, and anybody, even a fraternity brother, could buy a nice, new paperback. You'd get challenges from the back row, "Well, that's not what Bosanquet says," or "That's not what Berenson says." (Those were a couple of new paperbacks.) So no more back-row problems.

I got a little ahead of what you were asking.

Teiser: It's much to the point. The first classes that everyone is given are compulsory. Were those boys in the back row there because they had to be?

Miles: Yes, 1A and 1B. I had it for a couple of years; I forget how long. For two or three years I just taught freshman English 1A, 1B. Two of each.

Teiser: Everybody had to take it?

Miles: Well, not everybody, but certain colleges and departments required it, enough so that there was a huge load. The English Department was very fine in asking all its faculty members to teach freshmen, rather than pushing them off on a special crew. That has been one of our great redeeming features ever since.

Teiser: From what I hear, you must have always had rapport with students. You must have never felt that there was any particular gap.

Miles: I think that's true. I've had a couple of classes, one way back somewhere in the fifties, and one last quarter, which I just didn't get along with at all. I don't know why. It's just kind of a chemistry. I don't mean "at all," but it was just hard going, and they weren't particularly illuminated by each other or me, or me by them. Just pulling in different directions. But as I remember, two out of all those years is not too bad. I mean many students didn't like me, but that's more individuals. As far as the class goes, the class went all right. The first poetry class I taught was maybe about the third year. One of the kids in the class was a potter or something. Anyway, she made me a little figurine which the class got together and gave to me as a present. That seemed to indicate that we were friendly [laughing], and--shows the other side too--it was a picture of a very recalcitrant horse, like Pegasus (like that old drawing on Poetry), with his feet braced backwards, all braced backwards, but his nose kind of over the brink, and I (or a figure of sort of a peasant woman) behind him, with hands flat up against his rump, just pushing with all my might. And this was called, "You can lead a horse." [Laughter] So I guess that covers the situation.

Teiser: In your poetry classes, I can see how your students might have been of a mind and could get together for such a project. In your other classes, did you feel that you generated among them by your teaching a certain group feeling?

Miles: Well, hmmm. It takes a certain amount of time to get a class to a point where it does work together. But I don't think you can generate it. You may make the occasion for it. I don't think you could create it where it didn't exist in any class. In other words, maybe it takes three or four weeks. My criterion would be when, before class, in the five minutes or so when everybody's gathering for class, if they were all talking to each other about the material of the class, they then had got together. And of course that doesn't happen right away, or usually doesn't happen right away. Then I would just be there, and often they would just keep on talking. So then they were self-starting.

Miles: But there again I had a certain amount of great luck in that, I think in one of my 1A classes, there were two of the brightest, smartest, best people I've ever had. They sort of taught that class with me. It wasn't that they were painfully above the rest; it was just that they were marvelous people. I've lost track of them now, but I have kept in touch with a lot of those students. Since I've taught about five thousand students, I hate to think how many [laughing] I still know the whereabouts of.

At the end of 1A, I suggested that they not take 1B from me because I felt that I didn't know all that much that they could spread it over a year. I thought they might as well go get somebody else. Perhaps this was a hidden slyness on my part. It now makes me laugh to think. At the time it was perfectly generous, as far as I knew. But the thing is that these students went on to 1B and were terribly good, and guess who got the credit! [Laughter] I think I probably developed more of a reputation for being a good teacher because they came to me that way; it wasn't that they learned that much from me.

Teiser: And did you still carry remnants of the conclusion that you and your brother had arrived at, that you knew everything in the world?

Miles: I think that was mostly that night. Yes, that was mostly that night.

Teiser: [Laughter] It's easier to teach if you feel you do.

Miles: Oh--you mean because you're not defensive about things?

Teiser: Well, no. I mean if you feel yourself omniscient, I'm sure that--

Miles: There's a kind of teaching that you might relate to that, but that's not the kind I ever did, where you lecture and tell them things. Now that we have evaluation of classes, we have one teacher in our department about whom the students say over and over and over and over, "He's afraid of students. He's afraid of discussion. He doesn't like to talk about anything but Shakespeare. But he's so great on Shakespeare, who cares?" Now, that wouldn't be me; I would never be that great on anything, but on the other hand I wouldn't be afraid of discussion or talking to the students either. I have less often taught informational survey courses and more often taught writing courses or reading courses or courses where I was trying to teach the students how to do something well, and that's different.

When the war came along in the forties, then I had a good opportunity to teach different people's courses as they went off to war. So I taught a lot of courses I otherwise wouldn't have taught. I was not very good at that, because I was supposed to be telling

Miles: them all about American literature. But I was more, again, trying to teach them how to read an American poem or something.

I remember, on one mid-term, in a class of eighty or so students, one of the questions I asked was, "Describe the poem 'The Chambered Nautilus'." I got eighty blank papers. That was not an orthodox question in that time. You were supposed to say, "The author of 'The Chambered Nautilus' was So-and-so and he lived in so-and-so, and the poem was about so-and-so." To ask to describe it was just--we had not yet developed a methodology for criticism in those days.

So I was really part of doing something new in teaching, I mean new in a sense, which wasn't related to lecturing, informational lecturing. Eventually I decided I ought to try a really informational lecture course, so I made up one in the history of the lyric (this was some ten years later), and I worked out an informational course in the history of the lyric. It lasted for about two weeks. [Laughter] Then I developed a way of having Fridays be the students' day, and Friday the students would give information on some poet they had chosen, some lyricist they had chosen. They were so bad at this that I then had to develop a method. They wrote, say, every other two weeks, so they wrote five of these Friday papers, and they were so bad! Gradually they got better, and so gradually I learned to give them what we called a cumulative paper in which they really added up everything they'd said in the other five, or, what most of them chose to do as an alternative, threw all the other five away and wrote a new short one on their poet.

Teiser: On the same subject?

Miles: On the same poet. I tell you this detail because this is where my interest lay, in teaching people how to do things, not in giving them data. I did give them a lot of data on the lyricists, but still I could only stand it [laughing] for two hours out of three.

Teiser: You wouldn't mind other people giving them data?

Miles: Well, if I did, there was nothing I could do about it. [Laughter]

Teiser: If you hadn't been given data, or gained it yourself, you wouldn't have had the basis for teaching that you did, or would you?

Miles: That's an interesting question. This goes back quite a ways. I've written a poem on the subject. Would you rather hear me, or read the poem?

Teiser: What is the title of the poem?

Miles: It's probably called "Teaching." [Laughter] I don't remember. It hasn't been published yet.

Briefly, when I was in high school, there were two very handsome boys across the street from me, one of them going to Cal Tech, and the other a young married man who was working for Dun and Bradstreet. Both of them started flunking out of school or their job because they couldn't write a decent report. So they came over to ask me to help them. My motivation was high, and I was able to help them, and they both did very well. So that's how I knew I'd like to teach.

In fact, I used to say, to protect myself, since I wasn't asking anybody to give me a job, I used to say that my ideal would be to teach at Cal Tech because they didn't have any women teach there, and I knew there was no problem of reality. I really would have enjoyed--I did enjoy teaching this young scientist--

Teiser: How to write?

Miles: --how to analyze Shakespeare, how to talk about Shakespeare. So I really was interested in helping people read or write or whatever, more than telling them. Now you say about people telling me. If you think of UCLA, these two brilliant teachers I had were brilliant lecturers. But the one for whom I learned to write papers a little bit was a very quiet soul, Carl Downes, who never even got promoted. He was the one who made us do a lot of writing. Then when I came to Berkeley, as you remember, I was very badly off for a couple of years because everybody was giving us lectures, and they were fascinating, but I wasn't learning how to write, how to do graduate work. Professor Brodeur would pace up and down for the whole hour, and the subject was Germanic Romantic Poetry, which was really marvelous. I learned a great deal from it, but I didn't learn how to study Germanic Romantic poetry except as he went his way. He was the one who made the compromise with me and said, "You try it your way, and then if that doesn't work, try it mine." That's when I finally did try it his way and learned how to do it his way.

But it was Ben Lehman that taught all of us how actually to work, and to write. In his example, we had an example of a real teacher, from my point of view--except I couldn't have done it his way. He shamed people and he bullied them and all that--things I couldn't do. But it was very effective, the way he made it work with some. Very effective. I guess shaming and bullying doesn't hurt as much as it seems on the surface because you realize the man

Miles: is caring about you and is eager to have you do better. He didn't particularly do that with me, but he did that with many others. I watched him do it, and I resented it. I didn't think--I would never teach like him.

There was a whole shift, a real kind of revolution in graduate studies, or in English studies, right around then, too, and I was an early part of that. As I've said, at UCLA and to a great degree at Berkeley, graduate literary studies were sources and analogues of whatever--sources and analogues of the Faerie Queene, sources and analogues of "The Cook's Tale," sources and analogues of Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode." This meant, "Who influenced him, and what other poems are like them?" This was historical material on which you could lecture and on which you could do research.

But in college, my group of friends, the ones of us who studied together for the comprehensive and so on, went around asking ourselves, "Yes, but how do you talk about a poem? What do you say about it? There it is. We like it or we don't like it. What can we say about it?" This may be amazingly baffling to you who know the I.A. Richards tradition, but we just didn't know what to do! The professors we asked said, "Just do what we're doing." Well, but what they were doing was giving us results of full research. We just meant that if you look at a poem for the first time, how do you know what to say?

I.A. Richards's book called Practical Criticism came out in about 1924, somewhere in the early twenties. We finally got hold of that and read it, so we went around saying, "Aha! We have a little piece of a panacea here. You ask about the form of the poem, the style of the poem, the mood of the poem, and the content." This became a little formula. Now, that isn't quite Richards, but that's one I remembered that we used, that we adapted from him. When I got to Berkeley, that hadn't come up here at all, as neither place was very much up-to-date on current literature or on current criticism; it was still historic. But Berkeley was much more up-to-date than UCLA was.

There was a young man here teaching by the name of Gordon McKenzie, one of the Boy Critics so-called. See, we thought of all these--these were so much more critical than the UCLA people that we felt them all critics, though they weren't very. Bud Bronson wasn't at all, really. But Jim Caldwell wrote book reviews for the Saturday Review, and Gordon taught a seminar in criticism that everybody said was marvelous (I never happened to take it) and he wrote a book on criticism. So it gradually started going through our skulls that there were critical methods, and there were ways to talk about poems.

Miles: Then I.A. Richards's book, Practical Criticism, which is still very lively and interesting, reported giving poems to Cambridge students and asking them to discuss them. Students were helpless and gave what he called cue responses; that is, responded by: "The first line in this poem has a barn in it, and I don't like barns," and that kind of thing. [Laughter]

This all was a new glimmer on the horizon. Then in the early forties came out Brooks and Warren's Understanding Poetry, which is a landmark in critical teaching. Well, we were ahead of that landmark at Berkeley, but nevertheless that's the book we used to work from, and that swept the country. But Gordon McKenzie and I had already started cutting articles out of the Southern Review and the Kenyon Review. You see, these new reviews were coming in, part of the same thing; the critical review was also a new venture, in a way. Of course, you always had the Atlantic [Monthly] and Harper's, but they had become more social discussion. These [newer journals] were just focused on literary criticism. So this again was a new phenomenon, at least as we felt.

A little later, when Mark Schorer came out, and Ben Lehman was now chairman--this was in the middle of the forties--all the members of the department now said, "Our students don't know how to talk about poems." It took like five years to get rolling. The whole department voted--I guess he inquired among them and they all said they would like to have a revision of the whole department curriculum with some relation to criticism.

Teiser: Were you implying that they would not have said that earlier?

Miles: No, they wouldn't. This was postwar, and even in 1940 they wouldn't have said it. Nor would anybody have asked them. Ben was characterized by asking them. So he made a committee of George Stewart, Jim Caldwell, and me to set up a new English major, including criticism. So among others we set up a course called Introduction to the English Major, English 100, which prospered for many years, which was methods and principles of literary criticism. In those days there was no textbook, and there was no Xerox either. So Gordon and I had to put on reserve in the library the articles we had torn out of journals. It was that primitive.

Then Harcourt Brace asked Mark [Schorer] to do an anthology of criticism, sensing that this was a new thing. Mark, who realized that we had all the clippings [laughter]--he had the invitation and we had the clippings--suggested that really it should be done up by the English 100 staff. We tried that--there were about six of us--but it didn't work too well because we were too different in what we knew. Finally it was just agreed that Mark and Gordon and I would do it. That was a delightful year or

- Miles: two that we had, '47 to '48 or something like that, making up this anthology of literary criticism, which sold steadily for like twenty years, which is far longer than the life of the average anthology.
- Teiser: What's it called?
- Miles: It's called Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment. The phrase "Schorer, Miles, McKenzie" got to be quite well known. Often in my later life somebody would meet me and say, "Oh, I know you!" And I'd think, "Aha! A reader of my poetry." And then they'd say, "Schorer, Miles, McKenzie." [Laughter]
- Teiser: What year did it come out?
- Miles: Forty-eight, I think.
- Teiser: I don't find it in Stewart's book on the Department of English. He has a selected list of books by department members.
- Miles: Nobody's too impressed with anthologies. There are probably no anthologies there, are there? That was an influential anthology, though. But it was an anthology, which doesn't count for any particular credit or scholarly credit.

Then, to finish up that trend of thought about teaching, we had to kill that course off about ten years ago because the younger men who came from the East to teach here and to teach it, hadn't learned it our way, and there were now too many of them in the flood of the sixties to patiently teach them how to do it. They had done, at Harvard or Yale or wherever they were, had done close reading, which in my rather biased version is that you ask the student to read the work, and then you ask a bunch of students to read the work, and then you tell them all where they're wrong and you tell them how to really read the work. That's close reading, and too much of that tends to kind of stultify individual enterprise. So we gave up English 100 as an introduction to the major. The only one of those basic courses that we still have kept, we kept a sophomore survey course and we also kept a senior seminar where you learn to write a long critical paper, and that's now where we do our teaching of criticism. Except for those who teach photomontage.

- Teiser: What do you call "photomontage"?
- Miles: During the sixties we had lots of experiments and we had a couple of teachers of the senior seminar who did teach Macbeth via taking pictures of girls dressed up as witches and stuff like that. Didn't work all that well, I don't think.

Teiser: [Laughter] After every war, you have these experiments, don't you?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: Well, I still go back to this question that I'm undoubtedly asking the wrong way.

Miles: Oh, you mean you're asking something I'm not answering? I'm answering other things, huh?

Teiser: I don't know whether you're evading it or--[laughter]

Miles: [Laughter] Try once more.

Teiser: How did you learn what the order of characters was in the beginning of Hamlet? Did you read it for yourself and ask someone? Who told you that it was the changing of the guard?

Miles: Jim Caldwell.

Teiser: Somebody told you?

Miles: Yes, just five minutes before the class. [Laughter]

Teiser: How did you gain knowledge of Hamlet is what I really mean. In order to transmit it, how did you learn it?

Miles: You see, the word "transmit" is the trouble. Teaching is not transmitting. Teaching, as the word "education" indicates, is evoking. So you give people clues as to how to read something, and then you ask them to read it, and then you discuss it with them after they've read it, to see if they got the drift.

Teiser: But if they're wrong, how do you get them on the right track?

Miles: See, I don't believe they're ever that wrong. Those boys knew they were wrong because those intonations weren't getting them anywhere. It would be very sad if I had had to say they were wrong, but usually they're intelligent enough to figure it out.

Teiser: And so you told them how to get straightened out?

Miles: No, they figured it out.

Teiser: They figured it was the changing of the guard?

Miles: Yes. Are you asking about how to evaluate student work?

Teiser: No. I'm asking about the techniques of pedagogy. [Laughter]

Miles: Well, if you want to stick to this word "transmit" I don't know where to go.

Teiser: I see. All right, that answers it.

Miles: I did give a bunch of lectures, but I always felt they were rather subsidiary. I mean they were just sort of subsidiary information to the student doing some work on his own.

Going back to UCLA, what we were excited by and interested by were these lectures by Professors Longeuil and Campbell, and I'm sure we learned a lot from them, which we tried to apply in other ways later. The difficulties, as I said, were often that, if other people didn't believe what they had told us, then we too were wrong. It's awkward.

This very nice young professor, Carl Downes, who was never promoted because he didn't do any research, was the one that taught us how to write papers. That, however, was just at an undergraduate level. So we learned something from him. Then we learned mostly, I think, from each other, which is what students do anyway, in that this little group that I mentioned, when we were studying for the comprehensive, we went around asking each other, "How do you talk about a work?" In other words, I'm saying what I said before; I'm answering the same way again because it's the only way I know. We asked ourselves this question--"How do you talk about a work?"--and we didn't know the answer. We asked our teachers and our teachers said, "Well, just what we're telling you," that we'd read our notes and they would say, "Keats was born in such-and-such a time, and 'St. Agnes Eve' is a marvel of concision and gorgeous language." Well, this isn't what we meant. We wanted to know, "What is that, that that's a work there, that we can say something about as an identity, as an entity?" And the answer is I.A. Richards; I think he is the man who told us.

Then we started applying his method when we came to Berkeley. We didn't get very far with it because he hadn't been adopted at Berkeley yet, except by Gordon McKenzie. Do you see what I mean? There was just a long, painful learning process. That's why I stress the fact that it was not only a learning process for us, it was a learning process for literary history in the country, in that social journals were changing to critical journals: Harper's and Atlantic were changing to Kenyon [Review] and Sewanee and Southern. Here was just a whole new type of stuff being written and discussed. We then entered into that, and then that's the way we taught.

Students often would rebel against this and say that we were overdoing it, that we were always teaching them how to take a clock apart but never how to put it together again. That was the

Miles: danger of the analytical method. The analytical method now has really run itself into the ground because, as I say, the danger of using the analytical method is that the professor thinks he's the only one who knows how to do it right; then you're excluding students from the process and you don't have much teaching going on.

Also now the shift has grown toward student response. Now in the sixties and the seventies, there's a whole new school of criticism, which was sort of initiated at Berkeley--

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Miles: The new young critics at Berkeley in the seventies got interested in an emphasis called reader response, or transactionalism. Paul Alpers, Stephen Booth, Ulrich Knoepfelmacher, Stanley Fish, and others were extremely interesting and getting together--they were sort of our new generation, who are now the middle generation--and they stressed the involvement of the reader in the work and the contribution of the reader to the work. This is good now, because the new critics tried to see the work as a work of art that we looked at at a distance and analyzed how all the parts fitted together. And now the proposal is that one of these parts is the reader's own contribution. This gets away from the danger that the student is left out of the analysis.

Teiser: Do you think it's swung back to a good position, to a good point of view?

Miles: It hasn't swung back. It's gone to a different point of view. It's a triangulation, or something like that. You could say it has swung back to Saintsbury in the sense that there's more subjectivism in it now. But it's not his kind of appreciative wine-tasting subjectivism. From his point of view, the reader would have to get in there and change the wine in the cask, you see, to make it appropriate to the present.

There is a lot of new discussion of literary criticism now from new points of view. The anthology which we did in 1948 or so, and Brooks and Warren's anthology, all of which were vital for a couple of decades, are now really out of it.

Teiser: Did the Brooks and Warren anthology appear before yours?

Miles: Theirs was entirely different. Theirs was a "how to understand poetry," with a bunch of poems and how to read them. Ours was a collection of critical essays which talked about how to understand poetry, and ours came out of these literary magazines like Kenyon and Sewanee and so on. Brooks and Warren's essays were included among ours, but also [Lionel] Trilling and Kenneth Burke and all the new people.

- Teiser: When did Edith Sitwell's anthology* appear? That was a little earlier, wasn't it?
- Miles: I think it came out about the same time as Aldous Huxley's, which was the late thirties. That's my feeling.
- Teiser: Did Sitwell and Huxley have any effect upon people here?
- Miles: No--I mean, not that I remember. Neither did Laura Riding and [Robert] Graves's Reader Over Your Shoulder, though that had more. But this was more really of an American thing, I think; it didn't seem much involved with England. Oh, it may have with some people, but it didn't cross my consciousness. And I know that the people from England that came and taught in our department and taught English 100 were just amazed--they'd never seen a course like that! They really thought it was strange, and they really liked it. The discussion of principles of evaluation with a group as a whole struck them as not at all cricket from the English point of view; it was neither tutorial nor lecture. I guess it was a kind of different thing that grew up here and other places around the country, very strongly at Yale. Yale has always been very big on literary criticism, with [Rene] Wellek and Warren. That's where Warren and Brooks went, and then Wellek was already there; he did a history of criticism.

I remember once in a while I'd be teaching an English 100 criticism class, and students from the Yale criticism program would come to my class and challenge me tremendously because I never believed that the work of art was all that autonomous, was totally autonomous; I always wanted to keep relating it to other things a little bit--strands of context. But at Yale they had studied strict autonomy. So we had some interesting fights.

Also, Ruth, another answer to your question occurs to me. In the forties, at Berkeley, was a very interesting growth of a type of interest that flared up and died. It's almost dead now, as far as I know, but in the forties, perhaps running through the war, and parallel to these other magazines I mentioned, there was the founding of and the flourishing of something called the Aesthetic Society, which was discussion of literary principles and art principles. With Stephen Pepper and Will Dennes, and we had dinner at the Faculty Club every couple of weeks and had resoundingly interesting papers from people. Marguerite Foster, and the

*Aspects of Modern Poetry. London: Gerald Duckworth and Company Ltd., 1934.

Miles: Hungerlands; Isabel Hungerland was in the Philosophy Department, and her then-husband was teaching art at [California College of] Arts and Crafts, and Margaret Prall in music, and a couple of other painters whose names I forget, and--what's the name of the man in industrial design in San Francisco that has the ferry boat office? Made a lot of money, did very well.

Harroun: Walter Landor.

Miles: Walter Landor. It was a group of about maybe twelve or so people who got together regularly and talked about problems of analysis and judgment in the graphic arts, and musical as well as literary. That group was really thriving, and we'd go over to the city and see new shows at the art gallery. I remember seeing, for example, the first traveling show of Motherwell, Gottlieb, and Jackson Pollock. So that paralleled the readings at the Labaudt Gallery, and that helped a lot. You see, we were so interested in literature as an art rather than social history that we went into the other arts too to try to make comparisons. And that enforces my point, that this was a big shift, because this society was founded by us. The Aesthetic Journal I think then was founded by Thomas Monroe in Cleveland, working out of the Cleveland Museum of Art. It began about that time and has thrived since. But in Berkeley there are no meetings any more.

Teiser: How long did they last?

Miles: In the large group it lasted through the forties. In the small group we met at Katherine Rau's house; she was the philosopher. Will Holther and Pat Wilson and Diane O'Hehir and Donald Weeks were various names. Karl Aschenbrenner was the real leader; he was in the Philosophy Department. We tried to write a book on metaphor. We were all reading each other's papers on metaphor. We finished our book, and we must have sent it to fifty places for publication. We never did get it accepted, because they said the essays were written too separately and didn't relate to each other at all, which is so funny because they were all written out of total relation to each other. But we never did manage to zero in on our audience. But that was an interesting phenomenon.

Teiser: It was Pepper whose field aesthetics was, wasn't it?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: Did any of the rest of you have it as a specialty?

Miles: Karl Aschenbrenner. And Katherine Rau, Isabel Hungerland.

Teiser: They were all in the Philosophy Department?

Miles: Yes. Some of us did a lot more meeting with philosophers than we did with literary people for a while. You see, the other side of the literary field--and I'd better be sure to pick this up before I forget about it--had begun in the thirties with the Marxist-Trotskyites-Stalinists and so on. This was very important at Berkeley, and very important in our department, and I just wasn't very much a part of it. I kept saying I wasn't interested in social problems. T.K. Whipple, and the people whom I didn't learn to work with, were on that side. He wanted social history.

That developed in another interesting way. They developed a course called American Studies, both here and at Harvard, which was American history and politics and sociology and literature. It never did get aesthetic; it never did relate itself to art, it always related itself to social action. So, many of my friends here at Berkeley during my graduate years were fighting all the time about social problems. Many of the poetry meetings we went to, the thing would change from poetry to social fights, especially because J.S.P. Tatlock's daughter was a poet. She would come to the poetry readings. Her suitor was J. Robert Oppenheimer, and so he would come to pick her up. If he would settle in and stay awhile, then always things would turn to social issues. There was that whole side of my life that was kind of around me but I was not part of it where, for example, you'd see the students marching up between Wheeler and the library, and Donald Mackay, who was a professor of philosophy, linked arms with the head of some labor union, and everybody would call everybody comrade, which we thought was very, very funny.

I just want to mention, in other words, that there was a whole other driving force here besides the one that I kept getting involved in. That kept on being true in the department. George Stewart was in the social side. Jim Caldwell was an officer in the ACLU. A lot of the younger men in the department were active in that way, without much critical, theoretical interest, but with historical interest.

Teiser: You said that earlier, so far as poetry was concerned, you had met Sara Bard Field and C.E.S. Wood, and so forth--

Miles: And they were on the social side.

Teiser: They gave you your first view of it, was that it?

Miles: My first view of what?

Teiser: Of relating art to social--

Miles: I think so. I first read the New Masses in order to read their poetry, and I never did read the New Masses steadily. I think it was partly a pose; it was just something I didn't want to get involved in. I didn't like the long-line debate that went on, and it just wasn't a world I really got into. I got interested in social problems later, when they became more local.*

Also, come to think of it, I had very dear friends in Los Angeles who did join the Communist party and who were sort of pilloried by all this and had to leave the country. It was a great mystery to me. Again, I never quite knew what it was all about.

Oh yes, and also I taught in the Labor School in the city. I was supposed to teach a poetry class to longshoremen (this was in the mid-forties). Fortunately it was at the recommendation of Dean [Monroe E.] Deutsch, our very much admired classical vice-president, because that got me in a lot of trouble later, teaching at the Labor School; it was considered a Communist institution. What I taught at the Labor School was an evening class in poetry which was attended by about seventeen little old Berkeley ladies and one longshoreman. [Laughter] The wife of the head of the Ford Motor Company was there, and all sorts of nonlongshore type people. Let's see, Mrs. May was one of their names. Virginia Rusk. Elma Dean. I guess I can't remember all their names, but there were lots of interesting people in that.

Teiser: But you were picked up in some security check, then, later?

Miles: Yes, a certain amount. Really nothing to bother. It was just that it was all sort of laughable because I had no position whatsoever. Yes, they came around and asked me what I taught and what my principles were, and so on.

Teiser: You said, when I was turning the tape just a little while ago, not to get you wrong, that you did like to hear lectures. [Laughing] Would you say that again? I'm not saying it right.

Miles: Yes. I think big lectures are a great form of education. I do like them, and I go to them. It's just that I found so much need for the people in the lectures to know how to handle them better after they heard them that I just went where I felt the need, really. I think I lectured all right. I never lectured to more than about a hundred.

During the forties also we were having to teach the marines in special assignment at Berkeley. These were really brilliant kids. We taught classes of seventy. So I taught freshman English

*See page 104.

Miles: in a class of seventy. Obviously, you're going to have to do quite a bit of lecturing there. Lehman developed, and we developed with him, a technique for calling on people, for reciting, and we had teaching assistants who were responsible for calling on people. So I did have a lot of practice in a sort of semi-demi lecture and in relation to recitation. I mean, I can certainly rattle on, and I have spent whole hours just telling people. As I get more full of memories, I do it more, and I don't really want to; the time should be theirs, I think.

Teiser: We heard you give a very good lecture last year.

Miles: Really? Oh, that was the*--but I read that. That was just about the only time I've ever done that. [Laughing] I've seldom read anything before. I was just too scared to deliver that cold. Thought I'd ramble too much.

Teiser: You, more than perhaps others, have been interested and willing to give time to high school teaching concerns, have you not?

Miles: Yes. This comes about in a special way. As I said before, I swore off of all teacher training because of the teacher I had at UCLA, and I stayed sworn off since our department was the same way. We had two men who were our liaison with education, Bert Evans and Jim [James J.] Lynch. They were friends of mine, but I didn't particularly--well, they stressed love of literature; they stressed the sentiment of love of literature, which was okay. But in 1960, which was a year in which I felt sort of as if I'd be interested in doing something different, I had some friends who were teacher supervisors. Their names were Jim [James R.] Gray, Leo Ruth, and Ken Lane, and then there was Dick [Richard J.] Worthen who was visiting here from Diablo Valley College. One of my friends--Jim Lynch--died unexpectedly at a department picnic of a heart attack. They developed a teachership in his honor, which was called the Lynch Fellowship. We invited high school teachers to come and work in our department with us. The first one who came was Dick Worthen, and so now develops through the sixties all this interest, which was a big matter of accident because of all that, because of Dick Worthen and Leo Ruth and Jim Gray.

*The Faculty Research Lecture, 18 February 1976, titled "Where Have Goodness, Truth, and Beauty Gone?"

Miles: In 1960 they had a meeting, which I remember, in 145 Dwinelle [Hall] where various people talked about writing and a lot of teachers came. Lots of teachers had been my former students, and it was very exhilarating because their questions were so good and the need seemed so great for discussion. They liked that meeting so much and asked if they could have more. I don't remember the sequence from then on, but I know that we also worked together in starting the California Association of Teachers of English, and the Asilomar conferences, and the chancellor had conferences at Berkeley. In other words, these young men were so active and energetic and interesting, and they drew me into this. I would never have gone by my own free will; I had not gone with Jim and Bert, their predecessors in the English Department, because Jim and Bert did it a different way. They did it, as I say, more by getting together and appreciating literature, whereas this was more a call to understand and learn how to teach writing and so forth--it was more technical.

So through the sixties I went to lots of conferences and gave quite a few talks, published various papers. I think I've written now maybe ten papers. I just got through some meetings this week-- Jim Gray now has had four years of very exciting things (there's probably not enough time to talk about it here, but maybe I should later, in relation to current work*).

Courses and Students

Teiser: Let's go back to a quantitative analysis of your teaching. Has it been an unusually large span of courses that you've taught?

Miles: Probably in the middle. Except maybe during the war, I never taught any drama or fiction. I decided I'd quit meddling in some fields, and those would be drama and fiction. So I taught courses in poetry and criticism, and prose, plus writing. Over the years, in general, I guess, this would be my range of courses, though of course this isn't all in any one year. We're all asked to teach if we possibly can, and we do, a course in freshman composition each year, which I've always enjoyed. So I've done that. Then for a while I taught a sophomore course in Introduction to Language-- linguistics. That got so technical, with [Noam] Chomsky and later linguistics, that I blush to think that I was doing it, and I gave it up. But it was a very, very interesting course based on [H.A.]

*See pages 194-202.

Miles: Gleason. I mean, it was technical enough, but it wasn't the new linguistics, so to speak. But in relation to the study of style, it was interesting.

I seldom taught the sophomore survey because I don't believe in it. That would be an example of what you were asking me. That has to be discussional. But it's like the sampling and appreciating texts which I never liked in high school. (Though I did recently try a survey I liked called English Literature, 1501-2001 for the poor, fragmented graduate students.) So I skipped from the sophomore survey over to Introduction to Criticism, the junior course. Then also in about the same year would come a course in Versification, verse composition. Then also around in there is the History of the Lyric, which I taught for a long time. I loved that course. (I mention it specially because it was different from the others.) Then for a long time I taught senior seminars in a modern author.

In the days when we first inaugurated this, we had great fights over what modern author we could possibly teach, and finally defined modern as being at least some short span dead, and that brought us to Yeats. I taught a senior seminar on Yeats for a while. Then they actually loosened up and let us teach T.S. Eliot and then Wallace Stevens. Then somebody taught Shaw and somebody taught Faulkner, and the whole thing opened up. Then every new young man or young woman who came here wanted to teach the senior seminar, and that was the great cry. So I quit it because I didn't care that much. It was fun, hard work and interesting. Nice to get the very best students in the department in that senior seminar, and nice to get very good papers. But it was a luxury, which they [the new people] needed and I didn't.

Then in graduate work, I taught Introduction to Scholarly Method in a course called 200, which was always fought hard by the students and which, as soon as they got a chance in the sixties to do some strong voting, they abolished. I was not particularly the main teacher of it, but they didn't like it from anybody. A lot of chore work--learning to do bibliography and so on.

Teiser: Is that the course you would have liked to have when you were a graduate student?

Miles: Oh, absolutely. And necessary. They're all realizing, now that they've lost it, that they need it. We have one young man that teaches it so well, and I think they're going to petition again to have him do it. But it's a lot of really heavy chore work.

Then I taught a graduate course in Introduction to Criticism, and I guess my main seminar was in seventeenth century literature. I know I've skipped something, but that's all I remember at the moment. It's kind of a span. Usually I like to teach almost every level of student every year, if I can.

Teiser: Have some of those courses been connected with the series of works that you've done that I think has just culminated in your 1974 book, Poetry and Change?

Miles: No.

Teiser: That has not filtered over into your teaching?

Miles: No. Many people say the same thing. Most of us, or a great many of us, agree that it's very hard to teach in relation to your research, because your research is way, way, way ahead of where the students are, and there's no point in trying to bring them up to it because they're not going to stay there. Even if you have a student helper that you're paying, which I did (I did do that; I paid students to do some of the word counting for me), there was never any real desire on their part to ask my kind of question. Sometimes I'd give them a lecture on what I was doing, and they'd be interested. But there's just too much of a gulf.

One time President [Charles J.] Hitch proposed that we all teach an extra course. This was a tremendous pressure on personnel during the sixties and seventies, and we were really strapped for money. Hitch had taken 110 jobs away from Berkeley and given them to other campuses, and he suggested that we make up for this by each teaching a freshman seminar in our field, without extra pay. He was just absolutely astounded at the loud silence that arose at that suggestion. I think I was one of the few that volunteered, but my purpose was to do it and to show him how absurd it was.

Teiser: Did you do it?

Miles: Oh no. He didn't even get to first base with that one. It's not all impossible. I suppose this course that I taught, sophomore linguistics, was pretty close. But it took a whole quarter just to give them the rudiments! The rudiments was what the whole quarter was about. Plus, they had no motivation to do the particular thing I was doing. I think most of the faculty feels that.

Teiser: On the other hand, you teach the writing of poetry. You haven't stopped writing poetry while you taught courses in poetry, have you?

Miles: Oh no. Why would I? As I said, that's always kind of separate, because that didn't get tangled up in my teaching. Sometimes a poetry class will give me some ideas for some poems of my own; often it won't. I just can't tell. It's just unpredictable.

Teiser: We have a friend who's an artist, George Post, who gives demonstrations to groups of people showing how you paint. You ought to give a demonstration how [laughing] to write a poem.

Miles: I couldn't. I wouldn't know--you mean go back and say--of course, he's doing it right there, live. But I couldn't count on any idea developing in language. I suppose there's enough that he could do in sheer technique to get something on canvas. The closest to that is sometimes in the class everybody writes a ten-minute poem, something like that.

Teiser: Do you write one too?

Miles: Yes, I write one too.

Teiser: I think that's sort of what I mean.

Miles: But it's never any good. Usually half the class does better than I do. Some people do well quicker and other people do well slower.

Teiser: Do you think people can learn to write poetry?

Miles: Sure! [Laughing] How else--you mean, can they be taught to write poetry?

Teiser: That's what I mean.

Miles: A class in composition gives them a bunch of opportunities, one, to do a lot of reading, which they might not otherwise have done, and two, to experiment and try things that they wouldn't normally do, and three, to interact with each other and learn from each other. There are lots more--what are some of the others? A chance to make lots of mistakes and have them recognized as, "That's not the way I want to go," kind of thing. In other words, a class provides a context for experimentation, with echo answering yes or no or something.

The bad things about poetry classes are, one, if the class is mean to each other, if there's too much laceration of feelings. It took me a long time to learn how to avoid that, and I think too many people today still don't avoid it. A kind of hurt in ego trips goes on from one student to another, especially during the early sixties when students were very rebellious.

There's a lot of passion goes on, and a lot of, "I hate your work," part of which is ego tripping and part of which is trying to find out what you like and what you don't like. So I've learned over the years a way that I do it, which nobody else does. I teach a class by having criticism anonymous for the first month, and also oral; I don't pass out mimeographed poems and I don't let them see the poems. I just read them to them in anonymous clusters, and I try to develop their ability to listen and comment. When they get to the point where they can say, "That poem really developed its

Miles: idea of a journey through space, except in that second line where it goes so-and-so," then I know they're at the place where I can let them go and get to know each other and criticize each other. There's a kind of good criticism that they can develop in about a month.

Speaking of a month, I should also say that I've experimented a lot with timing, and it's about the eighth week that's good. In class after class, after about a month they sort of get the idea; after eight weeks they are really helping each other; they are really good. And about the twelfth week, you've got it. That's marvelous. Now we have the quarter system that stops in the tenth week. So teaching has become rather silly because the teacher never gets to see--

[end tape 1, side 2; begin tape 2, side 1]

Teiser: That tape ended. I cut you off. You said that ten weeks--

Miles: Yes. Usually in about the twelfth week they're really going well, and now that we have a quarter system you never get to see that, nor do they. They really just don't, because everything stops in the tenth week now, unless you're having a final exam where you can ask them to do the thing they've been doing all quarter. Then sometimes now our finals are really superb. But I don't think this timing is just subjective. Many people have tried to go as fast as they can to get things to work, and it's like forcing digestion--you just can't do it. To me, the quarter system is very bad, and there's nothing we can do about it now because the younger instructors even, to say nothing of the students, have all got so strong on this idea, "Get it over with fast," instant service, that I don't know what will ever give people enough seriousness to get back to the fifteen weeks, except maybe in some professional series like the law school; it is still on fifteen weeks.

Teiser: Have you ever had two courses end on end? Did students ever continue then taking the same course the next quarter?

Miles: Yes, and surprisingly enough the break happens there too. You lose them in the break and they come back, but you can't pick them up where they were.

Teiser: Do you accept anyone in your poetry classes, any students? Or do you have certain requirements they meet before they're accepted?

Miles: We never have enough, we never teach enough writing courses in our department, partly because we don't have the people to do it, and partly because our department has never been one that wanted to have a professional writing program. So they never seriously worked

Miles: on staffing it. This is the main complaint students have about our department. They're still accepting this major that we set up in the middle forties, which I think it's about time they didn't. But they complain about the writing.

We allow too many people to go through, petitioning time and time again to get into a section and then not getting in. The general method is to show some of your work to the professor, and then he lets in the fifteen or so that he thinks would profit most from the course. I haven't the foggiest idea how to tell who would profit most from the course, so I've never done that. The very best writers sometimes are the ones who need the course least. Then, since I give the course in a particular way, with weekly assignments, it seems too elementary to them, so that I don't want to take the best ones. And the worst ones, of course, are kind of discouraging; when you see the bad stuff they'll hand in to begin with, it's not very inspiring to pick them. I've never found "good" and "bad" a good basis of choice. Sometimes I've tried taking everybody and getting two teaching assistants and trying to teach it as a mass course, which Ben Lehman taught us to do with freshman English. I don't think that's so bad. They're not all too thrilled with it because they get less personal attention. But I don't think that's the main purpose of the course anyway. I've done that three or four times, and I'm not unhappy with it.

Mostly what I do is take people for whom it's going to be their last chance, either because they're seniors or because they're leaving next quarter or something like that. Some of the very worst candidates turn out surprisingly well, some of the best candidates couldn't care less, and so on. It's not a very satisfactory set of choices.

Lately we've been trying to fill a real demand, and we have five sections now just in poetry, or six or seven, where we had only one for many years.

Teiser: How many students in each section?

Miles: Oh, fifteen or twenty. And we're starting a sophomore section, and so on.

Teiser: Do some students really just like to take courses in poetry all the way through college?

Miles: Yes. Not many, but they like to write all the way through, yes.

Teiser: Do you try to make way for them when you see they're really serious?

Miles: Well--it's hard to say. I doubt there are more than one or two like that in a quarter. Then I talk to them seriously about whether they think they need it; whether it's worth putting somebody else out, and so on.

Teiser: [Pause] I am trying to decide whether we want to open up another [laughing]--

Miles: Can of worms?

Teiser: --today.

Miles: What is the can of worms?

Teiser: Well, I think it would keep you too long if we start. It's the types of students and how they varied from decade to decade. This isn't so much in relation to actually what you've taught them in the courses, but just the tenor of society as you've seen it.

Miles: Oh, that's easy to talk about. I could talk just maybe five or ten minutes about that. That would give us time.

It's easy. I do think in decades. I don't know whether this is because of Bud Bronson's course way back then, or whether I got into that myself just as some way of dividing things up. It seems to me that roughly you can talk about decades as they worked. Everybody talks about the sixties, of course.

Anyway, whether it's a decade or not, when I began teaching, it suddenly turned into war in '41. I began in '40, and within a year it got very heavy there, from '41 to '45. The University of California taught special brigades of marines who were stationed at International House, and we had to set up special programs for them. They were a delight. Oh wow, were they good! And caring--

Teiser: How do you account for that?

Miles: Well, it was competitive to get in the marines in the first place then to keep from being drafted. They were eager beaver types, all running for student body president and running for this and that--a lot of extracurricular activities--and wanted to do well. And wanted to read everything. Everybody wanted to read Ulysses then, as a good freshman book. Of course, now they've read Ulysses, so I don't know. But it was quite vivid then--all the reading they wanted to do and talk about.

Then, at the end of the forties came the GIs back from the war. They were another kind of delight. Instead of being eager beavers ("Let's try this and let's try that") they were mature and

Miles: they knew what they wanted. Everybody that I know who remembers this agrees that from about '46 to '49 was a heavenly time. There were 23,500 people at Berkeley, and it seemed like two thousand; everybody knew everybody, everybody was friendly. We were doing these big freshman courses, but everybody knew everybody there. I still see many of those students. [Robert Gordon] Sproul was president, and a very friendly president. Everybody just seemed to be working hard to do the work he knew he wanted to do.

Then like a great blast from above hit us the loyalty oath controversy, which came not from the students, as you know. It was from kind of an accident of the Regents beginning to worry about communism at that late date, and Mr. Sproul not understanding, and Mr. [James H.] Corley not understanding and saying, "Why, sure the faculty would be glad to sign a loyalty oath." Then the fat was in the fire. It was announced in June, after everybody left for vacation. Jim Caldwell was one of the first to see it, and formed a committee of six to fight it. Already by the time we got back in the fall, students were being quizzical, a little belligerent, "maybe you are a communist" kind of thing. If you said anything about mutuality, "do you mean mutuality even with Russia?" kind of challenging like this.

It was not bad, but the faculty was thrown way over on the defensive. It was very slight, but there was a kind of heaviness to the early fifties, as I remember, a heaviness of the students, and I can't quite explain it. After all this wonderful light-heartedness and strength we had, they were harder to teach. Maybe it was a time of doubt for the whole country. It wasn't for us, especially; you see, this had nothing to do with us. If we'd been thinking about communism, it was ten years back. Nobody was thinking about it now. Everybody thought it was old fashioned: Why bring that up, for heaven's sake? It was so out of date, and we couldn't help but get impatient. Some of us, [Edward N.] Barnhart, Isabel Hungerland, and I started a quarterly of faculty essays, Idea and Experiment, to communicate with our alumni. A wonderful response for four years, even support from Sproul. But the Alumni Association called us Communists and killed it. We flatter ourselves it improved the alumni death notices, though.

Alex Sherriffs organized a bunch of seminars at night, and we all went around to the Y and the dorms and this and that, and those were not very good conversations. The students knew nothing and we didn't know much either. We had little conversations on things like censorship, and we weren't prepared and they weren't prepared. It was an effort to bridge gaps. We didn't even understand the reason for the gaps.

Teiser: All just because of the loyalty--

Miles: Yes, but that in itself was secondary to McCarthy and I suppose to maybe citizens' doubts. In other words, the doubts that should have come up ten years ago about communism, if there were any, were now just getting around to the public and operating.

Maybe I remember this partly because we were also in a new building, Dwinelle Hall, which is kind of a factory-type building. So the atmosphere physically wasn't so good; all the seats were pasted down and various things were artificial about it.

Then that eased off and everything went along very nicely until--there was a cumulative force there in HUAC, and the students were all wanting to go to jail and wanting to be dragged down the steps of the [San Francisco] City Hall and so forth, and very belligerent. Now they were turning their belligerence not only to us but to the outside world. And I did have poetry classes where, as I said, I thought they were too hurtful to each other. This wasn't just me. Not too long ago, a student came back out of the blue from somewhere where he was working at a job in New Hampshire, and came back and said, "I would like to take you out to dinner and explain why I said all those awful things to Mary Ann Jones in that class." You know, it haunted him all this time. I wasn't strong on this. I didn't stop it; I tried to let it overflow and let itself out.

Now we began getting the beginning of the hippies and drugs. Aldous Huxley came to the campus, and everybody cheered him, and they came in and pounded their fists on the desk and said, "Okay, you heard what Aldous Huxley said, that irrationality is better than rationality, and drugs are better than tea and coffee, and what are you going to do about it? You're supposed to be teaching us, and yet you're surely teaching us rationality, and that's wrong." So there was this kind of challenge.

Gradually in the sixties, then, this developed into a really most glorious time in teaching--for me. Many people say not. But I had got all these little things three, four, five years earlier because I was teaching writing and I was getting more personal response earlier. In the early sixties, they were looking for an enemy, really. These kids were looking for somebody to fight, and they found this in the war in Vietnam--justifiably, but I mean they were very feisty, and they had no place to go. I don't know what was wrong with the public in the late fifties, why it was so suspicious and why it wasn't getting good work out of--I just really have never been able to figure out. In other words, their parents hadn't quite sent them to school with the right spirit, either.

As they began worrying about the war and worrying about social problems, they began to lean on their teachers and ask for help and advice and teaching and extra courses, and "Please give us an extra

Miles: course in the Bible" and whatever. Education for them became a kind of solace for all this uncertainty.

Again, it's a little late and a little odd because in the fifties I had got interested in politics through the Grassrooters, through grassroots movements against--well, you know--community groups grew up through the PTA and the Democratic party. Got integration in Berkeley, and the famous San Mateo grassroots group and so forth. Things worked through PTA's community action. So in the late fifties I had worked very hard in this kind of thing--telephoned everybody to get out and vote. This particular neighborhood is full of Democrats, but they're southern Democrats, so I never had very good results. [Laughing]

Students' politics, then, followed on my politics, so to speak, and wiped mine out. What we had done--and I was only a small part of it--what Jack Kent and Jim [Whitney], good leaders of the Democrats in Berkeley, and Byron Rumford, and Carol Sibley, who was head of the school board when it was integrated--they had achieved a turn-over from conservative to liberal control in Berkeley. We'd sent our first Democratic Congressman, who was [Jeffery] Cohelan, substitute for [John Joseph, Jr.] Allen, who was a very bad person. So we were sort of happy, you see.

But then the new young teachers came in from the East, and the new students came in, in the early sixties, and said, "That's just ghastly, all you liberals! You've done all these compromises. Throw all these people out! Vote against Rumford, vote against all these people. It's got to get worse before it gets better. We've got to get rid of Governor [Edmund G., Sr.] Brown," (who we thought was a very good governor), "we've got to start over and wreck everything before we can save it." You would have thought that this would have been very hard on us, and it was. Institutionally, the neighborhood groups were killed off in Berkeley and defeated, and all sorts of really radical people were elected. But on the other hand, the students were at the same time very loving about all this, and sort of saying, "You're a liberal, and that's not a good thing to be; you've got to be a radical. But we know you meant well, and we'll teach you more about it if you'll teach us more about Milton."

So it was a very lovely time for teaching. I taught more students, more fast, more motivatedly, more with their aid and help than ever before. They'd like to come to your house. I happened to have a room at school, in Wheeler Hall, that was right on the fighting line, and at the time of day, too, which was two to three to four o'clock. We had lots of tear gas lobbed into our room, we had lots of rifles stuck into our room. It was a really

Miles: war-like situation, and sometimes none of us felt we could take it, though we always got orders from the chancellor to stay in our rooms. He didn't stay in his room, I say bitterly, but we were all asked to.

I feel bitter about the University of California administration during the sixties. The faculty was just thrown on its own and given no support or help whatsoever. The students would vote to come over here and we'd meet out on the patio, and the helicopters would come down and scan us from about two feet up, and the kids would throw those camellias at them. It was a very dramatic time in which my sympathies were so much with the students. I didn't see the ones that broke the windows and did the [damage]. I just saw the writing classes and the kids who were trying to learn something in the courses.

I mention Milton because Milton was marvelous in this time-- the whole sense of war in heaven and rebellion against authority. They would learn whole passages of Milton by heart at this time. I would ask them to go home and talk things over with their parents. They'd talk to their parents and come in and say, "I talked to my dad, Jo"--here's where they started calling you by your first name-- "and my dad said, 'I don't believe it. You can't tell me what you say is true.' I'd say, 'Put my mom on.' My mom would come on and she'd say, 'Don't tell me. I can't believe it.' So would you write a letter to them? Would you write a letter explaining that I was just going around the corner of that building, and I didn't know the police were on the other side of the street, and I didn't know I was walking into a barricade. I was just going to pick up a milk shake." This was the story over and over and over. It was just a really exhilarating time, because of students' energy and need.

This time was also very hard. My mother had had heavy, severe strokes at this time, and I had to have lots of help. She was frightened by the helicopters, and often we were told we had to leave town; we had to leave the street, which was always being bombed with tear gas, and we'd have to get her out some place. It was very hard. The army--you read about these experiments--the army bombed us with tear gas that was not correctable with the usual antidotes, so that the eye, ear, nose, and throat men couldn't tell us what to use. (I mean I know I have a bum throat now from all that tear gas I swallowed.) The cops would bomb us in our rooms! And I would say, "Hey, I can't get out of here fast enough. If you throw that grenade in here, I'm going to swallow all of that stuff," and they would throw it because my students were in there. So it's a time which had a great deal of adrenalin and antagonism and excitement involved.

Miles: The students would get together to raise money to leaflet--their constructive work. You always hear about the glass breaking, but they raised lots of money to leaflet in the suburbs. My students made two or three magazines, which they wrote and printed and collated out there on the patio, and stapled, and took out and sold. A thousand copies, sold for a dollar a copy. They'd sell every one, they'd get about at least \$800, and they'd buy anti-Cambodia leaflets, and they'd go out to San Leandro and they'd talk to people, then come back and tell about their conversations--which were lovely! I mean, so much positiveness of the sixties will some day I hope come out. Nobody wants to hear it yet. My hope is that these kids will be the leaders in the eighties, and the eighties will be a very good time, because they've been through the wars, they're experienced, and they're very good at working together.

Sometimes we'd meet at night at a boy's house, a basement apartment over on the other side of the campus. Denise and Mitch Levertov sometimes came. One time I remember it got cold and he closed the door, and there was an absolute arsenal behind the door! Just everything--all sorts of guns, bombs, just everything. And I said, "I don't think we ought to stay here. Some of those might go off." He said, "Those belong to my roommates," and in came these two great big black giants and said, "We're going to use them right now," and took them all out. Agh! [Laughter] But one of those fellows is still now a social worker in Berkeley, working with the drug kids, trying to rescue the drug kids.

Then that drug thing came in too at the end of the sixties, early seventies. Again, we got no help. Isabel Hungerland and I both had students that we knew were really terribly sick. We asked the chancellor (who was a good friend of hers, but not necessarily of mine) how to handle these kids in our classes. He shrugged his shoulders and walked away. We just didn't know enough to know how to handle all the problems we had. I had a kid who insisted on jumping out of the window every day, and it was too far a jump; he didn't break his leg right away, but eventually he would. There it really took the class to figure out how to handle him, and they did. I have the greatest admiration for the osmosis with which these students worked. If I would say, "We've got to meet again next week an extra time. Who would vote for Wednesday? How many would rather have Thursday?" they wouldn't raise their hands. They'd just say, "Don't hassle us." They'd sit there quietly and then somebody would say, "Monday night," and they'd all nod and walk out. It was odd. It was a kind of ESP, which I hope they retain.

So now we're at the seventies, and I don't know. Their strongest quality is panic over jobs and panic over grades that lead to jobs. It's very hard to teach people that have to have A's.

Miles: The whole grade system has got torn up. Not that I believe in grades, but I don't believe in making them a mockery either. So far, just what I've been able to do is to tell them what my grading would normally be, and then tell them what it would be in terms of school averages, and then ask them what they want to do about it. So far they've been mostly--until this last class--they've been very good. They've said, "Well, we'll just have to work hard enough to raise it from where you're putting us to where we want to be," which was fine response. But when you're always thinking about that--"This poor guy is now working to get this up from a B- to a B+ for law school" kind of thing--it's a rather external way of working.

I just have a feeling that students, in the last three or four years, are desperate about ways and means, and quite uncurious. Lack of curiosity is the main problem. Maybe they've just had too much trouble. I don't know. Maybe not enough.

[end tape 2, side 1]

INTERVIEW IV -- 28 July 1977

English Department

[begin tape 1, side 1]

- Teiser: Let me put on the tape that last week Benjamin H. Lehman died* [on 23 July 1977], and you called to tell us, after the last interview...
- Miles: That I was thinking more about the department and scholarly interests than I was about poetry at that point, because I was talking to so many friends about his death. So we agreed to talk more about that today.
- Teiser: Shall I ask you some things about the personal structure of the department when you came into it?
- Miles: The personal structure--how do you mean? You mean the people in it?
- Teiser: Yes. As I understand it, about when you were appointed instructor, a man named [Guy] Montgomery was chairman. It sounds as if everyone agrees he was not very effective as a chairman, and it wasn't until he was replaced that the department came out of a--
- Miles: I think it was true of the whole university, in a way; that is my impression. Of course, Physics was going great guns, and English was doing very well with Tatlock, Brodeur, Whipple, and so on. In other words, when I was here as a graduate student, everybody had a pretty interesting sense there were lots of good and strong people here. But I guess there wasn't much sense of coherence in the department; that's why I didn't have a sense of coherence either. When Merritt Hughes suggested, when he went away, that I

*And Mark Schorer a little later, as Peggy Webb's daughter was married, the Raleighs' daughter engaged, and Carol and Larry Sklute's son born. J.M.

Miles: work with Lehman, it was such a surprise, because he was being a prophet at that point, to see that that's where a lot of energy would come from in the department. I think the stories were that people hadn't been promoted for a long time, but this was the Depression. It was this coming out of the thirties. And there had been certain quarrels in the department that were known, but not what they were about exactly, at least not by the younger people. They had these new younger people, Caldwell, Bronson, and so on, who hadn't had time to do much yet. So I would say there was a strong sense of a future and of a lot of action, but not, as I say, much of a center.

When Ben Lehman became chairman in '45, he had in a sense I think already been chairman; I mean, he'd been head of the graduate students, or something like that. He was turning his energy to the department, away from his European trips and his novel writing.

Teiser: Let me interrupt and tell you what he said in his interview. He indicated that because the previous chairman had been reluctant to entertain people and get people in the department together in that way, he had rather stepped in and taken that function on. Were you aware of that?

Miles: Yes, I was. I was a little hesitant to go to those--

Teiser: During the time that Montgomery was still chairman?

Miles: Yes, this was in the early forties. I believe I made a big mistake by not going to a big party that Walter Morris Hart gave for the whole department, which was supposed to be quite a landmark. I thought of myself as a very kind of peripheral person. It was vacation time, and I was out in the country having a vacation, and I didn't come in to this party. That turned out to be [laughing] kind of a mistake, which shows how seriously they took that party.

Also Jim Cline was chairman for two years before he left to take a position in the East, and I know he tried too to bring the department together more. We had more meetings. He tried to have us meet at the Men's Faculty Club, but he ran into trouble there because they didn't want to let me in.

Teiser: Women--

Miles: Yes. So Ben had meetings at his house in the evening and I remember, when they turned out to be fairly serious business meetings, I did go, and that was very exciting because it was fairly new for the department. Also, a little later, when he recruited new people, in '45, '46, and so on, he had them to his house and gave them very serious talks about their responsibility to the department. This

Miles: has always meant a great deal to them. In other words, he represented a kind of Biblical authority in setting up a sense or image of the responsibility to the department, the nature of the department as a whole, and was very strong on getting everybody to be interested in writing and research.

I remember--maybe it was about '48 or '49, some place in there--three members of the department got Guggenheim awards in the same year. This was a big thing to Ben, and he went to Robert Gordon Sproul and said wasn't this a big step forward? Sproul said yes and invited us all to dinner. So there was a great deal of joyful enthusiasm about steps forward, which is very good. The quality of showing interest in and appreciation for what your colleagues are doing is a quality that surprisingly few people have. I often look around now and wonder how much noninterest seems to operate in administrators. I kind of wonder that people get anything done, because nobody particularly seems to cheer them on. Ben did an amazing amount of that.

On the other side, he was also very negative. If he didn't think people were doing much, he suggested that there was a good inexpensive ticket on the next train east. He was very bad to people, very unfair to people, he didn't like. Unfair in the sense that he made up his mind, and then it either went one way or the other pretty extremely.

So we all worked very hard. The new people who came in--well, do you want me to tell a little bit more about who was in the department?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: From my point of view, there was that Medieval group that was strong; there was an American literature group which was strong. George Stewart was beginning to write novels now, which was exciting, because he had been into Middle English and metrics before that. I'd become a friend of his through that material. Then he wrote East of the Giants which was, I thought, a very good book, and maybe his first historical fiction before the famous one. Then there were the young men in criticism, as I say, who hadn't developed.

I think the department was hard to define; that's the whole trouble, it was hard to define.

Also, while I'd been away as a graduate student, when I came back the department had been sort of wiped out. There'd been five deaths. The great one was Harold Bruce, whom I'd never met (he'd been away most of the time I was here), but also everybody just loved Harold Bruce. John Ross hadn't died, but he'd gone to UCLA. And who else? [Thinking]

Teiser: A man named Robert P. Utter?

Miles: Utter had been struck by a eucalyptus branch, walking home from a conference. And two or three others whose names I can't say now. Anyway, these were ones I hadn't known, so it didn't make too much difference to me. To me it was, "Okay, let's get going on the department I know."

I think what happened then, in 1945, when I was telling you about this reorganization of the curriculum by a vote of the department, what that reorganization did was to center things in a methodology of study, which was what Ben Lehman was interested in. He had the phrase he used a lot in scholarship, to try to create "the image of the work." And that, as you can see, was a kind of new criticism because it focused on the individual work. He didn't particularly care what field that was in. So the emphasis on chronology was a little lessened, and the emphasis on methodology was a little increased. So we still had our medieval historical, eighteenth century, nineteenth century, and twentieth century tendency. George Stewart led a fight to call American English, to call English literature both American and British. Ben supported him on that, and some of the members of the department bitterly opposed, if you can believe it, calling American literature English literature. We had some of our more foolish faculty meetings on this subject. They were some of the earliest ones I went to, and I never could believe my ears what we were quarreling about!

That was one of the few major issues we ever quarreled about, and it was finally settled by deciding to use the word British for purely English and for the British Isles, and then to use English when you meant both. Since most of us by that time wanted to talk about both together and didn't want even the separation, George's fight for American literature per se already seemed a little outmoded. But anyway, that's one rather foolish fight we had.

Another one that came a little later, but I mention it now because it was our other major one, was on linguistics. Our department is called a department of English language and literature, and that really meant to stress language as well as literature. In the old days, that was philology, and when I was a graduate student we took a lot of philological courses in the background of the English language. For example, Anglo-Saxon, and old French, and old High German, and old Norse, and so on. Those weren't much liked by anybody, and they were gradually eliminated, and the whole study of language rather faded. But there were always fights about having to have Latin, and about the language requirements in general.

Miles: Then linguistics developed, a fascinating new subject. Ben brought Dave [David W.] Reed here from Michigan, who was a standard, rather mechanistic linguist going to work on an area study of linguistic usage. So Dave, single-handed, in his puristic way, nonmentalistic way, as they called it, held back any speculative studies for a long time. That's just the way he was, and that's the way the Linguistics Department was too. That made me very restive because I wanted, and some of us wanted, to study language more in relation to literature. But that would have been called mentalistic.

We finally did get more linguists, a well-known linguist by the name of James Sledd, who was a real opponent to whatever was going on; he constituted himself the opponent to that. And Sheldon Sacks, who was a student of his. Sheldon Sacks was a wonderfully strong influence toward speculative linguistics in the department. But when Sledd left, in dislike of our department, and because of a big job elsewhere, Shelly I think felt it was good to leave too, went to the University of Chicago, and now publishes a very distinguished critical journal.

That whole episode in the fifties was our other major argument, in which we had many meetings debating the development of the field of linguistics in relation to literature. It's still fascinating, and it'll take more distance to articulate it. I still read the journals. Literary people are still discomfited by the mechanisms of linguistics. On the other hand, they are too discomfited; they don't learn enough from what linguistics could teach them.

In the next decade I think we had the famous Chomsky here. We went to his lectures in Engineering, to engineers, and we really worked hard. We had a group that met here at my house for a long time to study language and literature. That group continued. We took in some anthropologists, and we met for lunch at the Golden Bear--I forget how often--and talked about linguistic and literature problems. It's interesting how hard we worked and how little progress we made.

Teiser: Who was in that group?

Miles: A couple of linguists (I haven't prepared my mind to remember their names, unfortunately). Shelly [Sacks] was in it, and later Julian Boyd, when he came to our department, and John Gumperz from Anthropology, Dell Hymes from Anthropology, who had to leave here for the same reason of not developing a real central support for the subject. So it wasn't just in our department. And Charles Fillmore, who came to our department, finally went into Linguistics. The whole thing was very uneasy. I went to more meetings, day and night, of the Linguistics Department, under Mary Haas, trying to

- Miles: make it work for me, and also in terms of computer technique and so on, and they never reached out a hand to me in any way. I mention these negatives because otherwise I would sound too cheerful when people did try to reach. They didn't reach out a hand to literary people at all. Fillmore, when he left our department, said he had to leave us because we wouldn't talk to him. And yet we all were asking him, we wouldn't talk to him, but he felt he didn't talk the literary language. This is a split between language and literature that's fascinating to me, and it's still--
- Teiser: Mary Haas?
- Miles: Mary Haas was head of the Linguistics Department.
- Teiser: This is my ignorance. I didn't realize that there was a separate linguistics department. Had there always been?
- Miles: No. No, I think David Reed helped found it, again, in discomfort about English literary studies. In other words, the literary people did not support linguistics as enthusiastically as they could and should have. I wanted to, but didn't quite know how, and they never helped show me how, and some in our department thoroughly, just blindly, I thought, closed their eyes and fought it because they felt disaster lay that way, into mechanism. As a matter of fact, I think they were right. In other words, it still hasn't come about that the linguists can help.
- Teiser: The Linguistics Department encompasses all comparative linguistics, in all languages?
- Miles: Yes. In fact, it took in the discomfited from almost every other department. [Laughter] It's a very interesting phenomenon--you could talk about it for hours--because it's a history of human thought where everybody has a certain amount of good will, interest, and drive forward, and is constantly stymied by some lack of understanding, common goals, communication. It's still going on today, even in a little magazine called Style that I contribute to sometimes, which is published in the Middle West and, as you can tell by the title, is certainly an effort at compromise. But it is always, the articles are always full of complaints from the linguists that the literary studies are too messy, and from the literary people that the rigors of the linguists aren't pertinent to literary studies.

To me this just isn't true. My belief, going back to my early research, is that language is the material of literature and literature is an art, and all you have to do is talk about the relation of art to its material. I don't see any problem.

Teiser: What happened when that book [S.I.] Hayakawa wrote* became popular?

Miles: Well, that's a different trend. The English Department always had certain waves of interest in teaching freshman English, and one of them was semantics, and a number of people did teach Hayakawa's book. I taught it for a while. It was okay. It was good for its time.

Teiser: Was it not very elementary?

Miles: Yes, it was elementary. In those days, any kind of methodology of scrutiny was rare, because everything before had been the methodology of appreciation. This goes back to Saintsbury again. So any methodology of analysis and description and study and objectivity was really quite new. The trouble with linguistics was it was so objective as to be unrelatable to literary procedures.

Anyway, I guess we solved the American-British problem. We never did solve the linguistics-literature problem; it's still strong today. We have now a young man of great inspiration and fun who's not a practical leader, so again linguistics hasn't developed for us, though everybody likes him and likes what he does with it. His name is Julian Boyd. Do you want to ask me something, or shall I go ahead?

Teiser: Go ahead.

Miles: I was just going to say that the other quarrel that we've had is right in the middle of the whole history of English literature--eighteenth century--where fewer students want to work and where we have some very interesting scholars. We have a real split as to what that century is all about, and that has caused us some degree of trouble, and still does. That's kind of interesting, there again: there's a whole era of English literature to be described where we divide in how we describe it. So we don't even recognize each other's descriptions of some of the materials sometimes.

I mention these splits because, on the whole, the English Department has never torn itself apart about personalities or problems, but it has had some very interesting ideological debates which have caused I think productive results in that they raise questions for people. The whole thing I mentioned last time about readership as a function in criticism, that the younger men have raised--that too has been very productive. Some have disagreed on that, though as a whole I think those younger men have won the department over to that approach.

*Language in Action. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941.

Miles: To come back, then, to Ben [Lehman], the most important thing I think to say about him in all his tenure of office was that his function was always to encourage these debates and these differences and these individual productions. He was exceptionally good at finding out what somebody wanted to do, and then helping him do it. He was not an easy man to describe or to get along with. As you know, he had quite a reputation as a playboy in his youth, and when I came here I couldn't imagine working with him.

I think when he took on the job of chairman he was almost abashed because he didn't think of himself in that role--well, I guess he did speculatively, but I mean in the past he wouldn't have been in that role. I think in the department there was a good deal of gossip that he'd been appointed to this job by Sproul because he and Sproul got along.

Whatever the story was, he really shaped, for five years shaped the department into a pattern of operation which would allow for everybody to have what he called his window on the sea, which is a rather romantic term but which is a very good thing to do: that every young person who came here had a course that he wanted to teach more than anything else. The whole policy was letting you do something you wanted to do very much, and then asking you to operate, in terms of staff courses, the way the staff operated, and have lots of meetings to make the staff course work as a course. That made some good strong ribs in the department; people worked together enough there that they knew each other; they weren't just all isolated from each other in their own fields, because everybody taught two or three, or even four staff courses--the central core of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior courses which I mentioned before.

That's really about the main thing to say about him, aside from the fact that he went back, with others of his colleagues, and did pretty interesting recruiting. He brought Mark Schorer and John Raleigh and John Jordan--who are some other people I should mention? My mind stops at that generation, but I'm sure he got younger ones too. And he was good at spotting people with energy and with interest. He developed in the department very much a sense of the department as a unit, as a working unit.

At the end of his tenure, the problem of the loyalty oath struck, and I believe George Potter was chairman. George Potter was a very nice, quiet man easily hurt (Ben was quite a bit tougher). George was so hurt by the hatchet men coming to his office door and telling him to tell everybody to leave their classrooms if they didn't sign this contract that he sort of retired from the fighting field. Ben, who was really not that opposed to the administration, nevertheless supported the will of the department, which was an example of his flexibility.

Miles: He had an interesting thing he used to say. He said he was not a man of principle. He thought principles really wiped people out, because they were always forcing them on situations where they didn't fit. He was a pragmatist; he found out what was needed and then tried to do it. And that was true, because it included other people.

Would you like to ask me something there?

Teiser: Yes. I can read you a passage from his interview* that concerns you and also concerns an idea of his that you just mentioned.

"These young doctor candidates in the period I am speaking of"--and I think this is the late thirties--"turned out works, every one printed, every one of distinction. Finally, in the 1950s they decided to make an honor volume of Festschrift. Each of them contributed an essay and published The Image of the Work: Essays in Criticism. I cite this again, I hope in no vainglory, because it is evidence of how, in those decades, a university professor's time and energies were absorbed in something that was at the same time teaching and research.

"What lay behind this volume was that in the seminars I always insisted that if they could raise in a reader's mind one fully understood image of a work, they were equipped to go ahead and do whatever they wished in the way of a dissertation. The result of that was that when Josephine Miles had a very original idea, which has made her a world-famous figure as of this date, and my colleagues in other fields in which she wanted to work wouldn't let her undertake the enterprise that begins with the statement of emotion in Wordsworth...I gladly let her do it, because she had done a paper on the image of the work, and I said it was evidence of capacity.

"The whole business of the 'image of the work' was a fairly new, certainly a fresh, statement for us here at the University of California in Berkeley, and affected the nature of our graduate studies."

*See interview with Benjamin H. Lehman, Recollections and Reminiscences, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1969.

Miles: Yes, I would agree with all that. I've been stressing here the difference between the historical approach at UCLA, which was called sources and analogues--and here at Berkeley too, though I wasn't here then (I wasn't an undergraduate here then)--and then in the forties the development of the so-called new criticism. This was Lehman's version of the new criticism, this "image of the work." It was the way he taught it, and it was very effective, because he was good at helping one develop that image.

Teiser: This interview reflects what must have been a very great interest in and enthusiasm for original ideas and original approaches.

Miles: That's right, that's right. That was true not only of the teacher but of the administrator. I've seldom seen an administrator--this is what we've all been saying as we've talked about him after his death--we've all been saying that we've seldom seen administrators who have a concept of administration which is to help good ideas get going. That's a good concept of administration. Why it's so rare, I do not know. But that's the one he had.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Teiser: I wanted to ask a little about Walter Morris Hart. I think both Stewart, and Lehman in a way, indicate that he was a very strong figure in the department after he stopped being head, and that his influence continued. I gather that he was not considered a very great department head but that he did have an ability to find good men.

Miles: You mean in the university as a whole?

Teiser: To bring into the English Department.

Miles: Oh. It's just a world I don't know about. He was teaching a seminar in Shakespeare when I was here, and everybody I knew was afraid of him because he had a very biting tongue. I can't even remember now the stories, but there were lots of stories about his severity. He was a great friend of Ben Lehman's and I think he was probably extremely influential in advising Ben Lehman in operations, with Robert Gordon Sproul. But that's a world I don't know anything about.

What he had done earlier--what I mentioned way back some place--they had decided to make this a real English Department, and by "real English Department" they mean everybody should have a Ph.D. to make it an orthodox national department. So they let go their brilliant young writers who had only M.A.'s--Jack [W.W.] Lyman, Jack Lyons, Robert Penn Warren maybe as a student, and others whose names I don't remember. This caused a great stir because these men were very central to the department in--I don't know when--late twenties, maybe?

Miles: I gather--and I've never quite re-created all this--that in the late war years, say from '15 to '25, something like that, when [Charles Mills] Gayley was chairman--and I suppose Hart was maybe under him and a friend of his, probably--there was a great flourishing at a very high level of--what would be a good word to use? Sentiment? It's hard for me to define because I haven't been able to tune in on it. Anyway, Witter Bynner was here, and there was enthusiasm for literature in a world way. Gayley could give courses in the Greek Theater, and Bynner gave courses in the Greek Theater, and they filled the place, and so on. The Greek Theater itself functioned. It was a time of this sort of world literature enthusiasm and of general cultural elevation. Everybody was writing, and we mentioned Genevieve Taggard before, who was very strong here as a pupil of Bynner's, and Hildegard Flanner, Marie West; probably Sara Bard Field remembered some of this. This era of elevated, enthusiastic literary response included--one of the things that impressed me most--Langston Hughes. Langston Hughes said later, when he came out to Berkeley and read to black audiences, that when he came in whenever it was--the late twenties or early thirties--he never saw a black in his audience, that they were all people in black ties; they were black tie audiences. And they were the social cream of Berkeley who entertained him, and I know that Ben and Walter Morris Hart were involved in that.

All this elevated world was just nothing when I came here. It had all--

Teiser: Did that have any counterpart in art nouveau?

Miles: It might. I think it might. It's certainly related to Oscar Wilde, if that's related to art nouveau.

Teiser: You told me the other day that you had been talking with Jack Lyman--about these years, was it?

Miles: Yes. He remembers the powerful figure as being Witter Bynner. Also these people were good friends of each other. Maurice Leseman is another name I remember, and they were passionately fond of him. I don't remember or know about him.

Leonard Nathan, who's a poet here, and I went up to lunch with Hildegard Flanner and Jack Lyman to just sort of ask more about all of this. Their enthusiasm was still great, and they would lend us things and give us things and tell us things. But really what they liked so much, it was not in our world.

Teiser: Did you read the poetry of Witter Bynner?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: Did you like it?

Miles: Fairly well. I liked it better than a lot of the more George Sterling types that were going around.

Hart was part of that more elevated circle, and he became vice-president of the University and was powerful there. Then there was a whole problem about the stadium being built. [Charles H.] Rieber, another big man on the campus, was so angry that he left for UCLA. That whole story the giants talk about as if they couldn't communicate it to the layman, and that's when I was a layman. So I've never heard the story of the triumvirate that took over from Wheeler. Those are all secret places, I gather. Maybe that's part of your sealed material. [Laughter] Was Gayley one of those? I don't remember.

Anyway, Gayley and Hart had this sense of great distinction. When I got here, the attitude was that distinction was all back about ten years and everything had fallen on rather evil days, and "we're trying to reconstitute things with these new young men who are still pretty young." They had Tatlock from Harvard and were trying to rebuild, but not in a very centered way yet.

So that's the best I can do for you. Hart, when he retired, I know that Ben went to see him a lot, and read to him when he couldn't see (in the next generation, Tom Parkinson did this too). He was not famous for being fond of taking fools easily, and I always felt myself kind of a fool in his presence. But I think he did back up Lehman. I mean, I think Lehman asked Hart to back him up in my support, and I think he did. But that's all beyond my ken, because when I talked to him personally and he never daggered me with any of these great repartees that he was so famous for, still I was always feeling I was about to be [laughing] the next victim.

Teiser: Lehman also just said in passing (and I don't remember in connection with what in his interview) he had thought that it would be unreasonable, in connection with your appointment, to let your physical condition stand in the way of the University securing the services of your intellect.

Miles: That was courageous of him. I'm sure he worked hard on this, and so did Jim Caldwell and so did Will Dennes. I think that once he made up his mind that I should teach, and when he found that he wasn't going to convince smaller colleges of this, then I think he worked pretty hard. It probably took quite a bit of maneuvering to put it over.

Teiser: Of course, the fact that you were a woman too was a problem.

- Miles: That's right, and our department was not all that fond of women, either.
- Teiser: Had you had any English professors who were women?
- Miles: There weren't any then. I'd had them at UCLA. But they wouldn't speak to each other at UCLA, so it wasn't a very happy scene. But Ben did later, quite soon after--I never felt lonesome in the department because he quite soon brought in five women who were excellent. Unfortunately they were wives, and they were pulled away later by their husbands, so that at the time it seemed fine but now it seems too much of a compromise. But it was great in its day.
- Teiser: He speaks admiringly in his interview of so many women students. He must have liked women--as you've indicated.
- Miles: Yes, and I think some of his friends in the department didn't, so that it was a kind of an interesting switch that he made.
- Teiser: He spoke admiringly of Sister [Mary] Madaleva.
- Miles: Madaleva, yes. She preceded us; we never knew her. And Agnes Robinson.
- Teiser: He seemed of a mind to recognize women's intellect; is that correct?
- Miles: Yes, I guess that's right. He liked individuality wherever; he appreciated that. He was now sort of eager to make something of this department and of the University, in collaboration with Sproul, who was also eager to bring it to the fore, and the way to do that, evidently, was to compete in eastern terms, which was to write for Modern Language Association, to get Guggenheim fellowships, to write and publish books. So he encouraged all that, and we had a very interesting development of our young men. If our young men who came here did too much just reviewing for the New Republic or something like that, they would get called in and asked, "where's your book?" There was a lot of real pressure, real competitive pressure, and very interesting tendencies in publication grew up in the department through not only colleagues like Willard Farnham and his Medieval drama but with Jack Raleigh's study of American tradition and Parkinson's of Yeats and Jordan's of Wordsworth. A whole lot of lines of thought were developed and encouraged by Ben, so that even when he wasn't chairman his influence lasted over the chairmanships of other people. There was a constant emphasis on individual exploration of ideas.

So, as he said, some of his students later did get together and make that collection of essays which were typical of his way of working.

Publishing and Research

Teiser: If you had just done studies of somebody's poetry, would that have been sufficient in the eyes of the department?

Miles: It would've by his [Lehman's] definition, and that's where we disagreed to some degree, I think. By this time I really liked scholarship [laughing], after years of struggle. I really liked the stuff; I liked the genre of the scholarly article in MLA [Publications of the Modern Language Association of America]. I wanted to write for MLA and I wanted to write for scholarly journals. He sort of laughed at me for that, and I think he thought that if I did monographs published by our press and did poetry that--he developed the budget committee's definition of the creative activity as alternative to scholarly activity.

We invited here a young man by the name of Milton Miller, who had written one fine article on John Milton, but who decided he was not going to get a Ph.D. Milton came, and he was supposed to be a test case of the fact that he would go ahead and write essays and be a literary critic and not have to bother with academe in its most rigid [forms]. Actually Milton decided not to do that for various other personal reasons, and decided to leave and to get a Ph.D. He's now at Riverside. But Ben Lehman wanted to make him that sort of case. But I didn't want to be that case; I really wanted to do research, because I now had this bee in my bonnet of being able to describe trends in usage of English poetry.

So I was working very hard to adapt to the establishment, which was difficult because the establishment might not be as eager as Ben or the people here were for new ideas. But as I mentioned before, in poetry the Southern Review was a very good place for me to relate to. When the Kenyon Review announced it was going to publish a special issue on [Gerard Manley] Hopkins, I thought, "Aha! Now I can write a study of Hopkins that will show how this kind of language that he uses works--" So I wrote to Cleanth Brooks, who was going to be editor of that special edition, and asked him if he would let me try a chapter, and he said yes. That was I guess the first serious published essay that I had in scholarship. It made a great deal of difference to me in the sense that it's widely known now, and that little book--it's called Hopkins: The Kenyon Critics--is still being published and I still get royalties on it. This is now thirty years later! It was a real early step of its kind. So it does relate to what we were talking about before in teaching, because Cleanth Brooks was alive to this methodology that Ben was talking about too.

Miles: Then I also got an article published in Modern Philology or something else that was straight orthodox, and I remember Ben's laughing at that, thinking then, "That's really unnecessary." Then I sent one to MLA and after a while, after some failures, I got one accepted there. So he was always sort of amused by my efforts to be orthodox. I never became orthodox, but there were enough people, not only Brooks but René Wellek at Yale and Harry Levin and Reuben Brower at Harvard, Samuel Monk at Minnesota, who were sympathetic enough with what I was doing so that I managed to get a word in edgewise here and there.

In the meantime, there was a mysterious figure whom I'll never know about, I guess. When I was developing the work on textbooks--and that was an interesting parallel to scholarship, because I thought they would fit together--there was a man at Prentice Hall, and I should be able to say his name, Don--? He encouraged me to do a textbook, and then two textbooks. When I would do a plan for a textbook, he would send me the comments of some anonymous reader that he had read and evaluate me for his purposes. He would never tell me who this man was, but these were the most marvelous analyses of my work that I've ever seen.

Teiser: Actually?

Miles: Actually. They were just so great! He would never tell me who the person was, but they always encouraged him to commission the work from me.

Teiser: What were the two books?

Miles: One was The Ways of the Poem (first it was called The Poem*), and then the other was Classic Essays in English.** Both of these were pretty much eye-openers to me in making the scholarship more understandable in terms of actual thinking about it practically. I'm just fascinated by how much--three or four times I've read letters from this anonymous critic I felt "the world is mine" in a most marvelous way. So when I wanted to publish one of my later books, which was called Style and Proportion,*** which was a

*Published under this title in 1959, under the title The Ways of the Poem in 1961; reedited in 1964.

**Published in 1961.

***Published in 1967.

Miles: scholarly book based on what I had learned from doing the Classic Essays, this man said, "Okay, I think we owe it to you to publish the scholarly book since it is based on the text you did for us." After they got it all set up and all in print and everything, he was promoted to some high position in Little Brown (he had switched to Little Brown, by the way), and the new man who came in, whose name I think was Stone, just saw nothing in that book. He said, "Miss Miles, this is what I would call a non-book." So when they were taken over by some conglomerate and wanted a tax loss, they shredded that book as a basis for tax loss. That's one of my saddest stories of scholarship because that book represented at least ten solid years of work.

Teiser: You mean they didn't distribute the whole edition?

Miles: No, they didn't distribute it. They shredded it.

Teiser: The University library has one.

Miles: They sent out a few copies. It was never received for review by most magazines, no.

Teiser: Is that right? For heaven's sake!

Miles: So that book is a non-book in that it scarcely does exist really. I have one copy; that's all I own. It is legal to write and warn the author, which they did. But by the time I answered yes, I'd like to buy twenty-five copies before they shredded it, they wrote back and said, "Sorry, it's too late." So it was really kind of the major disaster in my--*

Teiser: Do they still hold the copyright, or do you hold it?

Miles: Heaven only knows! Oh, I guess I do, but so far I haven't been able to persuade the reprint houses to reprint it, and guess why--because there's no demand for it. Well, guess why there's no demand for it? Because nobody's ever heard of it.

Teiser: Can't they publish it as a new book?

Miles: But our press [the University of California Press] doesn't--it's a very expensive book. It's full of plates. No, our press had already turned it down as too expensive. This was another bad part of the story before I even got to Little Brown; our press turned it down because of the plates. Some heroic woman at our press who was a major typist with a very super kind of machine saw the work and saw that it had been turned down because it was

*See also page 130.

Miles: so costly to print, with all these charts, and she volunteered to type it just for some kind of photo offset thing, so that it wouldn't be too expensive. (I'm sorry that I don't remember the methodology.) But she was a really heroic person. So then UC Press in 1960 did print all these tables, and so all Little Brown had to do was reprint some of the tables, so it didn't cost them so much.

I got in a real mess there, from about '55 on, in that my charts were so cumulative and the details were so detailed that really just nobody had the interest or money to afford them. I think now it would be better; I think there are more processes now. Still in those days it was expensive printing. That was a very hard time for me, around the sixties. I had none of these champions like Ben Lehman around any more. I forget who was chairman; I think it was Henry Smith, who was a real champion too but was baffled by that technical problem. Since my work was neither flesh, fish, nor fowl--it wasn't linguistics and it wasn't aesthetics and it wasn't literary scholarship--it was hard to get any[thing accepted]. I could always get essays accepted, but I couldn't get the data production accepted.

That might lead me to retrace my steps a little bit and talk about another adventure. After Ben wasn't chairman any more and George Potter was, Guy Montgomery died. Guy had left sixty-three shoe boxes full of cards for a concordance for the work of John Dryden, and this was his life work. He had worked with a young graduate student from Utah. They hadn't got too far with it. Not to go too much into concordance work, but you have to have some method of collating to check the accuracy of your alphabetization. A lot of concordances have been done "by hand," but they're an awful lot of work. Guy had never finished this, and the young man from Utah had abandoned it. Our department had written to the young man and said, "Would you take this on?" and he said, "No, it's not in good shape, and I've seen the last of it."

George, being a rather puritanical man, said, "We don't want to waste this whole lifetime, so why don't you take it on since you've done a lot with concordances." He gave me a little research money. I worked for about a year on it, and it was impossible. The boxes of cards would fall apart, the methods wouldn't be clear!

There was a man by the name of [C. Douglas] Chretien in language studies who told about making dictionaries for exotic languages with a computer--how you could do this, how they would do automatic alphabetization--you could punch for alphabetization. (I can't say that word!) This was quite exciting. This was sort of, as I say, when I was fairly new in the department, and I was kind of on my own because nobody knew anything about this.

- Miles: I went up to Cory Lab and said, "You've got the computers up here. Can I do anything about making these concordances? This is what Mr. Chretien told me--" and they said, "Yes, we can do that. We've never done it. We don't quite know how." This would be a long story if I told it in detail. But anyway--
- Teiser: Don't leave out too much.
- Miles: --it took me about five years, I guess. Towards the end of that time, we got some pretty good research money to get a young woman who was the wife of a navy officer or army officer who was here, and was very experienced but had little to do because of her husband's presence in the war. So she was willing to do it for a fairly small amount, I guess. She worked very hard at this, and we learned these computer methods, and we did get this in alphabetic shape, and we did get it printed. It actually is the first computer concordance.
- Teiser: Did you develop techniques--
- Miles: Yes.
- Teiser: --that had not been previously developed?
- Miles: Yes. We really did.
- Teiser: Did you ever record them, did you ever give others the benefit of your--?
- Miles: Yes. I put it in the introduction. It's so rudimentary. It's so rudimentary that our computers wouldn't even print language, words; we could only print the line references to these words-- I mean they wouldn't print whole sentences. The concordance locates every word for you. Say the word "apple," they'll show you every line, every poem in which the word "apple" was used by Dryden. Now [currently] any decent concordance, you write out the line where apple is used, like "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." But all we could do would be, say, "Line 24, poem 7." So it's a horrible thing to use! Nobody uses it unless he absolutely has to find out something about Dryden. But when computer usage for concordances was developed by Stephen Parrish at Cornell, he did say that ours was the first; he did acknowledge it to that degree. It really was kind of a fascinating little primitive use of a sophisticated instrument.
- Teiser: Did I ask you (or did I just plan to ask you) whether the course you took in accounting, on a bet, helped you in any of this?

Miles: I'm sure it didn't. I'm sure it didn't. [Laughter] I was always sort of interested in numbers. What you're really asking is why I did so much counting. Accounting was about something else, really, but I probably wouldn't even have taken the bet if I hadn't been sort of interested. The language of numbers is a kind of interesting language. But I use it only in the simplest way. My critics now of my work are always unhappy that I make too rough transliterations from--you know, if it's 75 percent I'd just as soon call it 80, and all that kind of thing. A rounding out just drives my readers crazy. I don't mind rounding out because, you know, [laughter] I don't think in what I'm doing it's all that important.

Anyway, that was a kind of scholarship in which the department--we made lots of interesting new friends, not only I but some of my friends in the department, by working in that kind of field. I think there was a Chinese girl up at the lab by the name of Penny Gee who was very smart and good. Later, IBM people from San Jose came up to interview me, and I've been interviewed off and on ever since by IBM--"What can we do to help you?" But I've never been able to connect with them either, though I did with Penny Gee. She really taught me--

Bud Bronson did that marvelous concordance he used for his study of the ballads, which was awarded some major medal by the Queen. I mention these two things to indicate again, while Ben would have absolutely collapsed at the very thought of this kind of mechanistic work, and even Henry Smith would have, yet they supported it in the sense that they let people do what they wanted to do or felt they should try to do.

[end tape 1, side 2; begin tape 2, side 1]

It was pretty hard to get that first vocabulary of Wordsworth* accepted. I know that the press committee that finally voted for it was full of suggestions, like one man said throw away the first chapter, others said put the first chapter last, others said put the middle at the beginning--such contradictory suggestions that I'm sure it was a great trouble to everybody, and it was a trouble to me to rewrite it in such a way that it would suit all these conflicting recommendations. I managed to do that.

*Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

- Miles: Then the next book, the one I had written on the AAUW fellowship, the Pathetic Fallacy,* went very easily, both in the writing and in the publishing. People who hadn't liked the first book at all said, "That second book is really fine." I often tell students this, and tell them to try to write a second book right away after their thesis book because the thesis is usually very painful, but once you've learned how, if you do one fairly quickly then, it's fun, because you've learned how and you can go fairly fast. People like and still read the Pathetic Fallacy proportionally more than other things.
- Teiser: You said that there was no master's thesis when you were at Berkeley. That seems to me a great learning experience, and I think you were cheated by not having to write a short thesis then.
- Miles: Well, maybe. I've never seen a good master's thesis. It seems to me it's the wrong stage of your life.
- Teiser: Just to learn how to do something, even if you don't do it well--
- Miles: I don't think you can learn how fast enough. We decided--and this was much debated--we decided that you could learn to write a good senior thesis because you were very closely controlled by the class and the instructor, and that's what we settled for. So we had the senior theses, which we still do. In other words, you're right that a thesis needs to be done somewhere along the way, and that's where we decided to put it. I think it's worked well. A master's is supposed to be done in one or two years, and you just don't dare--we do have them now, and I'm horrified when I'm on them, because they're not very good. There's no time. There's time to make a good seminar paper or senior thesis; there's not time to do a really solid, developed piece of research. I think that really takes three years.
- Teiser: Your Ph.D. thesis didn't entirely prepare you for the book, then, the Wordsworth book that you based upon that?
- Miles: Oh, it was trouble from the word go! It was just trouble from when I started to when I finished. It was trouble from 1938 to '41, I guess. But then the one that I wrote in '39 or whenever, that came out in '41 also, the Pathetic Fallacy, or maybe '42--
- Teiser: Forty-two.

*Pathetic Fallacy in the Nineteenth Century. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

Miles: --that was just very easy. Then I developed a whole theory that I wanted to follow out, the one of major language. Then I just had a built-in job to do every summer. I sat on the patio with my little beat-up traveling typewriter that had only three banks of keys, and typed out these studies of the language of the poets of the 1640s, 1740s, and so on. These were good for getting--I wanted something too, not only that I liked to do, that I could sit outside with and enjoy, but also that students could help with so that they could get support--grant money--and this kind of analysis of language they could do. Over the years, in fear and trembling, I've gone back and checked whether they did it well, and on the whole--I'm sure there are terrible errors still--but on the whole they did beautifully. They were responsible and good people.

I just did that until about 1951, I guess; for about a decade I did that, and then additions through the sixties.

Teiser: Let me take you back, here. In 1946 two books were published, Vocabulary of Poetry and Major Adjectives in Poetry.

Miles: The Major Adjectives was the third of the trio. Again here I guess this was probably Ben's ingenuity. He then said, "This trio of monographs could make a book." So, Wordsworth, the Pathetic Fallacy, and Major Adjectives was then published as the Vocabulary of Poetry. I think that was his idea, and it looked very impressive when it came out. Meantime, I had started--

Teiser: Were they rewritten?

Miles: No. When they were republished by Octagon, I wrote new introductions, maybe a page or two in length, giving new data, but rather additive, not actually reconstructive.

Teiser: Then in 1948 two more publications, one in which you participated, the Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment--

Miles: Yes, we talked about that last time.

Teiser: Yes. And The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1640s.

Miles: That's when I started the study of the '40s in each century. After I did the 1640s, Bud Bronson--or maybe right along in there--said, "You can't start there. You can't leave out Chaucer." So either before that book or after that book, I can't remember which, I went back and did some material--some subtitle there says "and earlier" or something. I went back to the 1440s or 1340s, roughly; I did ten earlier people. And then finally got up to the seventeen-, eighteen-, and nineteen-forties, and then published those, and that was called The Continuity of Poetic Language, and that came out in '51, right?

Teiser: Yes. Also in '51 was the Primary Language of Poetry in the 1940s.

Miles: That's what I said. They all came out. Then I thought, "Well, now I'd better look around and see what the forties have to do with the rest of the century," because I knew they had something to do with it but I didn't know what. So I did a little sampling of all of the centuries in the nineties and found the fascinating thing that the nineties were all much more toned down; that is, the forties were the extreme period of usage, which I'd had a feeling for from the beginning. That's why I hadn't done the nineties; the nineties are more transitional, not so fully characteristic of the differences.

Then I decided if I were really interested in poetic history, which I now was, I'd better do this in terms of a coverage of the whole century now, and do less of any one group. Like, I guess I did thirty poets for the forties; now I will do thirty poets for the whole century, or something like that. This came out first in a book called Eras and Modes in English Poetry.

Teiser: Published in '57.

Miles: That's where I really try to say there is a very interesting, definable pattern to the whole growth and development of English poetry. That book the University Press refused to back up with tables and data, and it was from '57 on to '64 that a lot of my misery started because I now had all this data but nobody wanted to print it.

However, because of this heroic typist at the press, they did publish kind of a "tabular view," as it was called there in '60 (that's the big 8 1/2 by 11 typed thing that she did), and then in '64 they published the second edition of Eras and Modes with some of the tables reduced. That was at the behest of the editorial committee of the University Press. I don't remember the name of the chairman, but he was a real hero to me because he told the press that that data was important enough. I never had much--how would I put this gently? Though the University has published a good deal of my work, I don't think that the manager of University Press and chief editor ever was happy about having to do it. So this was a case where the editorial committee stepped in and defended me and really rescued me after years of trouble.

Then in '67, when Style and Proportion was published, that was the addition of prose to the whole thing. Now I was asking the question not "What is the continuity of English language in poetry?" but also, "How does that relate to the continuity of prose?" and "What are all the relations of poetry to prose?"

Miles: Because everybody had been asking this question by this time. And this is the one that fared so ill at Little Brown.* I think it's a good book. It got reviews only from people who asked to see it especially, and they gave it good reviews, but I think there were only two. But I think it is a good book, and sort of the heart of the matter for me. That's the book for me. If I wanted to keep one, that would be it. But that's the one that sort of doesn't exist.

Then, before 1974, a number of people had been asking me to write essays. They'd write and say, "How does your work apply to Edward Arlington Robinson?" or to John Donne or whatever. Partly initiated by these inquiries and partly initiated by questions of my own, this Poetry and Change developed as a series of sort of spotlights on special eras and special recurrent literary problems and questions and how they would be related to what I was doing.

That was the book that was published most recently [in 1974], and that book--and this is so strange, and life is so weird--that book won the MLA prize for the best historical scholarship of that year, '74, which is ironic because the judges were not English professors. Mark Schorer was on the committee, but he said he stayed out of it. The judges were comparative literature people, who've always liked my work. So here's this same ironic thing! When you talk about luck, how fantastic that those judges that year would be comparative literature people! But no English professors would like my work to that degree; it violates too many of their concerns. But these two people that wrote me about why they voted for it, liked the very things in it that I liked and that other English professors wouldn't like.

I don't mean to say all English professors. Reuben Brower at Harvard, for example, was marvelously understanding of what I was doing. Many of his students I've got to know since, and are understanding too. But on the whole, I never have really zeroed in on any establishment consensus that what I'm doing is central to literary concerns.

I wrote one other book, that I skipped. Somebody wrote me back about '63 or so and said, "Why don't you do a little pamphlet on Emerson for the Minnesota series?" I had written an article on Emerson, and they'd read the article and they thought it was really right. So they asked me to do this book. (I'm being anonymous because I'm not quite sure who it was. There were two or three people

*See page 123.

Miles: on the board at Minnesota, and I'm not sure.) They had this Minnesota series going, a seventy-page pamphlet. I thought this would be great fun to tackle, use all that I now knew to tackle one man, see what I could make of him, especially one whom I loved, one of my favorite poets, and one about whom so much wrong stuff I thought had been written, and, to be sentimental, one whom I'd wanted to write about when I first came to Berkeley and wanted to write with T.K. Whipple, except that he didn't feel I could do that well. So I was very pleased about getting recognized in the American Lit establishment after all these years--which was not to be.

I wrote the pamphlet, forced-draft in one whole year, really enjoyed it, and I think I read everything by everybody about Emerson, and everything that Emerson had written. All of Emerson's lectures and all the data weren't out then as they are now. There's been a wonderful amount since, but in terms of what was then available I wrote this pamphlet. It was the first thing that I was in such a degree of hurry about that as I wrote it, in the summer, instead of typing it myself, I gave it to somebody to type--a typist, in other words--and she spilled a bottle of furniture polish on it by mistake and it was obliterated. So that was kind of an exciting story. [Laughter] I can't ever remember being bluer than I was for a couple of days. I phoned the police department and asked them whether they could read, with their Sherlock Holmes X rays, through furniture polish, and they said I'd been reading too many pulp magazines.

I remember my brother--we were going out to dinner and I was telling my brother about this and he just really couldn't conceive of why I was that upset. That was so fascinating to me--that knowing me as well as he did, his attitude was, "Well, cheer up! It's all in a lifetime, you know." [Laughter] However, the ending was miraculously happy. I wrote to this very nice editor in Minnesota; her first name was Jeanne; I can't quite spell her last name; S-i-n-n-e-n or something? Anyway, I must get it right because I haven't been that happy with editors I've suffered with through the years, but she was just superb. I told her that this had happened and I'd just have to bow out or start over. She said, "Do you realize"--I mentioned I'd written the footnotes into the text for the first time, to save time and be accurate--"Do you realize we're not using footnotes? Why don't you just sit down and write out of your mind what you remember and skip the footnotes? We don't put those in the text anyway." She suggested a few questions that might be interesting to ask myself. It was such a nice letter, so totally constructive that I sat down and I did--I wrote the whole thing out in about three weeks. I think it was close enough to what I had written in the first place. I mean, I didn't feel it was worse; I felt maybe it was even a little more coherent.

- Miles: She liked it okay, and that came out, and that's been by far my most successful work.* It's been reprinted a lot and sold a lot. Royalties in my life means over \$10 a year. [Laughter] So I got lots of royalties on that. People have written me about it. However, it was never reviewed in any orthodox magazine or American literature journal, except there was one little summary squib somewhere that said, "A peripheral work was done in this field by Josephine Miles."
- Teiser: It's such a small work--I was looking at it this morning--that maybe the reviewers thought--
- Miles: Oh no, they reviewed all the pamphlets. It just was I wasn't an American Lit person. Never got to be an American Lit person. But Emerson is a wonderful poet, and it was a great joy to me to do that book. I summarized it--one section of it was summarized in Poetry and Change. But it's been printed all over the world. I get letters from India and Portugal--
- Teiser: It's very highly analytical. I'm surprised that--
- Miles: I am too. It's really a great joke. They buy it because they want to know about Emerson's transcendentalism, and because he's a big shot in India and Portugal, and then they have to read it, and what they have to read is me, and it's very comical because it's not what they're looking for. But the nice thing is these readers, at least that write me, are very adaptable and [laughing] they say, "This is not what I was looking for, but isn't this interesting!" and then they ask me good questions.
- I should say, by the way, I would never have had the nerve to do all this if it hadn't been for Henry Smith. But he is such an authority in the field, and he held my hand; he read it and said, "Yes, it is okay to send in." I never otherwise would have done it because I didn't feel strong enough in the American literature field.
- I proposed that Emerson wasn't a Symbolist, that he was a Metaphorist in the seventeenth century terms, which was his century. That still isn't accepted. But Henry said it was true; so great!-- it's true.
- Teiser: I read somewhere that many of your works had been translated into many languages.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1964.

Miles: Yes, and that's the main one.

Teiser: I wonder how it translates into Urdu. [Laughter]

Miles: That's right--I've been translated into Urdu. Also, some other essays of mine, or chapters, have been translated into literary magazines in Italy and France, where there's a good deal of criticism of vocabulary and structuralism. Then my poetry has been translated all sorts of amazing places--China, Turkey, Hungary. I have all sorts of texts that I can't read at all. They tell me it's mine, but if it weren't for [laughing] the words Josephine Miles, I wouldn't know what it was. Even the line length looks different.

Teiser: Although you say you've hardly been part of the establishment, you've certainly been diligent, shall I say [laughing], and if anyone said you should publish, you have done that.

Miles: The interesting thing is it doesn't feel like diligence now. I mean, when I see that list it looks rather diligent. After I got going, after a rather slow, struggling start on all this, for one thing critically or historically or whatever word you want to use, I was really bothered by the fact that poetry was so misread by historians and critics. I was wondering if there wasn't some way to get closer to the poem as it works. This is partly like the New Criticism, but on the other hand the New Criticism wanted to deal with just one poem at a time, and my work does absolutely no good at all to one poem at a time; mine is interested in the function of one poem in a sequence of poems or in the work of a man or the work of an era, the work of a type. So it's a generalizing force, and it's for that reason that it wasn't popular--in other words, this is going counter to the New Criticism. I've gone to many lectures by visiting celebrities at Cal where I'd meet them afterwards and the lecturer would say, "Oh, I know your work. It's just a shame you don't do it in the way that would be believable."

Teiser: [Laughter] What do they mean by that?

Miles: For the linguist, this would be to be linguistic, to do much more with linguistic analysis, which to me has always seemed, from what I could learn from it, too alien to the text. Or the literary critics, most of the reviews of my books say, "This is a pretty interesting book and we recommend you read it, but it's because of all the tables and charts that she throws in there." So I've just fallen between these two stools all the time, whereas my feeling is that it's the bringing of those together that's a good thing to do. As I mentioned before, my going to all these linguistics meetings, afternoons and evenings of visiting linguists, and then also the

Miles: aesthetics group that I belonged to for so many years, and also various little groups that we had here at other colleagues' houses, studying some works of literature that we cared about--in all of these I was always saying, "Can't we bring the sense of art and the philosophy of art and the philosophy of language together? Because that's what literature is." But the linguists want to say that literature is some special aspect of language. They want to say, for example, that literary language is rule-breaking language or--what's the word?--deviant, discontinuant, in some way broken off from normal language. That's what they want to talk about. And they don't allow for the function of the principles of art. On the other hand, the principles of art don't allow for the principles of language study because they say it'd be more like analyzing the chemistry of the paint on the canvas. Well, why not? Why not? I hope some day this won't be so much like pulling teeth to bring these two together.

So it doesn't seem to me that diligent. If you care about something and you want to argue with people and you've got a lot of friends to argue with and a lot of strangers to argue with, you just do it as much as you can and you enjoy it. Willard Farnham, who was one of our chairmen after Ben Lehman, used to say that his justification of publishing was that publishing is teaching at a wider range. There's of course been lots of debate against publishing, that publishing is a silly demand and takes away from your teaching and so forth. But I think Willard's point is true; there are various ways of teaching. I wouldn't say I succeeded in teaching [laughing], not in the least, but it's something that's fun to try. Once in a while you get a letter or a response that seems to understand, and that's like having a good student in a class that seems to understand, or a whole class, or a whole combination of responses sometimes. But it takes a certain amount of patience, and you feel nobody's listening and nobody's believing. That was very hard with that one book because the relation of poetry to prose is so fascinating and so not what people think; that is, prose, from my study, the language of prose, or to put it the other way, the language of poetry is kind of a seed bed for common language. That's not the way most people think of it; they think of the language of poetry as an ornamentation of the language of prose. To see how this all turns around and works, and how the language of poetry is really closest to the language of science, because they're both trying to objectify without making statements that need defense the way assertion needs, the whole relation of one kind of thinking to another, is fascinating to discover.

Something else I skipped I should mention. Though we didn't manage to get Chomsky to stay in Berkeley or agree with us, one of his books, a study of the Port-Royal rhetoricians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was a great illumination to

Miles: me. For him it was an historical study, so it wasn't his theory. But ideas I read there--I suddenly understood, and I remember the afternoon. It was one of those great times when things become clear. It dawned on me what is the relation between the structure of a word, the structure of a sentence, the structure of a paragraph, and the structure of a chapter or what have you, and how these are all similar units of construction. So this was helpful in doing more with the analysis of structure in different kinds of styles in both prose and poetry.

It was also helpful for teaching composition. If you would like to know all about how paragraphs work, I would like to take five hours out and tell you. [Laughter] They're just a marvelous thing. Paragraphs are parts of sentences; paragraphs are adverbial phrases or clauses or appositions or modifiers. The whole language gets simpler and nicer when you see what they understood in the seventeenth century but what we lost in the meantime when we staggered into eight parts of speech and a lot of nonsense like that. For me it means that what you call diligence and I call various explorations now come together and support each other, which at least is encouraging to me.

Teiser: You have not used the word "logic" ever.

Miles: In what relation?

Teiser: In your analysis of ideas and the use of words.

Miles: Okay. Well, I could. Would you like me to try? [Laughter] First what I was interested in was what you call lexical. It was words and their associations and how they're used, how frequency of use tells something about the writer. If those words are connected in any way, basically the way you'd connect them would be grammatical; like you'd have parts of speech, you'd have a subject and a predicate and modifiers and conjunctions and so forth. For a long time I stayed away from conjunctions because the writers in the field said, "We must divide reference words from nonreference words," and prepositions and conjunctions were nonreference. That was a big mistake that I tried to rectify in Style and Proportion, because nonreference words are heavy, heavy, heavy, both with connotation and reference and all sorts of implications. So I accepted too many assumptions early and had to go back and learn about that all fairly late. But lately I have done more with nonreference terms, what they call function terms, and those lead to more studies of structure, of construction, and that'd be grammar--how the parts work together to make the whole.

Miles: Then logic would be how the statements work together. That is, if this is true, then is that true? If all men are mortal, and Socrates is a man, then is it true that Socrates is mortal? In other words, you're relating one statement with another statement. Logic is the relation of statement to statement. Sometimes people say that logic is the relation of statement to verifiable reality, and that's true; that is an interest. You are talking about, "If this is true, then is that true?" and you have to talk about truth. But basically the way logic works is the interrelation of statement to statement.

And then, the third item in that medieval education unit, which was called the Trivium, is rhetoric, and that's the relation of the sentence to the audience--the tone, the relation of the speaker to the audience.

All of these three enter in to what I am interested in. But I've done most at the lexical level and next most at the grammatical level, and so on up. I have done least at the logical level because when I get to the logical level, and it's in poetry, it's so strongly related to other interrelations of sentences, namely of lines and of aesthetic units of interrelation, that the logical interrelation just becomes one of many.

I did, however, do one strongly logical one, which was a study of John Donne's poetry, to point out that if you study the connectives in seventeenth century poetry, you find out that John Donne uses millions more connectives than anybody else. He's just an excessive user of connectives, and the seventeenth century uses more connectives than any other century. So he is the acme of the acme, and in this sense he does represent the century by being an extreme like this. Then if you see what those connections are, you see that a huge number are alternative or concessive or disjunctive connectives like "but," "yet," "though."

Then, after doing that, I then went back and analyzed the structure of his poems and found out that almost every poem--maybe 80 percent of his poetry (that's a guess)--turns on such a word, either at the beginning of the sonnet, for example, or the beginning of the sestet. So the way he writes is: extreme situation, extreme situation, extreme situation, but God will turn me to a simpler one. So his overstatements and his exaggerations and his very beautiful hyperboles are preparatory to a reservation, which he then gives in subordinating himself to the theological context. This structure characterizes his poetry and to some degree I think characterizes what you could call metaphysical poetry.

So I wrote another article about modern so-called metaphysical poetry, and how much of modern metaphysical poetry isn't at all. It doesn't contain this negative base, it doesn't contain these

Miles: alternatives, it doesn't contain this whole crucial aspect of Donne and the seventeenth century. But some few moderns do a little bit. Yeats does. Robert Penn Warren does. But it becomes an interesting touchstone then for defining a certain type of poetry which you can call logical in that particular kind of logic that sticks out because of his disjunctives.

But there are other interesting kinds. For example, there's the logic of comparison or alternation, either/or--choice. That's a very interesting kind of logic in poetry. Those words are all sitting there, waiting for me to get at them [laughing], after I get through with you.

Teiser: Here we are keeping you from them!

Miles: That's right! You're keeping me from either/or. [Laughter]

Teiser: You were saying that you combined or wished to combine some things. A case in point: You were just analyzing, speaking analytically, but also you were speaking of aesthetics.

Miles: Yes. Once you find out that Donne uses a lot of yets and buts and thoughts, then you need to ask, "In the patterning of his poems, how do they fit the pattern?" The patterning part is an aesthetic part. Why the linguists don't see this, and why we waste magazine article after magazine article on fussing about rule breaking, I don't know! [Laughter]

Teiser: There are about ten million other things to ask you. Shall we stop, or shall we ask you two or three more, or what?

Miles: I have to stop in about five minutes. But ask me and see if I can talk fast. I wrote several notes down here, but I don't--

Teiser: Do say them, then.

Miles: One name I wrote down that I wanted to mention in terms of all this-- recently has come out a book which is a great joy to me because it is working philosophically in the way that I believe right, which is fairly rare for me. It's a new book in the last ten years. It's called Structuralist Poetics, and it's been of a certain kind of linguistic study which has dealt with substitutable elements in literature; that is, structures where you get paradigmatic substitutabilities, grammatical substitutabilities. In anthropology this is represented by Levi-Strauss; you can have one kind of hero substituted for another, one kind of episode substituted in a hero's life for another. In grammar it can be that you can substitute a pronoun for a noun, and so on and so on. (This is too rough and ready.) But this has also troubled critics in America because

Miles: they're not very enthusiastically structuralist in the abstract way, and they haven't done much with it. In teaching the seminar in modern critical theory, I'm always finding the frustration of the students who want to learn about it but then say, "So what?" after they've learned about it, and don't find it very useful in their inquiries.

Now, this fine book called Structuralist Poetics is by Jonathan Culler, whose father was a professor at Yale and did an article very influential in my life, a critical essay on Bysshe (who's an eighteenth century author, a great interesting transitional force). Jonathan Culler teaches in England, and this book has come out--it's a couple of years old--and it's really cheering to me because what it draws from--de Saussure and linguistic studies and the structuralists and the whole Russian formalism and all the things we've been working among for the last two decades--what it draws from that is the function of language as providing a community of resources of thoughts, beliefs, values, and thus a kind of competence in the people who use it to understand and agree with and share with each other. These could be the poets of an era, for example. So the sense of community of resources resting in language, making for greater communication and greater share of values, underlies the studies that I've done in relating a poet to poet and time to time, and extends the New Critical idea that you stress just one autonomous poem. It breaks up the idea of autonomy, and it goes to the idea of continuity, and while it doesn't stress artistic and aesthetic patterning, it could, obviously. So it leaves room for what I would like to do, or have done, in a way that hardly any other theory ever has. So that's a blessing to me and is the sense of language that I have in relation to literature--that language and literature are both resources from which individuals draw, and which they draw not only as individuals but as groups and schools and types and trends and mostly just as temporal communities or more spatial communities.

That's where I started out, asking about how you define the individuality of a poet in Wordsworth, for example. What I quickly got into, you define his individuality in terms of his relation to other poets through the language that they all stressed. So you see we get back to home base there very nicely.

[end tape 2, side 1]

INTERVIEW V -- 4 August 1977

Public Contexts

[begin tape 1, side 1]

- Teiser: I didn't know if this was an inadvertent omission last time, or if there just wasn't anything special to be said. When we were talking about the department, I don't think you said anything about Mark Schorer.
- Miles: I did the time before, remember? When I talked about Gordon McKenzie and Mark Schorer and I doing the anthology and so on. My main connection with Mark was in working on ideas together, and criticism and so forth. I suppose I could have mentioned him--you mean as chairman of the department?
- Teiser: Yes.
- Miles: I seldom saw him in that role. We had a series of very good chairmen, and he was one of them. But as I remember he wasn't an initiator particularly; he just, you know, sort of held the fort.
- Teiser: Did the chairmanship then rotate instead of earlier--
- Miles: Always the dean is supposed to ask the department whom it would like to have as chairman every three to five years, and that's what usually happens. What I mean to say, in my memory that's the way it's been.
- Teiser: But before that, people held the position longer.
- Miles: Yes. I probably mentioned Henry Smith quite a bit more than Mark because he did more initiating. We had more crises during his administration that were interesting, like the linguistic fight. He later went on to be on committees that I was involved with, and so on. I just actually saw Mark much more as a friend than as an administrator.

- Teiser: Another thing was the effect of the sentiment that I think came from Governor Reagan's office, that teachers should teach and let all that publishing stuff go; that that wasn't really what they were supposed to do.
- Miles: I followed Willard Farnham's idea that publishing was a very important wider form of teaching.
- Teiser: I think we did not discuss it in relation to the state government pressure. Didn't they actually put pressure on people?
- Miles: Well, it's always there, and it's worse now than ever. It's much worse now than it was with Reagan, with Governor [Edmund G., Jr.] Brown and [John D.] Vasconcellos and Willie Brown and the whole problem of affirmative action.
- Teiser: Why does affirmative action enter into it?
- Miles: When you bring up any other criterion except discovery of new knowledge, you're in the soup! We are really in the soup with them because they have all sorts of different ideas, like helping the poor and getting new standards of knowledge and value and learning, and developing a sense that knowledge is a dangerous thing, that intellect is anti-soul and, oh, everything you can think of we are now getting thrown at us. I'm not sure you want me to talk about it because it takes an awful lot of time to unravel. [Laughter]
- Teiser: I was just wondering, in perspective, if this point of view had actually cut down on most people's publishing and if it made it more difficult for you to do scholarly work.
- Miles: You're talking especially about the Reagan administration?
- Teiser: Well, beginning in the Reagan administration and continuing until now.
- Miles: It's hard to think of it in those terms.
- Teiser: Then I'm misstating it.
- Miles: No, no. [Pause]
- Teiser: Let me go way around the other side of it, then. Am I correct that during the Reagan administration there was some attempt to make quantitative analysis of teaching--how many hours people taught, how many hours they were in their offices to counsel students and so forth--and to increase the number of hours?

Miles: Oh, I see. Well, this is all media stuff. This has nothing to do with us. This is what you read in the newspaper.

Teiser: Then you say what really did occur--

Miles: Robert Gordon Sproul was a businessman, but he was really dedicated to the frontiers of research and to making this a state university that was a big research place, especially in the big sciences, of course, but in the arts also. The arts never had the money spent on them, but they struggled along, and he backed them whenever the thought came to his mind. For example, in one of the leading anthologies of poetry for the United States, the one edited by Hayden Carruth, who was editor of Poetry magazine, about a sixth of the poetry comes from the University of California and environs. That suggests the strong productivity of this place in the arts as well as in science. Sproul was back of that combination, especially when it was mediated by the good chairmen that we had, and Governor [Earl] Warren. So we always had a sense of total backing and a chance to do anything we wanted to try. That was the whole quality of Berkeley as I knew it from 1940 to 1960, was that push forward on all fronts, which included publishing and teaching, and there was no split between them.

Tom Parkinson used to say that when you went down the halls of Wheeler at six o'clock at night, all English Department doors were open, and at every desk you saw a professor leaning over a desk with a student's paper before him and the student listening and asking questions about the paper. That's the picture that I have of the English Department of Wheeler Hall teaching. That was the way Tom got shot by the mad student; as you know, he shot the bullet right through the graduate student and hit Tom too.* That is the picture: we were that close together with our students. A sad metaphor.

We didn't do any less work because we were researching. It was one whole big thing that we were doing, and it all went together in the sense it was the same subject matter but in the sense that we were teaching on these various levels, both students in classes and in office and students in Extension and then to the people we wrote for and published for in the journals and magazines.

I doubt there was any split or problem there until the sixties. In the sixties what got to us, of course, was the problem of much weaker administration. We lost Ben Lehman and other good administrators, and we lost the working with the president. Clark Kerr was a good man, but Clark Kerr was so busy working on the growth of the University, and tremendous growth became a problem also. He turned, I think, away--well, he was pretty good still, however. I remember getting little notes from Kerr and things in

*The shooting actually took place when Mr. Parkinson had his office in Dwinelle Hall.

Miles: his own writing; he was very devoted to keeping the faculty in mind. But in the mid-sixties we lost him too. I think that the loyalty oath with the Regents, that was a great big fat distraction, and the faculty began realizing that they had problems with recognition. Then the dismissal of Kerr, which was another example of Regent lack of understanding.

These were the things that brought to mind that maybe others didn't see us as we saw ourselves, that is, very diligent, hard working, and involved.

That's when we had a great deal of violence on campus, which I've always felt was created mostly by Regential and administrative blindness. But we had to turn a lot of our time just to choking back the tear gas. This was very distracting. And we had to teach off campus as well as on. We often had to teach two sections of every class because some people wanted to meet on campus and some didn't, and we had to handle both; we couldn't disregard the minority in terms of the majority.

So if that's the kind of thing you mean, yes. But this is administrative failure to back up faculty functions, and that was just tremendous in the sixties. It was because they didn't understand what was going on, and they didn't sympathize, and they didn't cope. There were a few Regents, of course, who did wonderfully well, and there were a few administrators who did, notably Lincoln Constance. But they were rare. So we did lose a lot of momentum there, except that we also gained a good deal through the students, who were so constructive and so active and so vital that I suppose we gained back from them more than we lost from the administration.

Then I suppose Reagan came in, and Brown, both of whom are highly anti-intellectual people. They're highly abstract; they want grassroots, they want trade courses, they want job preparation, and they want opportunity for minorities in their sense of opportunity, which is instant jobs, and is all very alien to a faculty function--it's not the job of a university faculty to get instant jobs.

So we have had to spend a tremendous lot of distracting time on going up to Sacramento, trying to state our case. A wonderful physicist like Bill [William B.] Fretter has jeopardized his career to sit in legislative chambers to fight the poison, really, that comes from some legislators. I think on the whole the faculty has tried to hold its own and has still worked very hard in both ways.

Miles: You ask about quantitative figures. Well, that's hard to talk about. You wouldn't believe it, but accounting, computing, and so forth has been very messy in the past thirty years, and lots of these headlines that say, "Faculty-Class Ratio Falls" turn out to be some wrong computation by some secretary or some machine. Then you go up to Sacramento and say, "Look, fellows. Actually it's risen," and they say, "Oh, great," but that doesn't get in the papers. Much of this whole hassle is really absurd. They're trying now to get a formula for measurement which is stabilized and secure and checkable and so on. Alan Post everybody says is a very good man, and the budget directors. In other words, there's perfectly good faith among the intelligent people on both sides.

It's just that when President [Charles J.] Hitch tried to turn over to a very different kind of computational administration, I think one thing that happened is he turned it over to people who didn't know how to do it, and we got fantastic computational reports that had nothing to do with reality, which nobody recognized until last year. Things like that.

So again, I'm not sure we ought to go into all this because it gets so complicated, and--

Teiser: You've given us a sense of it.

Miles: The important thing is, all through the sixties and seventies I lost much faith in what I would have called one of my central beliefs before, and that was the First Amendment. That is, I think freedom of the press is such a vicious force when uncontrolled, as it has been by good people in this area. When somebody like Jim Benét for many years on "Newsroom"* begins his report on Berkeley, whatever it might be about, with a canned sound of kids yelling and screaming, you know you've got distortion. That kind of distortion I guess does grow; the distorted complex, the "What is the university for, and what are we doing here?" We have so little validity now in the media and in public concept that my only hope lies, as I said before, that the children of the sixties, when they become adult leaders, will revise the tremendous distortions.

Teiser: They're now just really getting firmly into their careers.

Miles: Yes. Some of them are already good. We already see them in action. Some of my students I already see in legislative action, and it's very heartening to see how they're turning things around a little bit. It isn't only the University, it's the whole public school system that's had terrible problems with the new committee legislation and so on. Look at--what was his name?--the head of education that we had for years and graduated anybody so they

*On television station KQED, San Francisco.

Miles: wouldn't get out of their peer group. Again, [Wilson] Riles is trying to turn that around. So there's a good deal of hope. But we lost so much ground with--what was his name? I can't think of that terrible--

Teiser: That bigot who was--

Miles: That was the head of the school system here for a long time.* Riles I think is a big hope. And [Mayor Tom] Bradley in L.A. is a big hope. I think a lot of the black leaders, for example, are going to turn around and fight this cheap entrance to universities which is now being fostered, and cheap degrees and all that, and quantitative mass control stuff. But at the moment it's very, very discouraging. I think if we didn't all like teaching so much [laughing], we'd be worse discouraged than we are. But where there's usually some kid to talk to who feels he's learning something, that makes up for it.

During the late sixties or early seventies, as an example, we had some Regents who were very strongly fighting against the faculty because they felt they were--I don't know what, really. I don't know what their cause was. Oh, they were anti-student-uprising, of course. But I used to get telephone calls from all over the state, from former students saying, "I've just been to a Rotary meeting, and Edward Teller came and talked to us about your university and his. He asked for a moment of silent prayer from all of us, for the sake of our grandchildren, that the University would not be as subversive as it was as he was talking." And he said, "That was very effective against you people up there" (because they always say "you people up there;" that's their phrase for us). He [Teller] would say, for example, "Do you know what it means when a professor does field work? It means he's out on the golf course." Now, when that goes to every Rotary Club throughout the state, noon after noon during the Cambodia crisis, you've got a problem! We never knew how to solve it. For a while Henry Smith was on a truth squad that tried to go around following up. But you can't do that; just like restatements in the paper--nobody reads them. They're not on the first page any more. The power of the press to falsify and not retract is so total that I simply can't know what to think about the First Amendment.

Teiser: Is it any different than it was?

*Max Rafferty.

Miles: I don't remember this in the forties and fifties. I don't remember this--of course, Sproul was very popular with the press. That was still a time when there was growth and interest and I think a kind of intellectual strength. The legislature was very proud of the University as one of the best public universities in the country. We participated in that pride and growth, and Sproul was vocal about it. A faculty member for those twenty years felt very much appreciated, and a faculty member in the last twenty years has not felt appreciated--I mean by those kinds of people. As far as the student goes, it's okay.

Teiser: Earlier, you university people weren't much in the news; you weren't there to be distorted.

Miles: That's right. The media weren't--they didn't even call it media in those days. We didn't have much television. If you had television, it was kind of Edward R. Murrow showing how the illiterate could learn to write. It was very touching and, again, it was pro-intellect not anti-intellect. It was not using the university as a kind of football for controversy and excitement and scare headlines and so forth.

Teiser: Thank you for talking about that. I know that you simplified it.

Miles: Well, it's probably a lot deeper than I could get there. I probably could say, aside from Kerr, who certainly, as I say, had a big job on his hands to integrate and handle growth, aside from that, we then had chancellors and presidents who were not coming from California and I think simply didn't understand or didn't really have much interest in California as a state or the function of California as a state, or the legislature. I think the legislators got turned off from all these people. We had a series of--what?--four or five of them, people to whom we didn't speak, who didn't speak to us, whom we never saw, who were always out of town if there was a problem, who didn't see--there was, seemed to be, lack of communication. I'm undoubtedly speaking too bitterly about our administration during those years, and I can merely say that this is truly my view. If I'd been closer or farther away, I would have probably seen extenuating circumstances. But in the middle distance of the faculty, it was a bad scene.

Even now it's hard, because now we have a president who is a faculty member, and a Californian, and this is a fine thing. But we have chancellors who aren't, to some degree. Now that I'm more closely involved in what they think and do, I realize sometimes how far away they do seem from our problems. But I think things are going to get much better in this way. I think Bill Fretter has been quite a hero, and our president, and I think people have so deeply realized how bad the problems are now, that I think the problems you raise have been now in a sense realized and maybe will be faced more seriously.

Miles: You probably didn't read in the papers that the great scandal about something called DSIR [Data System of Instructional Resources], which was all the data for the whole set of campuses, all this data was reported by a group of officials with the initials D-S-I-R (I don't know what that all stood for). It was a data reporting and computing analysis, and it all turned out to be false! It didn't use proper statistical modifications and so forth, and these guys had the power--the power, again, of the computer--and Mr. Hitch had instituted this as a good thing and it was supposed to be. I don't know the history--where he got it and why they were so bad and why they weren't checked on. So we've been living a lie [laughing] for about ten years, I guess. We've said over and over, "Look, people, this can't be true! It just isn't true, it isn't true." They say, "The facts are before you on the computer," and there's this whole loss of human relations.

Anyway, let's say merely that the trouble with asking professors to record the hours that they work is that it often turns out to be sixty hours a week, and this is no joke! I mean, everybody laughs, but it's no joke--we do. You have to. You can't do all your teaching and all your research without working weekends and summers too. So we report this, and then everybody says, "Baloney! That can't be true." So it's one of those absurd situations that we really like what we're doing so we really do an awful lot of it. We're not getting time and a half for overtime.

Teiser: You work on projects on your own time during the summers, you said.

Miles: Sure.

Teiser: Are you able to while you're teaching?

Miles: You can do little things while you're teaching. You can do little bits, sort of work toward a cumulative effect in the summer.

Teiser: Do you read all the time? Do you just read regularly every day, or what?

Miles: Yes. Sure.

Teiser: Summer, winter--

Miles: Sure. All the time. Despite that, the amount of reading that I had to catch up with at the end of this June, I just finished last Friday, which is about the first of August. And that was just reading that had to be done immediately; it was manuscripts of former students--nothing to do with current classroom work, but manuscripts from friends and former students who wrote to me and asked me to check them. You do an awful lot of consulting and conferring with people in all that, and books that I had to read in

Miles: order to get the answers to questions I was looking for myself. So I only got caught up on the most pressing work on the first of August. So this morning for the first time I'm reading a book that I want to read, which is still a scholarly work. It's a book on the ballad which I want to read, but it's still scholarly. Oh, I did read one book of fiction.

Teiser: Do you read fiction for pleasure?

Miles: I used to, after I got through finals, go down to the circulating library and get about half a dozen books of fiction and try to slow down my speed. I read very fast, and I'd get too wound up when I was at the end of the year. So I would read these fiction books fast, and slow down my speed. But circulating libraries aren't what they used to be, either. [Laughter]

Teiser: We have paperbacks now.

Miles: Yes, we have paperbacks, right.

Teiser: But you don't read for pleasure just right along?

Miles: I have to fight to read for pleasure. I have to fight off phone calls and extra manuscripts.

Teiser: You said you were reading manuscripts of former students, that you feel interest and obligation--?

Miles: It's a big burden and it's a big pleasure too. To have your students keep writing is of course what you want. This extends everything we've been saying into the second generation. And this might be a good place to continue from what we were talking about last time, because I did want to mention, when we were talking about scholarship and so on, and writing and so on, that this is true: graduate students that work with you, you like to have them go on too, not just write their dissertations and vanish into outer space. I've had maybe a couple of dozen graduate students, and my great pride is that they are not apprentices in any way; none of them have ever written books like what I write, or have used the same methods, but have used very different methods of their own and have worked in all sorts of fields and periods of time. This gives me great delight, that each one is very much unlike the others.* I guess maybe about a fourth of them have done a lot of good publishing, which is an unusually high average. So when they send stuff to me to read and check on, of course I'm very pleased. It takes an awful lot of hard work to keep up with all that; the better they are, the more hard work it takes.

*See Appendix.

Miles: I say that I just this morning started reading something for pleasure, but also this morning I got two letters from two very good former Ph.D.'s, both saying they were sending me manuscripts to read. I won't get to finish this book before their manuscripts come. [Laughing] But that's nice. I'm both pleased and somewhat oppressed. I guess all of us have the problem which we can't seem to define to other people, about the accrual of responsibility to students as you go along.

I remember very vividly during the forties when we first developed--again, when our department was first shaping up in its new shape, and after the war when we were thinking of getting jobs for students. We placed our first Ph.D.'s at Michigan and Princeton, and Larry Benson at Harvard, and Bill Steinhoff at Michigan, David Green at Princeton, Sheridan Baker at Michigan, and so on. This was very exciting, because Berkeley hadn't done much of this reciprocity of placements before, and so we were much interested too in having them publish.

When in 1968 we had the hundredth anniversary at the University, it was such a bad time for violence that the University hesitated to have any ceremonies because they would have been perhaps occasions for more violence. So the University played down in a very timorous way its own anniversary. But the English Department decided that that was wrong. So we asked the University for some money to have our own celebration, and they figured we wouldn't get too violent. What we decided to do was to invite a dozen of our most distinguished graduates to come to a week's celebration and have a dinner and hear them. It was fun! It was a really nice idea. We got a big list of these and then had a vote as to which ones we would bring. We didn't have any great fights; it was pretty clear who they were. There were two or three of these first Ph.D.'s who had worked out very well. Also there were some poets that had done well, like Bill Stafford and George Starbuck. And the George P. Elliotts, and the Tapers, Bernard and Phyllis, who were working on the New Yorker and who had been editors of our literary magazines here.

So it was in the early or mid-forties that we picked up this sense of distinction, of publication and action in our own students. There too, some of them left and became extremely good teachers, like Al Hollingsworth, who never actually finished his Ph.D. But there again, I think mostly we wanted a double standard of hoping they'd be good teachers and good publishers too. That's the way it worked for many of them, a source of pleasure to the department.

Developments in Poetry

Miles: Then I might go back from scholarship to poetry, saying that at the same time, in the forties, we began a new era for poetry in that in the thirties I'd been talking about Yvor Winters and Ann Winslow and her book. By the way, an anecdote, I got a letter today too from somebody I know, Don Bogen, who said, "I'm writing a book on Roethke. I'm working on the Roethke material up here in Seattle, and I ran into your poetry in this anthology where he is too." (This was Trial Balances.) He said, "It's so amazing to read your early poetry that I thought I'd write you." So that was it. I keep noticing on these days that we talk how things keep coming back.

Ann Winslow got her M.A. and left for Wyoming to teach and raise dogs (which was a nice switch). In about 1940, when I came back to teach, there was a new group. It seemed new, because I'd been away for three years. There were these people, a very nice group of people studying, doing graduate work--George P. Elliott and the Bill Steinhoffs and the Tapers and the Ham [Hamilton] Tylers, the Benbow Ritchies--all friends. The Fretters were in this group, the one I mentioned who is now active in physics and in the University. And the Jack Murchios. It seems that as I remember things they're clusters; I don't know why these clusters happen, but this was a very good cluster of friends that I got to know. George Elliott helped me, and I suppose that was one way I got to know them. He drove for me for a while. We used to meet in the evenings and talk about whatever it was we thought important. I think we were still talking about how to discuss a poem, which was still a very hot subject in those days. I remember that we just nearly fell all over ourselves on the subject of [Gerard Manley] Hopkins's "Windhover," but that's kind of a vague memory; I can't imagine us doing it now.

Anyway, that group was active in graduate study. Then, at the same time, we had Robert Duncan and Jack Spicer in poetry, a fellow by the name of George Leite, who started a couple of magazines. One was called New Rejections, and this was in reaction to New Directions which was just becoming very strong and active and well known in the forties. Then he did another one called Circle which was pretty important because it circulated throughout the world, and we had exchanges with some of those jokester magazines in Australia, and we got a sense of poetry's being international. Leite was a tremendous entrepreneur; he had a bookstore on Telegraph Avenue--some angel angeled it for him--where the Eclair Bakery now is. That provided a very, very active steering center. I remember

Miles: at one time somebody said, "Where's the Phi Beta office around this campus?" And somebody else said, "Oh, down the hall," and he pointed it out. And they said, "Oh no, that's the poetry office," and it was actually both. Phi Betes were poets and vice versa. [Laughter]

Speaking of New Directions, James Laughlin came out here and was so impressed with all this activity, he said there was no place in the country, except maybe Madison, that had this kind of poetic activity. That was in 1941, maybe, something like that. He published my second book of poems. The first had been published by Macmillan; it was a sequel to Trial Balances. Then Laughlin started this series called the "Poet of the Month" or the year, or something.

Teiser: The month.

Miles: Was it the month?

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: So I think somebody asked me to send to that, and I did, my second book, the second collection that I had, and he turned it down. That didn't surprise me particularly, but what was interesting was that a little later I got a letter from him saying, "Delmore Schwartz is one of our editors here, and Delmore Schwartz happened to read your manuscript, which I was sending back, and said, 'No, we should publish this'." So I'm very happy to think that I was rescued by Delmore Schwartz, because I liked his first book of poetry very much; it was called In Dreams Begin Responsibilities.

Laughlin in those days was sort of a traveling salesman for his own work. He came out and we had a lot of fun, because he decided my titles were no good (my titles are never any good). So when I decided this would be called Poems on Several Occasions, which showed my academic relation to Bud Bronson and the eighteenth century, he said, "We'll have to name these poems for various occasions," and so we started doing that--"On the Occasion of Lighting a Fire in the Grate," and so on. We sat around the apartment that I lived in then, and made up these titles, and really had a very good time. He was a nice person.

Muriel Rukeyser was here for a while, and Octavio Paz was here, and they decided this should be the translation capital of the country, and everything was really humming.

Now that I had another book in the mid-forties, I decided I ought to--well, New Directions was doing other types of things then, as I remember; I mean I don't remember discussing it with

Miles: them. But I decided I'd like to have this published by Reynal and Hitchcock because I liked Karl Shapiro's first book so much, and they'd published it. So I sent that to them and they accepted it.

Teiser: Which one was that?

Miles: That was called Local Measures, and that was about 19--

Teiser: Forty-six.

Miles: Yes. So things were very prosperous for poetry in the forties, as they were in other ways too. This was, remember, a heavy wartime, and it made people very conscious of the world around us. We were bound to Berkeley because of gas rationing. We were also bound to kind of a cave-like atmosphere because we couldn't have lights on at night. We were blacked out, and students would rove the streets throwing stones anywhere they could see a gleam of light, and yelling, "Lights out! Lights out." So there was a sort of reason why there was all this intensity, because there was an intensity of focus out in the town; people weren't going away for the weekend, and they weren't wasting much time. If they were conscientious objectors, they were wondering how that would turn out, and were working meantime in hospitals and so on, and later were interned up at Waldport, Oregon, where Bill Everson and Bill Stafford and Gary Snyder and others were; that became a nest of singing birds up there. Then they all came back here in the late forties, after becoming friends, and they published a magazine called Interim and another one called Ark with Sanders Russell, and so on. There are just infinite names I could mention, and groups and clusters and interrelations here. There's all this sense of, "Well, if we can make it through the war, we certainly can make it through the peace." In other words, we'll have all this stuff ready to go, if peace comes.

I remember it was very hard for me to get to classes because I had used student help, and the students were all drafted by that time, all the able-bodied ones. But I did have a boy that was in one of the armed forces on campus, and the armed forces captain very kindly let him help me, because he had a car. But he had to come on campus at eight o'clock in the morning. So all that year I had to come on to campus at eight o'clock, and my class wasn't till nine. So I parked outside of LSB, Life Sciences Building, and had beautiful times watching the dawn come between eight and nine [laughing], and the students come to class. It was a very lovely time. I tried the stunt then of telling myself to write a poem every Thursday morning, or every morning--I can't remember what--to see if I could be a serious kind of person who sat down at the typewriter every morning and wrote something willy-nilly. That was my experiment with that, and I did. I wrote a poem every whatever-it-was, Thursday or

Miles: Tuesday or both, for that span of time. A year later I realized there were just as many decent ones as there would have been if I had written without schedule. In other words, I had to throw more than usual away. So I told myself I was right, that I shouldn't worry too much about regularity and timing and that. But with all these stresses and difficulties, the fact that if you did get away for a weekend--I remember we went either to the Russian River or to Los Gatos when we got enough stamps, maybe once a semester--then our guys who were soldiers and could get leave would come and stay with us. That was both sort of a harrowing time--I mean my brothers and my friends, the fellows that I studied with who were students or teachers elsewhere, would come and spend time with us at either of these places, and we'd hear all about the horrors of the war. It was a time of great tension, but also a lot of drive, I suppose, to make up for that tension.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Teiser: The forties was a period which began many things, then, in poetry, wasn't it? Are we today still feeling and seeing the people that started there?

Miles: Well, yes and no. Part of it began in the thirties, of course, where Winters and Rexroth were big figures, and Kenneth Patchen and Kenneth Fearing, and of course Jeffers. And as I showed you in Trial Balances, that was the book of the mid-thirties and that is full of people still working today. So I suppose if you looked back to the twenties you could even see that stuff began there. That's the trouble with me, I was too involved to notice. But it doesn't seem so; it seems to me that the twenties was more of a time turned, looking backwards. I think part of this is perspective.

But then what was added in the forties was the generation of Leite-Duncan-Spicer et al. Spicer was a very interesting person who's much worshipped by poets today. He was in my poetry class with five charming girls, and they did him a world of good. He later turned away from the whole Berkeley scene, as did Robert Duncan, because they felt opposed to it--that it was too academic. But I know those girls did Jack Spicer a lot of good.

Another thing we did during those years was to have, to continue the poetry meetings that Ann Winslow had had. These now we had in the daytime because there were night blackouts. We had them on Friday afternoons in Wheeler Hall, and a hundred people would come! Again, for lack of other things to do, but also out of interest.

Richard Eberhart was over at the Alameda air base teaching gunnery, and he would come over. He'd published a couple of books by that time. He'd come over and talk to the students. We had a lot of free talks by good people those afternoons. Henry Miller

Miles: was a fighting phrase; I believe somebody wanted Henry Miller and somebody else said we couldn't have him. I don't remember what that was all about. (I guess he wouldn't come, for one thing.) Tom Parkinson and a poet by the name of Leonard Wolf and I ran those for three or four years, and they developed to be so popular that we even had sections in addition to this general meeting. Talking about contact hours, contact hours were just limitless that we spent on this stuff, and very, very invigorating. Later we had some quarrels among ourselves because the different poets pulled away and wanted to teach poetry in different ways. And toward the middle of the decade the war got pretty strained too, so we gave those up finally.

At the same time, then--about the same time--the chairman, Ben Lehman, decided to have another kind of poetry thing going on. In Morrison Room in the library he started Monday afternoon poetry readings, which weren't like ours. He thought ours were too much hoopla. He wanted just quiet poetry readings. Every four o'clock there would be somebody there, and anybody who wanted to drop by Morrison at four o'clock on Mondays would hear poetry read aloud. He started that under the pressure of the war. These were mostly members of the English Department. Just every year we'd make out a schedule and the people would be there--no fuss and feathers. Just year after year. That went on for about thirty years.

Teiser: Was it a different kind of poetry read there, then?

Miles: Oh yes. They read traditional work they were fond of. It wasn't modern. On the whole, it was whatever the poet, the reader, wanted to read. But the idea was it was from the treasury of English literature. There was usually some Chaucer, some Milton, and whatever poet was much liked by the reader. Also we did have some original poetry there. During those years, I read probably three times there my own, and others of us did. The most elaborate we ever got, I think, is that we did a reading aloud of Samson Agonistes with various characters, and we had an interesting reading aloud of the Bible in a Greek version, an English version, and a Hebraic version. There were little variations, but it was the steadiness of it that was really so amazing.

That was suspended on the whole after thirty years because the trucks that went up past the library, in front of the library, were so heavy and made so much noise that you couldn't hear. So then we moved to Wheeler, the Commons Room, where we've been having them in the last couple of years. There they've grown so popular that there's poetry read in there almost every day one way or another, and they're in Morrison too. Now all you have to do is sign up if you want to read there, and go and read. In other words, from four o'clock on, the Commons Room is open to sign-ups for any kind of literary use. They're either speakers who are planned, or there are students who want to read, or whatever.

Teiser: Read their own work or others'?

Miles: Read their own work or others', either one. So that has had a remarkable steadiness, with a remarkable lack of fuss.

When the war ended--I remember one ending; I'm not quite sure which ending it was. It was probably the Pacific sector, because both my brothers were in it. So I probably cared more deeply, and most of my friends were in the Pacific sector too. I remember the kind of tremendous moment. I remember it was about five o'clock in the afternoon that we heard the news. It was like a marvelous dawn. I had the feeling of great emotion that all this work that we had been doing for this future, that that future was now with us, would dawn upon us; and that all the pressure was off and everything would just grow naturally. Somebody had put up the window blinds. It was a marvelous feeling of potentiality.

We had built this little house by that time, under a civilian permit for it, because my brothers were in the war. So everything seemed gung-ho, ready to go.

It seems very sad to look back on that and to think that on the one hand, yes, we had maybe three, four years of marvelous accord, exactly what we all expected, from maybe '45 to '49, something like that. The GIs came back; they were great students; as I mentioned before, the campus had twenty-three thousand but it seemed like three thousand because everybody was so friendly. It was really kind of a heavenly time. It seems sad, doesn't it, to think that that all was wiped out by the Regent loyalty oath attempt--in other words, by McCarthy. McCarthy wiped out that paradise, and it never happened again. I think he did it pretty single-handed, though you must remember, I suppose, that that feeling of doubt and fear was in many a heart and that's why he was able to capitalize on it.

So then we moved into a period--in the fifties, maybe the last year of the forties--maybe for three or four years then--of our own war. Real embattlement again, in a different way, with people being hurt and having heart attacks and leaving town and getting jobs elsewhere and being in lawsuits. I can't remember my other functions at this time at all. We were all so emotionally involved, I can't remember anything about those years. Oh yes, heavy teaching, and some community politics.

Teiser: Did you go on writing poetry as well as teaching?

Miles: Yes, I went on writing poetry. I know I finished up--I suppose in a kind of mesmerized way--I finished up my Continuity of Poetic Language, and I went on writing poetry. Quite a bit of that was poetry about the war. Then Reynal and Hitchcock had folded by that

Miles: time, so I sent this around--I forget whether I had troubles there or not. But then Indiana [University Press] wrote me, since Indiana had an angel for publishing poetry, and they started a poetry series. The editor was Samuel Yellen of Indiana; I think he wrote me. And I sent my book there, which came out in maybe '55 or '56. He was the editor, a very nice editor.

Teiser: That's Prefabrications, '55.

Miles: Prefabrications, yes. So that book was very intensely about Berkeley and about the surrounding pressures. Then the sense of work was now sort of harder because you had a sense that the students were more skeptical of learning, and you had that realization that things weren't going to open up as grandly as one might have thought.

Then, at the end of the fifties, there came a tremendous--what would be the word?--revelation of what those difficulties were going to be, as the Un-American Activities Committee got stronger and stronger, as we had the ruckus at San Francisco City Hall with HUAC, and as the students developed an anti-authoritarian spirit.

Anyway, that was when I had such a hard time teaching poetry, because they were so cruel to each other, so destructive to each other's work. I said to the students that it seemed to me every time they liked a poem it had the word--they refused to accept a poem unless it had the word "scream" in it. You see, there was this incipience of the violence we talk about now that came very vividly in at that point. It would be interesting to trace back the whole nature of that blood-thirstiness that came into poetry and to the poetry students.

Then when I said, "Why is it that you like poems that have the word 'scream' and obscenities in them?" one boy very intensely said, "Miss Miles, I don't know any work more obscene than yours. A poet that thinks he can write a poem like a Christmas package, and tie some pretty tissue paper around it, and tie a string around it, then tie it in a knot, and then hand it to somebody--what's more obscene than that!" And they all said, "Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah." [Laughter] So it was very helpful to me. From then on I had no trouble, because from then on I understood what bothered them. I mean, I don't understand why it bothered them, but it was clear what bothered them: easy solutions, simple answers, things that looked neat and so on, they just couldn't tolerate.

Teiser: Do you think it's valid for anyone to think that your poems present easy solutions?

Miles: On the surface they could have thought that, yes, because my poems have very definite endings to them, and they just didn't want definite endings.

Then my selected poems came out in 1960, and it was a rather desolate moment, because [laughing] here were my poems. "Maybe I'll never write any more. Here I'm a very ancient lady of fifty now, and this is probably the last book I'll write, and they're out--they're gone with the wind." This was the feeling I had about that volume, because this was the feeling students had about them.

But as time developed, two different things happened. One is, I gradually learned. I just sat around listening to them. I didn't try to control them, I didn't try to--many of them came to me and said, "You've got to handle this," and I'd say, "I don't know how to handle this." So I just sat around and listened and let them yell at each other. And as I said, many of them have apologized to each other since.

Then further, some of them were very, very good. A fellow by the name of Gerald Butler was an amazingly good poet of that generation. A fellow by the name of Lyman Andrews, who wasn't that violent by any means but belonged in that era. And Diane Wakoski, in whom you can see some of that icon-breaking quality, was of that period. I remember when we asked Donald Davie to come and talk to us, and he talked about meter. I was sitting in the back of the room and he was up in front talking about meter, and the class stood up and said, "Pardon us. We're going now," right in the middle of his talk. So I said, "Those of you who feel you have to, who can't bear to listen to these words about meter, go ahead. But that doesn't need to be all of you. Don't feel forced by mob action." About four people stayed. But dramatic things like that were always happening.

As time developed, there was a tremendous change. I mentioned that there were two things that happened. One was that things simply wore down. And the other thing was that as there was more pressure on the students from others, they turned to the faculty for sympathy and assistance. Or perhaps they were now different students, I don't know. But suddenly we found ourselves, many of us, playing a new role. I guess not all of us; it was very hard for some people now to teach. But for me it became just illuminatingly easy because now they felt they needed support, I understood them better, they felt I understood them better, and we moved back into Wheeler Hall. (We'd had ten bad years, as far as environment goes, in that ghastly Dwinelle Hall.) We moved back into Wheeler in '63, I think it was, and that made a more open atmosphere. So again we had some nice peaceful years till about '65 or '66 when the violence started again.

Miles: The room that I had was in the basement of Wheeler on the southwest side, which meant that it was in the line of fire. I think I already mentioned, that became a battleground for about five years. I was too dumb to realize I should have asked to move to another building. [Laughter] I didn't even realize that up in the Engineering Circle there wasn't all this going on that was going on in the humanities [area of campus]. I just thought it was, you know, part of the war.

Here came then another fascinatingly good group of students, again that I think of as a group. Paul Foreman and Hildie Spritser and Mary Dunlap and Janice Castro and others who are still working today in interesting aspects of teaching or law or poetry or publishing. Jim Tate became a department visitor, and a lot of people worked for him on a magazine called Cloud Marauder, which was very good and different. So again this embattlement had a certain kind of power to foster poetry and foster solidarity and enthusiasm. I've written lots of poems about all these things. Maybe I say them better there than here, maybe I don't. I've tried them out on some of my friends, and my friends don't think they go very well. So I don't know. It's a hard thing to capture, this feeling of osmosis that comes from a lot of people in a group. But that's what many of my classes had through the Vietnam and Cambodian years, where there was a lot of social concern, a lot of free writing, a lot of slap-happy writing but also a lot of strong writing too. This developed now the era of reading aloud and the poetry readings that you spoke of before.

Jack Niles is another good poet I should mention there who was awfully good, as Paul Foreman was and many of them were, at just making instant magazines of poetry, which we would sell and make money to use for leafletting purposes.

I then [laughing] fell in with this by trying some pamphlet poetry. Robert Hawley asked for some poems for a pamphlet for Oyez; Robert Hawley was publishing now doing Oyez. Cody's was there, so that had an influence, and the whole growth of paperbacks, of course, made a lot of good difference too. So then I tried a pamphlet called Civil Poems,* and the students liked that a lot better because it was more along their line of interest, and it was fun.

*Published by Oyez in 1966.

- Teiser: Did you choose the poems for it particularly because you thought they were pamphlet poems?
- Miles: No, no, not at all! I was just about to say, it was just the fun of writing poems to be published. I didn't choose; I didn't have any others to choose. Those were them.
- Teiser: Oh, you wrote those for the purpose?
- Miles: Yes. Yes. And that was a new experience. That's the nice thing about pamphlets. That's how the kids started out: "Let's do a pamphlet of poems. Okay. Everybody bring a poem by Monday."
- Teiser: You have one on the People's Park controversy in I think it's called "Green something."*
- Miles: Yes, there's that one too. I had a lot. The one I liked best was the one about how to play a soccer match. An awful lot of adrenalin went into that poem, I'll tell you. Anyway, these were all instant poems and instant publications, and it was fun, because it was new to me. I didn't have to save them up over a five-year span or so; they all got published right away. So much so that when the celebration of our centennial came along in 1968, I thought, "Aside from inviting people here, a nice thing to do would be to write some poems for the centennial." So I wrote a book of poems called Fields of Learning.** These were not emotionally loaded in the same way. They were poems about textbooks. Over a number of years, I had always read freshman textbooks for other courses so that I'd know what the students were reading. A lot of us did that; we'd help them do their exams in other courses by knowing what they were reading in other courses. I loved these basic freshman texts in physics and chemistry, and they all seemed to me to be illuminated with vitality. So a number of these I made into poems. The book is, as a whole, not a success. But I think there are three or four good poems in it, but most of them are too flat because the difficulty for me is that the subject matter to me is so illuminated I don't care if it's flat or not. But it doesn't mean as much to others as it means to me.

*Green Flag, People's Park Poetry, published by City Lights, San Francisco, in 1969. (Also poems in Street Poems and American Poems, student collections, and Peace and Gladness, edited by Doug Palmer. J.M.)

**Published by Oyez in 1968.

Miles: That book Robert Hawley had trouble with. He was glad to do it, but Graham Mackintosh, who was such a fine stand-by printer for Robert, was on the rocks at that particular moment and couldn't do it, and he couldn't find anybody to do it. Finally--I can't think who it was--some very nice poet (who could it have been?) typed it, and then they just did a photo offset. I had fun out of that too. I just made millions of copies and gave them to everybody I could think of, handed them out on campus, and sent them to all the administrators. I never got one acknowledgment from one single administrator. I sent them to lots of chairmen of departments and teachers of the courses that I was writing about. I got fascinating letters from teachers of physics and teachers of biology, and so on. Aside from the fact that I didn't turn it to any ceremonial purpose--the dedication was "In debt to Berkeley" and I had quite a lot of sentimental feeling about it--aside from the fact that Echo never answered back from anybody that represented Berkeley administratively and in relation to students, both of those pamphlets were lots of fun.

In the midst of that, then, I guess another book was published, is that right? I guess Kinds of Affection was published at that time.

Teiser: That was before, yes, '67.

Miles: This now was Wesleyan [University Press]. My books didn't sell very well, and so Indiana didn't want to do a paperback. I was now very struck with paperbacks, so they turned me down on the paperback, so they said I could try Wesleyan, and Wesleyan did Kinds of Affection. That had a fairly good response. This is a very happy thing, that I was feeling so dopey about--

Teiser: That was in both hardbound and paperback.

Miles: Yes, I guess so. But it was sort of funny to think that I was feeling so low in 1960 with my selected collected works, that was about it [laughing]--and then right after that I did so much new stuff that was fun and exciting and different. That is the positive side, I think, not only for me but for the campus. As I can't stress too often (I probably said this on the last reel), the marvelous vitality of those days, those years, of the students and their creative activities.

We had then people like Archie Ammons on campus and George Starbuck--all sorts of good writers, John Logan at St. Mary's with Jim Townsend. And very good relations with Thom Gunn, [Lawrence] Ferlinghetti, [Richard] Brautigan, Louis Simpson, Gary Snyder, who came and taught for us.

Miles: We did a lot of experimenting, inviting of new young black writers to campus. I'm not sure whether this was late sixties or early seventies, but we had Victor Hernandez Cruz, David Henderson, Ishmael Reed, Al Young, many more, and we worked very early--we had a committee in our department to get as many black writers as we could to visit us. We couldn't get them to stay permanently because, on the whole, they didn't want to be tied down. In the one or two cases where they would've, we didn't want them to be. But on the whole the best for us was to have visitors and to learn from them. George Barlow was another one, and Margaret Wilkerson (she's head of the Women's Center now). Anyway, we had all new kinds of poetry coming in to the picture now. So the sense of poetry in the seventies has been more various from more points of view, both inside the department and I guess in the sense of poetry in the country too.

I wrote some articles. I did a couple of studies for Massachusetts Review of poetry in 1965. Roughly all the poetry published in '65 and all the poetry published in '70. It seemed to me that there was a shift there, the kind that I had noticed here earlier. The poetry, the books on the whole in '65 were rather imagistic, photographic, still-life. I think I used the example of catching the quality of an empty package of cigarettes floating on a pond in the park. Then in '70 all this had gone into action, all waked up and gone in many directions of more involvement. Maybe I was imposing this; I hope not. It seemed to me truly that the shift that I saw between '65 and '70 in that work was like, in a slower, more encapsulated pace, the shift that I'd seen in Berkeley, say, from the sixties to the seventies.*

Where it's going now, it's hard to say. I was a judge this year of a poetry contest that included--we were supposed to read all the poetry published this year. The other judges said that they thought that we didn't have much good work to work from. We had read two hundred volumes apiece, but they weren't too impressed with it. The winner was Stan Rice. I don't know if I mentioned this before--

Teiser: No.

*For additional analysis of these decades, see page 180ff.

- Miles: Anyway, we had about 150 books to read, and they asked us if we wanted any more--they gave us the publishers' list that came out during the year--and so I said, "Yes, there are about fifty more I'd like to read, but mostly small press stuff, not vanity press but small press"--because I should also mention this growth of the small press idea and the West Coast Print Center, and things you know about in that direction. So they added these. I was pleased that Stan Rice won, and that a small press won.
- Teiser: What prize was it?
- Miles: It's called the Poe Prize. It's supposed to be for the best poet of sort of middle years who's published two books or more.
- Teiser: Rice has published very little, hasn't he? Unusually little for someone--?
- Miles: Yes, and that was a problem where it was kind of lucky I knew the facts. Rice's book was taken by Evergreen--that published Evergreen Review, that press--it was accepted by them (his first book, called White Boy) and they held it for five years, every year saying that they would bring it out. Then finally they returned it to him. I'm not sure it was exactly five years; it might be four or six. But it was a destruction. It was just as bad as murder, as far as I'm concerned. Then when his daughter died he did the one called Some Lamb. So finally then both of those books were printed by local people--just people got together some money and printed them. One was Mudra Press, and the other came out through Serendipity or Book People--I'm not quite sure how it all was. It makes me sad that the Chronicle and the Examiner and the Oakland Tribune--again, that the press couldn't care less and never even mentioned that a local writer had won a national award. The sports page doesn't need to be that dominating over other kinds of contests.
- But anyway, I raised this point to say that the other judges didn't feel we were going in a very clear, good direction, and I would guess they're right. Gary--I mean Stan. I keep saying Gary because I want to say something like Gary Snyder; I think they both have a kind of freedom and an emotionality, which is the only direction I see that seems terribly constructive. I don't know where else. A lot of the poetry from the East Coast seemed rather inhibited--neat but not gaudy--and in kind of a narrow way.
- Teiser: We had so much poetry here for so long that was gaudy but not neat. [Laughter]
- Miles: We still do. We still do. That's right. And that's what I think Stan did. So I can't predict now what's going to happen, but there's an awful lot of interesting work being done in translation, for

Miles: example. Somebody like [Pablo] Neruda is very influential. Recent national prizes have been won also by others of our people. Diane O'Hehir just won what's called a break-through prize at Missouri Press, which is a new press for poetry. Joe DePrisco won something of the same. Don Bogen--another student--just won a very good midwestern prize. And these people are all different from each other. They're intensely lyrical, is the term I would assign them. But it just seems that a lot is being done here.

When the National Endowment for the Arts was rather frustrated about how to spend money for literature, Tom Parkinson was on the board, and he encouraged them to have one of their meetings out here, which seemed rather wild to them--why come out here and hear the same old stuff? But they didn't hear the same old stuff. They met in the Alumni House three years ago, I think, when Nancy Hanks was still involved, then [Leonard] Randolph, and invited people to come and say what they thought was needed, what the NEA could do for them. And that Alumni House was just jammed with people screaming and yelling and asking for things, which at first confused them, and at noon they said they couldn't go on. But by afternoon they began getting some messages loud and clear, and by evening they were exhausted.

The next morning, Sunday, they were going to fly back. Paul Foreman asked them to his house for an early breakfast, at which everything suddenly came clear. We sat around there drinking coffee, and everybody began saying, "Oh yeah. Oh yeah, I see. That's the way it's got to be." And the issue was, if you give money to a press you get bad choices; if you give money to the poet he doesn't get printed. So, give money to the combination through a chapbook, and that has worked well and with most printers, as you know, is resulting in very interesting and good work. We had a lot of these fellows already on the spot to do this because they'd worked with Jim Tate in Cloud Marauder, and both Panjandrum Press and Don Cushman's press were ready to go.

So now I think maybe we shouldn't worry too much about trends and tendencies and types, but just think about letting it all out, letting everybody get to say, and say it his way. What's going to be chosen in terms of models and values I think is rather mysterious now. But what's good now is the variety of activity and the opportunity--the vast opportunity--to be heard. We have now I think to develop a more systematic critical review method; the review system is broken down.

Teiser: You were saying that the newspapers don't pay any attention. Little publications keep coming out which try to do reviews of small press work and of serious poetry.

Miles: They do?! [Laughter] You mean like Poetry Flash?

Teiser: Yes, I guess so. I guess that tries to be critical. It's more a bulletin, isn't it?

Miles: Well, actually I meant something much more national and heavy.

[end tape 1, side 2; begin tape 2, side 1]

There is a lot of interest and effort to review in a rather slap-happy fashion around here. Kayak does some interesting reviews. That's a very interesting magazine, I think, George Hitchcock's magazine down in Santa Cruz. And there is this little throw-away around here called Poetry Flash, which is really interesting and lists about umpteen activities every night in poetry in the Bay Area at different places. An interesting thing, though, about that is that Poetry Flash came out about a year ago with a nasty review of somebody--I mean, just mean; you know, fun to read because it was mean--and Tom Parkinson wrote them a letter. Tom takes this rather Olympian tone at times, so it was very charming, I thought. He wrote Joe Flower a letter and he said, "Pardon me for saying so. We just don't do this around here. The Bay Area has a heck of a lot of poets in it, and they're pretty good, and one nice thing about them is they don't backbite on each other. We have a lot of difference of opinion, but we don't have cliques and rivalries and meannesses. So lay off! If you want to describe somebody's work, describe it, but don't get any success out of being snide and mean." These aren't his words. But I thought it was very nice because I think it's true, and an important thing to be said is this is not a factional area. When you hear about New York, you step into the world of factions so fast it's breathtaking. The two or three times I've been in New York I've hardly been able to believe that I couldn't see a certain person because that was an opponent to another person--when here I was all that distance away and it couldn't matter, in two or three days, if I couldn't see, you know, just a variety of people.

That surely wouldn't happen here. While I've had fights with--I don't know who I've had fights with, actually, but people have fought with each other. Robert Duncan has fought with Spicer and Robin Blaser--and who else? It's hardly worth--well, Rexroth and Winters weren't always on major terms. Winters didn't like Kenneth Patchen's work, understandably. There's a lot of people not liking other people's work, but everybody sort of coexists. A lot of people don't like my work, but yet they invite me to read it. It's just a nice coexistence. I think there always has been, and I hope there always will be.

Miles: It reminds me of something I skipped over in the mid-fifties. When I said that Allen Ginsberg came to town, this was a time when Allen was working for some business firm and had a pin-striped suit. He came over to Berkeley to talk to Mark Schorer and me about whether he should be a graduate student at Berkeley. He went to see Mark, and then he came down. He had this pin-striped suit and he had this big folder. So he said would I read these poems and tell him whether he should do graduate work. And it was quite a nice experience, you know. I mean, wow! He was rather unprepossessing looking, and to lay your eyes on something really full of energy was a real pleasure. I said, "Sure. You ought to take Anglo-Saxon," because it was clear he was interested in the old Anglo-Saxon beat, and he said, "Yes, that's what I thought, because it's related to Whitman." So we got into a long discussion of metrics, and I liked him very much. Despite all of the things he's done that I don't like, which are many, because I think they're distracting in the wrong way, nevertheless I think we've got along. He's forgiven me for a few things, like walking out of the baiting of Olson in Wheeler Hall in the summer of 1965, and I've forgiven him for a few, like not walking out.

When they had the second Black Mountain conference down here, the one that followed the Vancouver one, this was a very oppressive time; this was the mid-sixties. They had this two-week conference on campus, and Allen--well, let me move back a minute before that. There's something else I remember I should have mentioned before--keep track of all these beads I'm trying to string on a string.

In the forties, beside all these other groups I've mentioned, there was a group called the Activists, taught by Lawrence Hart. He came down from some northern county, and he had a theory of teaching poetry, and he was a kind of Svengali, as I thought him. He was teaching night school, and he'd brow-beat the ladies into writing vivid images. "Vivid images" was his slogan. He was very fond of Archibald MacLeish especially. Two or three friends of mine took his course and were much impressed with him--Rosalie Moore and Jeanne McGahey. Jeanne married him and was published by New Directions, and Rosalie didn't publish right then, but later she was published as a Yale Poet* by [W.H.] Auden. Later also, a younger one of that group, Robert Horan, was published by Auden. So there was a certain amount of national success way back there through the Activists.

*The Grasshopper's Man and Other Poems. Yale University Press, 1949.

- Miles: So now in the mid-fifties I remember being at an Activists' party at somebody's house, and we were all reading poetry. Dick Eberhart was there visiting--I think he was teaching somewhere out here--and he nonchalantly said, "Well, what's new in poetry around here? What's going on?" So we said, "There's this new fellow that's come to town, and it's a whole new world, and it's kind of exciting. His name is Allen Ginsberg and he's got these friends, [Jack] Kerouac, and so on." So Dick, who likes to be kind of a patron of the arts, said, "I'd like to meet him, like to see his work." I lent him my copy and he wrote an article for the New York Times--
- Teiser: This was Howl?
- Miles: This was Howl--he wrote an article for the New York Times that really gave Allen quite a send-off in the East. I just backtracked to that because there's that whole other force of Allen's entering into that--the whole force of this free poetry entering into the Activist tradition, which was so different and so highly controlled by Lawrence Hart. It's kind of a comical thing. It was just really one wave hitting up against another; they were going in different directions.
- Teiser: Incidentally, did Ginsberg become a graduate student?
- Miles: Six weeks. But he was around a lot. I remember I was teaching a seminar--the nineteenth century, I guess it was--in the library. That door didn't have an opaque glass in it or it wasn't solid; it was just plain glass you could see through. Towards the end of the seminar, there was always the face of Allen outside the door, and he was always coming to argue about something or start some new theory or something. He was very nice to have around. I got kind of bored with all the mantras and chantras and stuff, but at that age he was full of zing and new ideas, and everything was very close to his heart. He brought real energy, not only to the San Francisco scene but the Berkeley scene too. He lived over here, had a little house near the Parkinsons. I forget who else was there.
- Then the whole group accrued around Mike McClure and Phil Whalen and Gary [Snyder] and Ferlinghetti, and the growth of that whole group, which is still very strong. I would say no clear tendency has yet supplanted that one.* As I say, now things are sort of more fragmentized, more individualistic, but well done, very well done in many different ways. As I said before, I think the variety now is what's interesting.

*For discussion of another group of the 1950s, that represented by Leonard Nathan, see page 180.

Teiser: In your own work, you have written the way you were going to write, not being affected by these various trends.

Miles: Well, some people tell me--I don't know. I think my poetry has gotten looser and freer in form than it was. I think I don't write [laughing] as many clear endings--yes, I think I've been influenced. But on the other hand, I don't think I fit into any of these--I've never been accepted as a soul mate by any of these groups. [Laughter] Once in a while Carruth or J.V. Cunningham or someone said something about you could tell I was from the West; that I have a western style. Then other people say, "You couldn't tell in a million years she was from the West. She sounds like from England." Best recognitions have been from [Richard] Ellman and [Denis] Donoghue (England and Ireland!). So how do I know? But I think I got a certain amount of excitement and stimulation out of all the poetry readings of the Bill Stafford, Archie Ammons, Gary Snyder type, and certainly went to millions of them.

Teiser: You yourself read at many.

Miles: Yes, and heard all my students developing in these ways. While I tried to fight in them too much egregious formlessness just for its own sake, on the other hand I think I tried to learn how to be freer, to the result that some of my friends, like Leonard Nathan, who is quite formal, thinks that it's too shapeless. But the last review I read of Leonard Nathan says that he has lost his formality too. So maybe even somebody who doesn't want to give in, has given in to a different beat. It's very interesting to speculate about what's happened to the ears of poets, of people. I grew up hearing meter very, very strongly, and I still do, and so do they if they're listening to the Beatles, say, or to country or rock and roll. But when they hear it in poetry, they move to the haiku; they hear it to some free form. I learned that it's more and more difficult to urge students to hear a beat in poetry as they want to write it, and sometimes I don't even try, and other times I do try. But it's a real anomaly. This is not in their ears. I say to them, "What poetry did you read when you were young?" For many of them, there were no ballads, there was no Child's Garden of Verses, there was no A.A. Milne, there was no Walter de la Mare--there was just not the poetry of my youth in their youth. Naturally you can't just instill something.

I just got through reading a fascinating book by a former friend (I mean I haven't seen him lately). His name is Paul Fussell, and he wrote a book about poetry of the First World War.*

*The Great War and Modern Memory. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Miles: That poetry is just imbued with trisyllabic feet. That book was fascinating to me to read because I was not only very chilled by the First World War, because I was a child of maybe five or six or so, but even in those days I didn't like that kind of poetry. So that it gave me a boundary for what I didn't like; in other words, that was what I was turning against.

Teiser: It was sentimental, was it not?

Miles: But now when you think about the ear, it was too trilly. There were too many trisyllabics. There were too many skipped feet. I liked a steadier beat. Oh, I did like it--sometimes if it was heavy, as in Kipling, you know: "Once we feared the beast/When he followed us we ran"--that's okay. But when you get little things about "come down to Kew in lilac time, in lilac time"--that's your point about the sentiment, I realize. But often it's more tripping. Tripping poetry I always especially didn't like.

Teiser: You were mentioning music. How anyone whose ears are atuned, or whose ears are assailed by contemporary rock music, or whatever in the world it's called, could tune his ear to--

Miles: It's fascinating. The Beatles you could. You notice that half of the Beatles' poetry you can read on the page as poetry, and the other half you can't, which is a very interesting thing to study.

We once had a memorable New Year's party at Elizabeth Bishop's when she was visiting here, where all the poets in town were dancing at midnight to the Beatles on a wide parquet floor. The whole thing looked like a Mozartian eighteenth century drawing room.

Now, that's true you can't do that with modern rock. But I've had classes in which there've been modern rock composers and I've tried to take advantage of this. We had a couple of classes where they would invite us down to their sound-proof studios, and we would try to write words and music and stuff as they composed. I don't know enough about it to do it well, to experiment well, but I have experimented. I think there's a lot yet to be done there that could be very interesting. That's the one way I think it might go. It might go toward a popular communal ballad-like beat. Students are writing ballads much better than they used to, and there's something they're tuning in to there that's new and different. But I don't know yet. I really don't know.

Teiser: Do you think it ties in with this awful country music?

Miles: Well, don't worry about the message. There are some interesting melodies, I think. There are some little books, paperbacks, called Rock Lyrics. Did you ever look at those? The "Sound of Silence"--do you know that? "Gentle on My Mind"?

Teiser: You're braver than I am.

Miles: Well, I've tried to really work it out with the students. It's not that I'm brave, it's that I'm dumb. I don't get it as well as I could. I'd like to be able to get us all to see if we could do some composing in this way.

Recently one other thing happened at Berkeley, which was that the activism--Third Worldism and so forth--took over student administration to the degree that they stopped supporting the literary and artistic materials on campus, even to the degree that they didn't support the Band. They supported activities that were definitely related to some ethnic purpose. So for the past five years or so, another job that some of us have taken on was to try to get the artistic stuff still supported through the administration as a curricular adjunct, or some such phrase.

We worked with the student vice-chancellor, and we had a lot of exciting things to do. We had to save the Pelican Building (they were taking over the Pelican Building as a place to store things). We now have five magazines working in the Pelican Building. We lost a very marvelous man who used to be ASUC adviser to student publications. He was a great asset and a conserving force.

Teiser: Who was he?

Miles: I was just afraid you were going to ask me; I'll have to look up his name. [Added later:] Wally Fredricks. Then for a while after him it was disaster. We had carpetbaggers coming in just because there was a little, little money to be scrounged, and they would put themselves off as students and edit bad stuff. We've had to rescue that whole situation, which again I'd say the administration hasn't done anything about; that is, the split between the ASUC and the academic. We do have funds now to help these magazines, so we've had some what I think are very good publications of the Occident and a thing called the Berkeley Poetry Review.

I mention names like Ross Shidler and Rob Wilson and Jason Weiss. (This is the last step that I was relating. This should go on, you know, developing the earlier stage that I mentioned of Paul Foreman and the small press tradition. The small press tradition has helped us too, and it's helped students.) Berkeley Poetry Review comes out maybe two or three times a year, and it's just solid poetry by students, and I think it's very good. Again, I don't recognize a trend in it; it's very various.

So right now, this is the place where I don't know what will happen next. I think probably the ASUC will take some of these magazines back and will get a reorganization. But this is a temporary effort to bridge a gap, since the arts have had rather a

Miles: hard time. We did save the building, at least temporarily, and we do have five quite interesting magazines going, all with a great deal of self-initiation. The faculty committee doesn't steer and doesn't push; all it does is meet twice a year and allot funds, based on budgets and results. I like this degree of separation between authority, and the students have very dependably done good jobs on their own. I like to go into the Pelican Building once or twice a year and see everybody working there, heads bent over their desks, getting out their magazines. The greatest pleasure to me, that I know of, is to get students in situations where they can teach themselves and each other just as much as possible and make as many mistakes as possible without fatalities. And that kind of independence is what we've got there.

We've had a good long tradition with Occident. As you know, it goes back to Steinbeck and--did we talk about this before? I can't remember--when we talked about students.

Now in poetry what I'm working on is--I have been trying over a couple of years. When I went down to Riverside to teach two years ago, it was like taking the plug out of the basin of memories, because I lived down there. I don't know why Riverside, because I'd gone back to L.A., I'd gone back to the beach, I'd gone back to many places where I'd been before. I don't know why Riverside had this power more than the others. Maybe because I stayed there longer. But starting there I've written quite a number of poems about things we've talked about here, things that I remember. Things like when Leopold Senghor came to San Francisco or when [Jean] Genet came to Berkeley. Things that are sort of literary but have sort of a little formality of episode to them. Some of these my friends tell me are good; most of them, they say, don't work, because I make too many assumptions about data--detail. But anyway, this is what I'm working on right now. So that's what my next book will be about, if I ever get to it. It's narrative and it's remembrances and it's autobiographical. I don't think I in any way even then--that does fit the trend of what you could call the remembrance poetry of, say, [W.D.] Snodgrass and Lowell. But mine isn't at all confessional, so I don't think it fits that trend. But it does fit the trend of looking backward in a kind of an odd way that I haven't done before.

[end tape 2, side 1]

INTERVIEW VI -- 11 August 1977

Writing Poetry

[begin tape 1, side 1]

Teiser: It's mean to quote anyone back--

Miles: No.

Teiser: This was in an article in the Daily Cal Arts Magazine, February 1, 1974, called "Poetry with Josephine Miles." It asked, "What basic unit do you think in when you write a poem?" and you said, "I think in the line. Even when there's no sense to it. The abstract or senseless line. Structure emerges from the sense of relating line to line. I think of a line, then wait for the meaning to hit the fan. Once I get the abstract rhythm of the poem, then I can do it. I'd love to write a poem about a certain thing, I have an idea, then I wait months or maybe years for the first line, and then, Oh boy, here we go, and the whole poem gets written." Do you still stand on that? [Laughing] This is your chance to correct it.

Miles: No, no! That's very good. Did I say that?

Teiser: That's what you said.

Miles: All right. I'll stand by that.

Teiser: It sounds as if you have an idea and then a line comes along and then they pull together, is that what you meant?

Miles: Yes. Some people keep books of ideas, or notebooks and that sort of thing, but I don't have that many. When I do think of something that dawns on me that I'd like to say, then I sort of just park it in my mind, and then gradually I give it a sense of rhythm. Then I start writing down the rhythm, and then the poem sort of works

Miles: itself out that way. When I was younger, I did this all without writing; I just did it in my mind. But since my memory has got less tenacious as I've gone along, now I write it down.

Teiser: Perhaps you had fewer things to think about when you were younger.

Miles: [Laughter] Maybe so. But anyway, there is some quality of having to wait till the poem gets some kind of organizing sound to it.

Teiser: I suppose actually it starts with the idea and then goes to the sound.

Miles: Well, I don't know. It depends on what you mean by "starts." Sometimes I think I'm not aware of what the idea is going to be until I hear the sound. Sometimes I invest in an idea, other times I'm not aware of doing that. It's just that a lot of this happens when you're not aware of what's happening, so it's hard to describe it. But when it hits the conscious point, it's usually in terms of having a rather insistent rhythm going through my head, where I figure, "Oh, now I guess I want to say something." Then I start figuring out what that is.

Teiser: I suppose anyone who creates something has this same sort of thing.

Miles: Oh, I don't--people say various different things about writing, and I've not read many of them. I remember in Hope Against Hope, Osip Mandel'shtam's wife [Nadezhda] writes of how he starts muttering to himself and that it takes him a long time to get from the muttering stage to the poem stage. So that's something like it. I mean she gave a kind of interesting description where it seemed to have something to do with getting a vehicle of sound. But in terms of teaching poetry, I seem to find that people do various kinds of things.

Teiser: I think you said that the times that you sat in the car each morning, or one morning a week or whatever it was, and just determined to write, didn't work remarkably well.

Miles: Yes, it worked just as well as any other way--not worse and not better. That's what was so interesting. In other words, I put a lot of effort in an arbitrariness that didn't mean much. But it was interesting to find that it didn't.

Teiser: Do you think--[pause]

Miles: Do I write with a pen or a pencil? [Laughing]

Teiser: Oh no, no. It's way at the other end. [Laughter] If you had to, could you characterize your body of poetry so far? Could you say that it was a kind of poetry saying a kind of thing?

- Miles: I could in a sense. I think it's lyrical rather than dramatic or narrative, and it's meditative rather than ceremonial ritualistic or some of the various things that lyric can be. Then, the special quality that I would like to have in it is the quality in the fact that it's a lyric of thought, that it tries to capture a little bit of the drama of somebody else's thought; that is, that there's a quality of dialogue in it, and that the speaker or the speakers aren't necessarily speaking for me or from my point of view. Some people say, "Of course they really are, or you wouldn't have picked up their ideas in the first place." Well, that may be, but then I would also say, "But I would hope I was able to understand attitudes other than my own and capture those in a lyric form--to lyricize attitudes other than my own," because so many attitudes I hear, or overhear, seem to me so charming or beautiful or moving or profound or exploratory, and I would like to entertain those even if they aren't mine.
- Teiser: In and out of my mind, as I have read your poetry recently, has flitted the idea of Browning's dramatic monologues. Was that a--
- Miles: I like Browning very much. His are much more dramatized, and longer and fuller and more exploratory of the ironies of elaborate situations than mine are, but I agree there's a glimmer of what you mean there. If you contrasted Browning, say, to his famous contemporary, Tennyson, I would feel much more affinity to Browning than to Tennyson. Or I will feel more affinity to Frost than to Hart Crane, in our day; that would be a somewhat similar parallel. In other words, there is a kind of lyric that's very rhapsodic--Hart Crane, Dylan Thomas, Tennyson, and so on. It's a long tradition, a Pindaric tradition of the lyric, the ode, which I like very much but I don't think I write it, though the celebrative quality of it I would like to make use of in a more quiet way, in a less public, in a less developed, less elaborative way.
- Teiser: I was also trying to read a little, putting myself a hundred years hence, in another place, and wondering if there was much I would lose.
- Miles: I've been told that my poems don't appeal to England at all; that'd be another place and another time. But the English seem to be very hung up on the fact that mine are colloquial in a way that they don't speak to. It's interesting too because my research has been really much more appreciated and dealt with thoughtfully in England than in America. So that's really rather an interesting thing; England feels very friendly in one sense, but not in the sense of poetry. Thom Gunn says he likes my poetry, but he says it's just much, much too colloquial to transport.

Miles: And I don't know about time. I'm already in books where there are footnotes to meanings. I've had an amazing amount of republishing in anthologies. I must be in about eighty or a hundred anthologies. This was a great surprise to me, because my poetry hasn't sold that well. But it has been anthologised.

Teiser: Do you get royalties for anthologies?

Miles: Yes. Not enough to matter, but what you do get is a terrific amount of circulation, so that I've had lots of correspondence and lots of response, which I wouldn't have expected to have from the books, which I've got through the anthologies. Those anthologies, many of them footnote what seem to me very comical little details, for students. Already apparently they think things need explanation.

Teiser: I can't remember whether potato salad is potato salad in England.

Miles: I don't know, but no, that potato salad is probably very local. I would guess so. It's in Germany, of course, but I don't know whether it would mean that degree of domestic picnic. That's probably exactly what Thom Gunn means; the words mean something, all right, but the overtones weren't there. When I read that poem in a large hall to students, there's quite a rustle, quite a response, just to potato salad, without their even knowing what's going to happen to it.

Teiser: It's a most evocative poem within any westerner's experience, I imagine.

Miles: Yes. Apparently potato salad does mean a real solid norm, the way they respond to it.

Teiser: But the whole poem I should think is one of those that would come over more immediately to people--

Miles: Yes, it does.

Teiser: --than some that are the more recondite.

Miles: That's true, because the last line is quite a shift but it's a shift that the students--when I say students, I mean that most of my audiences, I guess, are at least half students--seem amazingly prepared for. I mean they're ready to shift on; they're very responsive to the last line, even if they've never heard it before. It's a poem they seem to enter into very strongly.

Teiser: I should put on the tape that this is a poem called "Family." There are two that were reprinted in the Daily Californian Arts Magazine interview.

- Miles: I wanted to give you this today before you go--John Oliver Simon, who's one of the local publishers, has put out now a book called Buds and Flowers of Berkeley or some such thing. Anyway, it's a Berkeley anthology, and that poem is printed in there. The whole anthology should interest you. It has I think quite a good spirit of Berkeley. He captures a very interesting Berkeley quality in it.
- Teiser: Is it similar to the book you lent Catherine? The nineteenth century Berkeley one?
- Miles: Slightly different, slightly different. [Laughing] Different buds and different flowers.
- Teiser: [Pause] I'll keep on quoting you, if I may.
- Miles: See if I recognize them.
- Teiser: Yes. [Searching for quote] I was going to quote a jacket blurb, but I think I haven't brought it.
- Miles: That's good. I'm not very fond of jacket blurbs.
- Teiser: Which book was it, now?
- Miles: Oh, was it To All Appearances, where I talked about--
- Teiser: I think so, yes.
- Miles: --where I talked about below appearances, beneath appearances?
- Teiser: Yes.
- Miles: Have you got To All Appearances there?
- Teiser: I don't have it. I brought everything but, I guess.
- Miles: Well, I don't remember it very clearly, but I was just making the point that To All Appearances has a kind of double edge to it. In one sense it means that to all appearances may not necessarily be real, and the other sense is that I am speaking with pleasure to all appearances, for all appearances--I'm addressing appearances. That double edge is just the double edge that some people feel--appearances are less indicative of the real than something underneath is. I'm just saying in that title, at least, that I think appearances carry a lot of weight, carry a lot of value, whatever is underneath. It took me awhile to come to that position; that was an attained position, an attained belief. [Laughing]

Teiser: There was an implication in it, I thought--maybe I read something into it--that you began, that the poems began with the appearance and perhaps explored contrary--

Miles: Hmm. That doesn't ring a bell.

Teiser: I shouldn't misquote you to yourself [laughing], should I?

Miles: I don't think I would like to do that; I mean, I would like to stay with the appearance all the way through, except perhaps see different aspects of it. The poem that's so much quoted about the man that drives the car in front of the movie theater. The appearances there are everybody trying to get him out of the way, and then his appearance, when he finally gets to speak for himself, is that Reason is his middle name. In other words, his appearance is just as much of appearance as all the surface of the scene. But the difference is that it's his. You might say it goes deeper into appearances, but not away from them.

Teiser: You and I were talking on the phone before we began this interview about something; I don't remember what preceded it, but I remember accusing you [laughing] of not believing in Absolute Truth.

Miles: Yes, very good. True. [Laughter] I can't accommodate absolutes very well.

To come back to this appearance bit and the poem we were talking about before--"Family"--there the appearance is, is somebody drowning or is somebody not drowning? Then there's the appearances of the standard family picnic, and then there's the rescuer, one able to be sensitive to the truth of appearances. Then the last line, "This is what is called the brotherhood of man," still the phrase "is called" is there, and that's still an appearance.

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: And that is therefore praise or joyful recognition of somebody else's recognition. It's not any statement of my own, but there's a joyful acceptance of an acceptance.

Teiser: I'm looking at a review in the issue of Voyages in which there was an homage to you.* There's a review of your Kinds of Affection, and I think it's this review which indicated that there was more emotion in it, or more indications of emotion, than in your earlier books. Is that right?

*Fall 1968. The review is by Arthur K. Oberg.

Miles: The reviewers have been saying that gradually. The first two or three books, I got very tired of the remark that these poems were very well wrought, very well constructed but didn't deal with very vital matters. This always troubled me because how could they be well wrought if they didn't seem vital? That is, that seemed to me a very superficial distinction between good writing and whatever they meant. In other words, the sense of superficiality in elaboration of good writing I didn't understand. Obviously the poems just were bad if they gave this sense of triviality.

I haven't been getting that comment so much lately. I think maybe it's just that people are getting used to my writing [laughing] and they don't expect such big revelations as they thought they should have had before. Or maybe I did take some clue from the students, and do try somewhat to make the solutions seem less constructed than I once did; that's a possibility. I'm not quite sure if it's true. It's very hard to judge that in your own work--whether you've changed or shifted--but it may be that I use less formal organizing qualities than I once did.

Teiser: There's one book on our list that's a mystery to me.

Miles: Oh, well that's nice!

Teiser: Maybe it never got published--Neighbors and Constellations.

Miles: That's not a book. It's a section of selected poems in the Selected book. In other words, that Poems 1930-1960 (Indiana) was a selection from all the other books, namely Trial Balances, Lines at Intersection, Poems on Several Occasions, Local Measures, Prefabrications, and then the further section was Neighbors and Constellations.

Teiser: I see.

Miles: So that's where you saw it.

Teiser: I saw it in a bibliography of some sort.

Miles: Oh, then it's a mistake. It shouldn't be in the bibliography.

Teiser: I see. Then I do withdraw my earlier statement--the University of California does have all your books in the library. I couldn't find that title.

Miles: Good. Where are they? Everywhere?

Teiser: Here and there. They're in The Bancroft Library and they're in the main library, and I guess in the undergraduate library.

- Miles: People are always telling me they can't find them in Moffitt, so I wondered.
- Teiser: A lot of them are in Bancroft.
- Miles: Yes, that's what I was afraid of.
- Teiser: And some of them are in both.
- Miles: That would be better.
- Teiser: One of them is a Rare Book in The Bancroft Library--In Identity.
- Miles: [Laughter] Somebody must have signed it for me. Oh, it's a broadsheet that somebody did. You know, I'm not too fond of these bibliographical ploys--little broadsheets and little single poem volumes and so on. There are a number of those.
- Teiser: Also there's one copy of Kinds of Affection that's a Rare Book too.
- Miles: Are some of them in Doe, in the regular main library?
- Teiser: I can't tell. I just have the ones marked in Bancroft, and others. I don't know where the others are; I haven't searched them out myself.
- Miles: Because I'm just curious. When students say, "Why aren't your books in the library?" I never know what to say.
- Teiser: Tell them to search in every possible library. [Laughter]
- Miles: "Work harder" I should say to them. [Laughter]
- Teiser: I meant to ask you about this a long time ago. George Stewart was asked in his interview with the Regional Oral History Office* about his interest in metrics, and he said, "Of course, Jo thinks I'm a great enemy of poetry, but I'm not. Just certain kinds of poetry I don't like."
- Miles: That was a special article that George wrote agreeing with Edmund Wilson in I think the New Republic way back, in which he said that metrical poetry was going to die down.

*See interview with George R. Stewart, A Little of Myself, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1972.

- Miles: George's own study of metrics is a wonderful study. He did two books, actually, and they've never been superseded, remarkably. It's too bad he didn't go on with it, because he was doing that--when I first came here, he was shifting to novel writing. But the more books come out on metrics, the more George is referred to as a beginner of understanding. He was the one that made clear this quality of the triple foot, that I've mentioned so often, as characteristic of nineteenth and into the beginning of the twentieth century. This very interesting book that Paul Fussell wrote that I mentioned, on the First World War and First World War poetry, when you read that you see the triple foot is just reigning as a way of thinking, and it's a nineteenth century way of thinking.
- Teiser: Now we're on George Stewart, I think you said you liked East of the Giants, and he said in his interview, "Curiously enough, Josephine Miles was a great admirer of that book. It doesn't seem like her book." [Laughter]
- Miles: Oh! Yes, I do like that book. [Laughter] We can leave unsaid what I think of Doctors Oral. [Laughter]
- Teiser: He really got into everything, didn't he? What did you think of the Oath? Want to leave that unsaid too?
- Miles: No, that was a nice, hard-working book. That was a very marvelous job that George did there. Where I think Doctors Oral represents his real hatred of his own work in some ways--self-hatred in a very sad way--his Year of the Oath represents his wonderful ability to get people to do work. He just rallied all the young men around him to do research, to look things up. What did he have me do? He assigned something to me. I think I was supposed to study the charter, the organic charter. Then we were all supposed to write reports, and these were all merged as a beautiful job of community action. Just George at his very best. And it was again a University thing. It was the whole positive side of his--he was a very important man in the University and in our department, though he was never on committees much and he was never elected to offices and stuff--he was nonparticipative except in the Faculty Club, because he was always on part-time, writing novels. But his role in the department was very strong, a kind of an ethics of perspective of action: why one should never have unanimous votes on things, why one should never report numerical votes, why in the department we shouldn't have tabling motions. He had a real courtesy book for the department and for the academic world that was a very important influence.
- Teiser: The other two things that I have here to talk about next are poetry today (which you have talked a little about) and also publishing, which we talked with you about some years ago. I don't know which comes next better.

Miles: Well, let's see. We could bring them together in the sense that if we speak of now, the publishing situation is quite different. I'm not sure that I can say more than I said last time about that.

Teiser: I'm thinking when we talked to you for those Chronicle interviews, one of which appeared* and one of which didn't, you said then, I believe, that in earlier years eastern publishers had wanted to publish poetry, for one reason and another, and that by then--and that was early 1972--they didn't very much, and that you had a book finished and were looking for a publisher, and you were at that time having--

Miles: Trouble.

Teiser: --trouble finding one. It almost seems impossible.

Miles: Yes. You say it seems impossible; I never got a book published without trouble, except the little pamphlets that were fun. Yes, it always took me three or four years to find a publisher because, for one thing, as I mentioned last time, a couple of the publishers vanished, like Reynal and Hitchcock, and some of them changed their policies, editors changed. I always thought how nice it would be to be able to talk about "my publisher" the way some people do, the way, say, Richard Eberhart does for Oxford. Actually, Oxford had asked me at the beginning to submit a book to them, which I sent to Macmillan instead because of Trial Balances. I always had a kind of a sense of having to try over each time, that values changed so much at New Directions and changed so much at Wesleyan.

The way I got To All Appearances published, as I can interpret it--one never gets told the whole story--a former student of mine was teaching at Illinois and talked to Richard Wentworth, who was the new head of the press at Illinois, and Richard Wentworth had worked at the Southern Review back in the old days--an example of my point of the way strands continue. So, I had a letter from him, I sent my book there, and they took it and published it. They did a lovely job of it, I thought, and advertised it very thoughtfully. Wentworth is a nice person, I'd guess. I've never met him.

The important thing to say about publishing, as you've already mentioned, carrying on from '72, is that when the eastern publishers were doing less and less, doing about two volumes a year, mostly for somebody's cousin, as Louis Simpson would say, gradually the little presses started working there; people like Hawley started working with Oyez, and all over the country the

*"The Big Boom in Bay Area Poetry Readings," San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, 27 February 1972.

Miles: little presses began to increase and grow. Secondly, new university presses took responsibility. My example of Illinois would be an example, and the University of Missouri press has done a fine lot of publishing of what I consider to be very good poets, ones I happen to know and ones I don't know also. Princeton Press has started a new series which started publishing Leonard Nathan. He had been published before by Random House. But the Random House editor that he had left, and this is the part of vagaries of the publishing situation.

Leonard Nathan, by the way, represented a group that I forgot to mention last time. I was talking about how, as I look back, people seemed to work in groups and flourish in groups. There was a group in the fifties which represented the kind of conservatism of the fifties, and also of poetry. Counterbalancing the Allen Ginsberg kind, which grew up then, was the conservative kind of Leonard Nathan and also some younger people of his friends who became scholars and professors, like Bill Brandt, Robert Beloof, Allen Hollingsworth, George Hochfield. This represented a very different kind of person working in poetry and in scholarship in the fifties, from the Ginsberg tradition. I think it's important to mention that, to say that I don't think you ever get a time in which there's a huge wave in one direction without some counter-action.

This group was much appreciated by Ted Weiss at Bard; I think he was at Bard and at Princeton. He was editor of the Quarterly Review of Literature. We were all kind of sustained by Ted Weiss, if I put myself in that group, when a lot of the publishing was shifting over to the Beat Poets, which we weren't. On the other hand, since I had been a teacher of Jack Spicer, who had a very funny sense of humor, Jack insisted that I be in their anthologies, or the records that they made of their poetry. This made for a lot of real humor because this record and some of the anthologies would be reviewed, and the reviewer would say, "How did it come Josephine Miles gets in there? I've seen her work in MLA," this funny kind of connection which Jack enjoys. Jack likes scholarship, and he liked this combination.

So in the fifties there was this kind of double of values going. That helped encourage the growth--sustained the conservative poetry and encouraged the growth of the newer kind of experimental. I don't want to make that split, though, because of course there are other kinds of experiments all the time. It's just that there were various kinds that were different from the Ginsberg group kind.

Then in the sixties was when I felt the worst sense of problem in the feeling that we weren't quite sure where we were. Leonard wouldn't go to poetry readings because he found it all so distasteful. In other words, the conservative found the experimental really

Miles: distasteful. Archie Ammons, on the other hand, was developing, and he and I were both going to meetings and listening and feeling observant. I remember that none of the experimenters around here would give Archie the time of day until a leader, Jonathan Williams in North Carolina, gave him a rave review in the New York Times or somewhere. In other words, it was a very anomalous, mixed sense of values when these two currents were moving side by side and together. But you have to say something to say there was a great variety in these currents. You can see why the publishers got confused and mixed up. I mentioned last time the reviews I did for Massachusetts [Review], a review in '65 and in the seventies, in which I felt that there was a real motion from the inherited neatness of '65 still, toward a really freer opening out in general all over in the seventies. A lot of that was black.

The whole sixties really gave rise to I think a new breath of life in poetry, and it was black poetry--people like Al Young and George Barlow and Michael Harper, Robert Chrisman from Berkeley, and many, many more. There's a little anthology called Dice and Black Bones, or some such title, which very well reveals this new kind. From now on, then, I don't think--yes, I guess we still do have problems in these types. A very good black poet by the name of Gloria Oden in Maryland tells me that she still has a hard time getting published because the publishers say she's not black enough. So here the publishers must still be holding some curious kind of typology in mind. There is one big publisher of black poetry who does much more than the others, though the other conservative publishers are now trying to move into this field.

To summarize, I think that the little presses have helped, aided by NEA (that's fairly recent; that's only been about the last five years that that's been true), and some of the university presses, unfortunately not ours. Our University Press has been blindly and blankly oblivious to poetry, except sometimes in translation. They did publish, very successfully, a book of poems translated by Nobuyuki Yuasa from the Japanese, A Year of My Life: A Translation of Issa's Oraga Haru, which is a beautiful little volume. They did make some good names in translation. They published Carlyle MacIntyre, for example, and some other good people. Especially that was true when they had a wonderful editor at the University Press whose name was [Lucie] Dobbie, and she sponsored a lot of innovative publishing and translation, which died with her death. Except for her and except for that, we've been one of the worst in the country in poetry.

[end tape 1, side 1]

Values and Standards

[begin tape 1, side 2]

- Teiser: I was talking to Bob Hawley and told him we were interviewing you. He was much interested and very pleased. He said he didn't know what kind of poetry you liked, that he'd never been able to figure it out. The nearest he had ever been able to tell was from an article you had written for the Pacific Spectator, which Catherine and I have just read, and we can't tell from that. If that's the nearest you came--[laughter] you haven't come very near. But seriously, for that you analyzed a great variety of poetry from newspapers, and books. Do you have that article in mind?
- Miles: Sure. That's funny. I got a lot of criticism for the cryptic quality of the evaluations in that article. I didn't feel it was that cryptic. In fact, the Pacific Spectator got some very angry letters. One man said he was a donor or something and was going to withdraw his donation it was so disgraceful to have no value system represented, and that I was willing to talk about newspaper poetry at the same time with published poetry. That's an interesting point in that back then, whenever that was--the forties, I guess. That was about the time of Donald Weeks--editor at Mills--
- Teiser: It was published in spring 1948, and it was a review of the poetry published in 1947.
- Miles: I was up to my more recent tricks there of what I did for Massachusetts Review. I like to do that. I get very impatient with so-called objective selectivity, the selectivity that seems to be covering a field and is actually just covering the interests of the selector. And so, every time I do one of these, what I try to do is be as complete as possible and describe it completely as possible and let the reader draw his conclusion about what's going on. I try to use some outward principle of selection. With Massachusetts, it was the books that came out, or they sent me, or that I was able to scrounge around and find in Publisher's Weekly and so on. With the Pacific Spectator, I think it was what was printed around here in magazines and--
- Teiser: Up and down the coast.
- Miles: Yes, because that was the focus of Pacific Spectator. Also in those days, and this is sad to look back on, the newspapers were publishing some pretty good verse. There was a man on the Oakland Tribune who did a lot of encouraging of poetry (Ad's Column or some such thing), and the California Writers Club had an annual banquet in which they awarded prizes and they got together. This related to the work that I did in that labor school where I taught that class

Miles: of rather domestic poets, who were nevertheless in their own way very good. I think it's very important to say that all of poetry doesn't have to be equally avant-garde. Some of those women, especially the women in the California Writers Club, and one man that's important to mention, and that's Harold Witt, because he's always been very loyal to this group and they've been loyal to him. He now is functioning out in the Walnut Creek Library poetry scene this way. I say it's more domestic; I don't know what I mean by that exactly; it's a little less avant-garde; it's a little more about things around us, but it's very literary too. Rosalie Moore and Elma Dean were in this, and B. Jo Kinnick still today very active. Ruth Iodice. I admire these people for doing their own thing in their own way. Sometimes they belong to college women's clubs, poetry circles and so forth.

Teiser: Are they comparable to Sunday painters?

Miles: I suppose they are. Yes, yes. I thought it was just charming to notice all this semi-demi stuff that was going on in Pacific Spectator. I wasn't trying to write about what I liked; I'm not all that interested in what I like. What I like I like so fast and completely that that's just that--I don't want to bother about having to defend it or explain it to anybody. But I am really more interested in finding out what I don't like and trying to understand that. My dissertation was done on that basis. I didn't like the poetry of Wordsworth. I was complaining about that, and Ben Lehman said, "It's sometimes-usually-often hard to write on somebody that you are crazy about because you stay crazy. But if you write about somebody you don't understand and try to figure him out, this is helpful." He was very right, and I got really enthralled in finding out what Wordsworth thought he was doing. I've written a lot on Wordsworth--

Teiser: You still don't like him?

Miles: He's still not my favorite poet, no. I like him now; I don't love him. The poet that I like the best, W.B. Yeats, I've written very little on. The article I did write I think was pretty good, but nobody's ever referred to it since; it was published in one of my books. I think the interesting--I think value judgments are so instant that what they then need is documentation in terms of understanding of how they arose. Only after you really understand what you're looking at in terms of, say, paintings or whatever, do you want to come back to further evaluation.

For example, if I go to an art gallery to see a whole roomful of new paintings that I've never seen before, I think I stand in the doorway and look around and say Ugh! to all of them, or "There's one over there in the corner that I think is marvelous. I'll go and

Miles: look at that." Then I gradually let the paintings sink in. But I don't think it's right to pretend that I'm not instantly responding, and I don't think it's right to start saying, "These are good and those are bad." That's just far too premature--and by premature I mean not only in terms of days but of weeks, months, and years. That's why I like to spend a lot of time describing and analyzing.

The reason for my scholarship in poetry is that I feel we know all too little about what we're talking about. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't believe what we feel, but rather it means we should believe what we feel in a clear-cut, open way, so that we allow ourselves to go back and then see what is there in addition to, or in counter to, what we are able to get from it, which is usually sort of limited.

So Robert Hawley says he doesn't know what I like. One reason is that Robert Hawley very kindly brings me a lot of books which I don't like, and I don't particularly want to write back and tell him I don't like them.

Teiser: Why don't you?

Miles: Because Robert Hawley has got a clear taste of his own, and I respect it.

Teiser: He brings you things that he likes?

Miles: No, I think he brings me what he publishes. I think I'm just on his donation list. I don't know what he likes, as far as that goes. I often send people to him, and sometimes he accepts them and sometimes he doesn't. He accepted Naomi Clark, who I think is wonderful, and she couldn't get in anywhere. But he took her on. He has a kind of eclecticism that I think is good. I don't have any eclecticism at all. I really like very, very few things. I could never be an editor or a critic because I don't like that many things.

Teiser: What don't you like? Can you describe what you really don't like?

Miles: Oh, let's see. No, I can't, really. Maybe in the whole world I like ten poems, and you're asking me to describe all the rest [laughing], which would be a little difficult. [Laughter]

Teiser: Hawley also said--I always ask him what the current state of small press publishing is--he said there's lots and lots being published; he suspects that there's some kind of a factory some place in the Midwest which sends a helicopter full of [laughing] poetry every week, and a large percentage of it shouldn't be published--it's just bad.

Miles: I don't agree. Maybe I'm not seeing what he's seeing, though; a lot more of it comes to him than to me. But an example is what's done by the Poets' Co-op around here. I'm not sure yet about all these titles, but we have a Poets' Co-op, a Poets' Conspiracy, a Poets' Collective. These meet on various nights and alternate Wednesdays, and sometimes they meet at Cody's Bookstore. One of them--I think the Co-op--publishes an annual anthology. It would be a good target for the word "bad," but I would think that would be a mistake. I think it should be a target for the word "good" also. It's kind of preliminary; the people may not get better. But it's potential, a strong potential volume.

Oh--I guess I know what I think is bad. What is bad is absolutely inert repetition of old modes, where the whole life has gone out of them. In other words, really bad poetry, as I see it, would be done by people who were writing haiku for the five millionth time, or Whittier's "Snowbound," or whatever generation they're from, doing it with absolutely no sense of anything but doing it again. That's not bad either psychologically; I mean that's the kind of practice and the kind of exercise which I would welcome. When I get that kind of manuscript I just write back and say, "Keep on doing this, and also do a lot of reading so you'll see if there are other things you'd like to try." In other words, try to widen your horizons so that the repetition doesn't become inert.

But the Co-op stuff is by no means inert. It's full of life and vigor. That's how I would think most of the stuff I see, multifarious as it is, has that kind of life in it.

Teiser: Do you assume that a lot of it won't survive and some will? I mean continue to be read.

Miles: Well, you know, John Donne almost didn't survive.

Teiser: He came back.

Miles: Yes, yes. I'm not sure how important--is survival really an important criterion for you? You mean, is this stuff writing toward the future? Well, I'm afraid maybe it doesn't have that much originality. If you put it in a space capsule it would survive, and people would get a very good idea of our time from reading it, if that's a good criterion for survival.

With Kathleen Fraser and Robert Haas, I was a judge for a contest which San Jose State ran for the bicentennial, in which they asked for poems from all over the country for the bicentennial. They told us we'd have to read about sixty or

Miles: eighty poems and make a decision of the first ten. Actually they got over a thousand poems. That's bad, because we had to read those, and we all slaved for months reading huge boxes. If we'd been warned by them, we'd have divided them up, but nobody told us these were going to keep coming. Now, on the other hand, we got a lot of stuff there which we could separate into bad and good, and the bad would be poems that began, "Columbia, the gem of the ocean/Columbia the gem of the sea/My heart's devotion goes to thee." In other words, they would reek of poetry you had heard before. The good ones would have just marvelous touches of nobody else in them: My grandfather's wooden teeth, or George Washington's wooden teeth, or the buffalo on the prairie, or catching whales. Even if it wasn't very well written, it would be marvelously interesting and have the quality that a good diary would have.

Happily, the three of us agreed on this. We all saved out from this ghastly flow I believe it was two hundred poems, and that's not what they'd wanted to hear. This is probably a pretty good answer about your word good and bad, because it was certainly a laboratory for what you're asking. Furthermore, we tended to agree on what the good ones were. Of the two hundred, all three of us, different as we are, agreed on about 150 of them. Kathleen wanted a few more women's attitude poems than Robert and I did. Robert and I agreed almost totally. So we added maybe twenty or twenty-five poems more from the women's point of view for her--they were still good, but I mean they seemed to us a little more conventional--and then we took this two hundred and shipped them down there and said, "These are it, and we suggest you don't give any prizes but publish a book, and spend the money that way," because there was no poem there that we thought was outstandingly good. Okay? Well, the rituals of the world don't allow for this, and the San Jose citizens who donated the money didn't want this. They wanted awards to be given to fine, upstanding young American students who would be encouraged to go on. Actually, when they did force--these were all anonymous, by the way--when they did force a winner, it turned out to be a conscientious objector who lived in Canada. So justice was done. [Laughter]

Oh, and by the way, I should say that since they were anonymous, we found later that of the thousand, another two or three hundred were by well-known poets, that we'd rejected. There shows the amorphousness of the bad, because we were clearly getting in a groove of some kind of learning something about America, and many of the very good poets were just still telling us something about themselves or something. In other words, you develop special criteria for special occasions.

Miles: Finally, they did force us to give awards, which was really painful and useless--an example of how "bad" and "good" aren't meaningful terms. But then they did raise enough money in town to publish the book, and I think it's an awfully interesting and good book, interesting because it's a documentary almost. That's just a whole example of other sets of criteria.

This summer I was a judge for the best poetry written in America by somebody who'd published two or more books by all the publishers. Again, we had to read everything, except vanity presses (remember I told you that, that I had to read a lot of little presses).* The other two judges--and I guess I agreed with them--said that as a whole the poetry of 1976 did not seem to them good poetry, and I guess I would agree. So there's another answer to the meaning of bad (you see how relative this all is): in the sense of vitality of people that we know writing today, the 180 books that we read last year were not all that vital.

Now, what does vital mean? It apparently meant for us that we didn't get much sense of the quality, the identity of the speaker, the poet, and anything particularly new in the way he was saying what he wanted to say--not necessarily new, but peculiarly adapted to what he wanted to say. There were maybe ten like that, but as it turned out they didn't fit the stipulations laid down by the contest.

It must mean that good and bad, as you already told me, are not absolute but are relative to occasions where you're working.

Teiser: Hawley also said he sees poetry today as being two parallel streams, one the neat poems of Bukowsky, and the other the Olson influence.

Miles: Oh, he saw those as different, did he?

Teiser: He considers them parallel and quite different.

Miles: I'd have to do some readjusting of perspective there.

Teiser: I thought he was indicating that Bukowsky's line flies all over the place and Olson's line is structured.

Miles: Maybe. If so, then Hawley is over in Camp A and he's not talking about Camp B, because neither of them is at all neat in the sense of neatness that is still being written. When I mentioned Ted

*Page 161.

- Miles: Weiss and Leonard Nathan, Robert Haas--oh, so, so many--Grace Schulman, Albert Goldbarth (these are books published last year)--so many people that we read that were fairly good, they have a very controlled accentual line of a fair degree of regularity, of a fair degree of stanzaic structure or something close to it. Whereas Olson and Bukowsky are both over on the side of a great deal of break in the line. Olson has a whole theory in what he calls projective verse of the projectile quality of the line, which brings the force to the end of the line and then breaks over, and where you break the line in unusual places just so that force will build up. (He uses the metaphor of the synapse.) Bukowsky does that so much that he doesn't get that kind of controlled force. I can see how you would make them opposed to each other, but as I say, that's only in terms of getting over in that side of the picture in the first place.
- Teiser: Not analyzing the whole field...
- Miles: Yes. They're even both on the other side of Allen Ginsberg because he uses a kind of chant beat. I can't think of any outstanding poet today, beside those two, who uses such broken [lines]. Creeley does, but Creeley does it in a different way again, a very controlled, formalistic kind of break that he uses.
- I would need more enlightenment on what Robert meant there.
- Teiser: As I look at the whole small publishing picture here, I see Hawley's publishing as being perhaps diverse, but also having what I would call high standards (I guess now I'm contradicting you [laughing]), while many publishing ventures will publish anything that's done with enthusiasm. Is that right?
- Miles: You don't mean vanity presses?
- Teiser: Well, it's hard--I don't know what the difference now is between a vanity press and a small press, because some people publish their own poems.
- Miles: No, I was just thinking of big vanity presses like Vantage.
- Teiser: No, no, no. But I suppose the ultimate vanity press really is self-publishing, isn't it?
- Miles: The small presses are doing it differently. The editor, the publisher of the press, makes his selection. Paul Foreman doesn't publish anybody he doesn't like.
- Teiser: Oh yes, that's right. Well, I think he's very selective too.

- Miles: And Don Cushman, and Dennis Koran, and Robert Hawley and--who else? Well, you mention the old presses--the old White Rabbit, Robin Blaser, and a woman who publishes Cafe Solo down in San Luis Obispo.
- Teiser: You mentioned Hitchcock.
- Miles: Yes. These are all highly, devotedly personal about their own standards; they all think they've got the highest standards in the country. They can't bear all the other stuff that's coming out. So they're more idiosyncratic about it. That's why I think it's important to accept them all, as far as one can.
- Teiser: There's a chap whose name I finally thought of today and have lost again who's very vigorous and very anxious to publish in San Francisco. He publishes about once every quarter, I guess, a hefty kind of magazine-size anthology.
- Miles: Was it Norman Moser?
- Teiser: No.
- Miles: There's another one. Ed Mycue? Oh, there is really lots of stuff going on over there. There's Tom Head, is that his name? The Head Press.
- Harroun: You don't mean Stephen Vincent?
- Teiser: Stephen Vincent!*
- Miles: Oh yes, he used to be head of Intersection.** Yes, he's interesting.
- Teiser: He keeps publishing.
- Miles: Yes. Intersection is a very free, experimental, rather good, healthy place, I think--I mean healthy for variety. Yes, that's true, he does.
- Teiser: The publication of gay men--they started long ago a quarterly.
- Miles: Oh yes, you mean Manroot.

*The publication is Shocks.

**A San Francisco arts center.

Teiser: Manroot, yes, which seems to be fairly selective.

Miles: That focuses on the whole homosexual tradition and is very--

Teiser: But publishes material more widely diverse than that.

Miles: But, yes, it's pretty focused, though, on the prison tradition too. And John Oliver Simon is doing some prison poetry. That's another interesting kind. It's a good example of the point. A lot of that prison poetry is not howlingly well done, but it is howlingly moving, and how you can reject it I don't know.

If you take Poetry Flash and just notice that there are about five or ten poetry groups to go to every night, and most of them are publishing, you see Robert Hawley's point, that there's an avalanche of work happening, and I would say it's at a miraculously high level all over. I don't run into any of it that I would want to reject. When I go to the poetry meetings around here, where kids grab the mikes and they have fights and they throw each other out of the cafe and they yell obscenities and so forth, a lot of that is extraneous. But the poetry you hear at those meetings is often extremely good--extremely good, again I mean in the sense that there's a sense of strength, of interest, and some sense of constructive effort in it. The more the presses manage to handle that and get it out and get it improving, the better it'll be.

This may all wear itself out and people will turn to some other form of expression or communication or what have you, but while they're doing this I'd say there's no point in blocking it off at any point.

Teiser: To go way over on to another point of view, Hal [Harold I.] Silverman, who edits California Living and who has clearly somewhat of an open mind about--

Miles: I like that magazine. I think he's doing a good job there, don't you?

Teiser: I do.

Miles: His articles have the sense of what the New Yorker used to be good at--a tremendously patient detail of observation, which I really like.

Teiser: I was muttering to him--we did an article for him that he wouldn't take; maybe we didn't have much conviction in it. It was on Paul Foreman and Everson and a little press in San Francisco called Five Trees, run by women. I don't know--maybe it was just because we couldn't get it for him.

Miles: Was it about small press poetry?

Teiser: Yes, it was--small presses and what they were doing. I said, "You know, there's something wrong here. I guess we were writing for an audience that was already interested"--which we were, as a matter of fact--"but why shouldn't there be an audience that's already interested? Why shouldn't there be interest here in what's being written?" And he said, "Because most of the small press stuff is so bad." I said, "Well, I don't think so."

Miles: Well, there's nothing easier in the world than to call other people's stuff bad. I just think that the exhilaration of finding the good is worth reading a lot of bad, makes reading a lot of bad worthwhile. In teaching a poetry class, of course, you get down to another nitty-gritty of this where you're reading twenty and thirty poems a week which you can call bad. But what bad means there is self-sabotage; they haven't got themselves together. When they start getting themselves together and a poem starts moving in a direction of their choice, it's so exciting that you're not sorry you've read the efforts along the way. To sit around calling that stuff bad to begin with, the tendency would be to not ever get the good results. I suppose you get good results in some ways by calling things bad by challenging people, and I'm sure that's often done. You know, "This is just so awful," and the fellow is so hurt that's told this that he goes out and tries something, and in anger, in adrenalin, improves it.

Don Cushman was my reader once, and I had a huge, huge poetry class--about fifty people--and I needed readers. At the end we were giving grades, and grading just meant--it was an honors course to begin with, so you just decided whether they were good or better. Don said, "I suppose you think there are some really good people here, and I don't think there's one, not one." In terms of this community, he has a more hierarchical view than I do, and that was an interesting example of it. I actually thought there were four or five. So we're not all that far apart, and Don is a very good example of hierarchical taste. He was a good follower of Jim Tate, and Jim Tate is pretty selective on what he does.

The question is, "Is it bad, on the way to being good?" That's the question--is it in motion? I would say around here and in San Francisco it is. Of course, I haven't been to all the thousands of millions of bar readings that go on over there. Maybe Silverman has. But the people you were talking about aren't that way. This is a book that Paul [Foreman] just brought me. It's an anthology called Southwest, and it's just people from Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California. I was just reading through the list of contributors; I scarcely know one of them, because it's a whole other scene. I'm sure you could throw the whole thing out as bad, or you could hail it as great, either place, wherever you want to stand.

Teiser: He's very interesting. I must get in touch with him and apologize for taking up a lot of his time when it didn't come to anything; maybe it will some day.

Miles: With California Living, my hunch is that you did it in too traditional a fashion. I think the interesting thing about the people who write for Silverman is that they write the story kind of as if they were having breakfast, lunch, and dinner with the person.

Teiser: [Laughter] Yes.

Miles: And so what you would do--really, seriously, if you want to think about it--is to go to the West Coast Print Center, sit around and watch the presses turning, and see who comes in and what they bring and the questions they ask. You'd enjoy it, and that's what Silverman wants, I think.

Teiser: Good idea.

Miles: That's I think the virtue of California Living, that it does not stand apart and look at things as they have been structured, which is what traditional writing tends to do, but tries to get there in the midst and follow the process. Remember that popular contrast that we have today between product and process? Products are out. Process is self-involving, and so on. You could do a fascinating article on the West Coast Print Center, and it could stress form and it could stress all these people, but it would just be--remember that night that I read at Panjandrum?*

Teiser: Yes.

Miles: Now, that was an interesting evening as a process. The people that were there, what they did and said, the old man who thought I was Ina Coolbrith, and lots of fascinating stuff was going on there, but you'd have to be God to listen in on it all--that was the hard part.

Teiser: We were in the back, and we didn't hear you were Ina Coolbrith.

Miles: It wasn't public. He just came up later and said did I remember Ina Coolbrith who, way back in the early forties, used to teach at Berkeley. She was lame and a very interesting old lady. I said, "I think you're talking about me, if you'll pardon the expression." "Oh no! No, no, no, no. You're quite a young lady. This was Ina Coolbrith. She had white hair, and she taught poetry in Wheeler Hall in Berkeley in the early forties." It was really kind of an interesting confusion. [Laughter]

*Panjandrum Press in San Francisco.

Teiser: That was an interesting evening. People were so involved.

Miles: Yes, and they were so miscellaneous--where on earth did they all come from? And the presence of the presses around there. It's even more harrowing at Cushman's place* because they're so busy, and people are there nursing their own manuscripts through the presses. Oh, it's just funny.

Teiser: That's a good idea. I guess the reason we wanted to write that article was that Everson had just published an interesting book that had never been given any notice, Archetype West, and Foreman was just doing that anthology of translations--

Miles: And you could add Stan Rice of Mudra Press to this now. That would give you another good lead. Oh, don't despair. Do it over. With Stan Rice's award now, that's a big motivation. I've been hoping you would do that because the Mudra Press deserves quite a bit of credit for getting that award, and who the heck is Mudra Press? Two nice women that felt that Stan ought to get printed.

[end tape 1, side 2]

*The West Coast Print Center in Berkeley.

INTERVIEW VII -- 18 August 1977

[This interview begins, after a section of faulty taping, with a continuation of the discussion of teaching students to write clearly. (See pages 95ff.)]

Committees

[begin tape 1, side 1]

Miles: Besides writing and research and teaching, there's another side to our work--committees. The committee work is very various. First of all, early in the fifties a subcommittee on educational policy started studying junior-year writing and how to teach improvement all along, using what they knew. What teachers need to know is what to do very simply and fast and quick and clear that the students can absorb and use. When we first started working in the fifties, with students in other departments, we would say, "Okay, we're going to have two people mark your midterm, one from English and one from History," or whatever the other course was, "and compare notes on how much of the problems they find are in the writing." The students would look very bewildered and they'd say, "But don't you want this written like an English paper? You don't want it written like a History paper, do you?" We'd say, "What's the difference?" Well, in History you don't bother about the writing." In other words, they have a kind of esoteric feeling that in English classes you do something special, and you don't generally do that because there's no demand.

After we got the History instructor and the History teaching assistant to talk about the importance, and when we were able to point out that maybe half of their grade depended on the lack of organization rather than the lack of information--that's why they were able to improve so fast. I mean, it was a sheer survival technique, and they were motivated by dire necessity, not by interest or by any lovely thing like that. They realized it was impractical to write the messy way they'd been writing.

Miles: It's from that that we carried over now to the teachers and to the schools. This is about the fourth year of the [Bay Area] Writing Project, and I think that the statistic of improvement showed up last year.

Teiser: My word! That is fast.

Miles: It is fast, and it can happen right away. You might ask about the minority people. Subject A has done some very interesting experiments with them, and they do have some motivation problems that are different; that is, they don't trust their own voice or their own evidence or their own position in a middle class English that's stripped of their own colorful qualities. And so, in Subject A, especially in the black and Asian courses, and chicano, they've been doing a lot: about the first month is getting the student to be free to assert himself and free to state his own position.

A very sad result of scientism and behaviorism and a lot of things that went on in the first half of the twentieth century is a kind of mechanization of writing in which you use the passive and the impersonal. Science did this because science wanted to observe rather than interpret. And yet, interestingly enough, in my studies of prose styles, as I think I mentioned, the most adjectival or descriptive or elaborate prose style is a scientist's because he wants to assume a lot of qualities, and that takes a grammatical construction of adjectival modifications. Young students are not wanting to make that much assumption; they're going to try probably to state simple opinions, and that's going to be short sentences, which is all right for them.

We try to say to teachers, we try to encourage them to say, "Don't forbid anything." Typical remarks are, "Don't use 'I'," "Don't use the passive," "Don't use the word thing," "Don't use short sentences," "Don't use adjectives," or don't use this or don't use that--these are all easy tags that the teacher has got to assert so that if the student does do this they can mark him down for it. Anything goes in any traditional style in English prose so long as it's used for the right purpose; that is, for the purpose that the student establishes. [Telephone interruption]

Ask me something, because I forget where I was.

Teiser: I think you were summing up the fact that when you didn't put demands upon students, then--

Miles: Yes, yes. If we could manage to agree on the demands and make them simple enough, I think we're okay. Subject A has developed some very good approaches with minority students that are working well.

- Miles: Subject A also developed an interesting diagnostic test. (I should mention names here. Phyllis Brooks is one, and there are others.) They developed a diagnostic test, finding that, say, 80 percent of errors are four errors, and those are all errors of coherence. In other words, they mean that the student doesn't see what he's doing. If he sees what he's doing, those errors all fall away. Happily, that corroborates our studies in the fifties when we found that--we didn't isolate them especially as coherence errors, and we didn't isolate them down to four, but just a great mass of errors falls away if the student knows what he is doing.
- Teiser: In the thirties at Stanford there was a little book that was very popular among Subject A teachers called Thinking to Some Purpose--
- Miles: That sounds good.
- Teiser: --that was supposed to underlie the whole shooting works. When I taught Subject A I think I spent all my time abjuring the students to think. That's why I didn't get anywhere with them.
- Miles: That's true. That's why I was going to say that very title speaks from another era, because words like reasoning and thinking aren't stylish now. It goes way back, then; it goes twenty years back, thinking and purpose and goals (that's not a very good word either). It's just another ambience of kinds of terms that are good. A concept now is some way of talking about developing the stages through which you carry an idea. "Idea" is not a good word either. When I once asked a student in freshman English (somebody impatiently said, "What do you mean by an idea, anyway?"), I said, "What does an idea mean to you?" and this kid said, "An untrue fact." There is that sense of opinion that isn't valid.

That's the whole problem of the behavioristic, mechanistic tradition, and we really have to work hard to bring that extreme together with the subjective extreme of "Anything I say is right," and "My journal, bad or good," and all this kind of thing. Many good teachers in our department are now teaching journals, which they consider sacred, which they will not correct, obviously. How would you correct a journal?! Students are encouraged to use other media, too. All this is good, except there's a main line in the middle between thinking to some purpose and photomontage and journal keeping, which is having an idea--which is making a generalization and supporting the generalization with instances. When they can do that, then they can handle academic work, which is asking them to test generalizations by the reference to instances, or to make generalization on the basis of instances they have experienced, and it's just so simple! But I go and talk to people and people say, "What do you mean by a generalization?" That's not an easy answer for people who have to ask you the question.

Miles: But you're right--you can't use the word "thinking," you shouldn't better use the word "logic," and so on. Some of our very best handbooks today, written by very good friends of mine, give examples of good thesis sentences, ones like, "Everybody should pay more attention to politics"--now, that's an impossible thesis sentence because of the "everybody," and their simplest study of logic should have told them that, so that it's the teachers as well as the students who are confused. I mean, you can't write about all or none, you can't write about superlatives, and yet a typical student lead sentence--if you ask them to write on "My Home Town," they'll write, "My home town is the best little home town in the world." Impossible unless you're going to deal with all the other home towns in the world and show why it's best. But they don't use a superlative with any meaning like that; it's just an emotional remark from a chamber of commerce bulletin. So you have to spend time talking about what kind of a generalization could they themselves support. Once they see what kind they can support, then they feel secure in supporting it. But obviously they have felt pretty mixed up about supporting some of these other ones.

It's fun and it's easy--that's the sad part that it has got so mixed up. But naturally of course it has, in all the confusions of our culture; that's obvious. When I say it's fun and easy, it's fun and easy because at that simple level where I'm talking about it, you hardly ever get any reality. But if you can persuade them to see that reality, abstract enough to see that reality to use it even a little bit in their college work, it's very helpful. And I don't just mean college work; I mean making reports and in almost everything they're going to have to do in whatever job they have, just to be able to make a generalization, perceive a general situation and then see what instances need to support it. It's not just a college exercise; also it's a lifestyle.

One meaning of illiteracy, I think, in our society is the inability to use language to generalize and to support. This is a simple thing we just have to teach over and over.

Did I mention before--yes, I'm sure I did--when I was in high school, I enjoyed teaching the neighbors, who were young men starting in business. Why did the young man, who was twenty-four years old, come over and ask me how to help him write his report for Dun and Bradstreet? Because he had twenty-five yellow pages of data on Albers Mills, which he'd been asked to visit, and he didn't know how to make a generalization to cover the twenty-five pages of data.

Teiser: Was he able intellectually to add it up and do something?

- Miles: Yes, he could. When I, in my simple high school way, said, "Let me read over this data and see what seems to repeat itself," and then I would say, "Oh yes, you keep talking here about too much overhead. What does that mean?" He would say, "Well," and he'd explain it to me, and the light would dawn on his face and I wouldn't have to say anything except, "Oh yes, hey, that's a good point: One of the problems at Albers is too much overhead."
- Teiser: Then you were teaching him to think.
- Miles: Well, that's your term. I'd just say I was teaching him to generalize. [Laughter] Avoid the word "think" at all costs these days. [Laughter]
- Teiser: Well, I suppose, when you have a selected group, when you have people who are able to pass an aptitude test and get into college, you have people capable of making generalizations.
- Miles: You don't, though, because they haven't had any practice consciously doing it. They may be doing it unconsciously, and that's how they'll skim through.
- Teiser: But they're capable of learning, you mean. I don't know that the whole high school population would be--
- Miles: The people that we taught in upper division learned, as I say, in two weeks, because it meant that they already knew but weren't using it. We would go back and say, "Look, our teaching assistant shows that you actually did D- work in the writing of this paper. Your History TA says you had B amount of information. So what's the result? You get a C- on the test. That's nonsense! You should be getting the B credit for the information." The teacher would stand up and say, "Yeah, yeah. Go, go," and the assistant would stand up--if we had said it, they wouldn't have listened; but when we got this general affirmation, then we'd give them another test two weeks later (just use their same old midterm techniques), and the exact data I think is that over 50 percent of the class improved more than a whole grade in two weeks. That meant that they were suddenly paying attention to what they were doing, that's all, and they recognized the demand.
- Teiser: Does grammar play any part in this? Is that another bad word?
- Miles: Grammar isn't too bad a word. I do think we talked a lot about this before; we were talking about grammar, rhetoric, and logic, remember?
- Teiser: But in this relationship. Do you teach them grammar?

Miles: Sure. The study of grammar has been a lot improved through linguistics studies and somebody like Charles Fries. Linguistics as a whole hasn't seemed to be very applicable because it's so elaborate, but it helps you get rid of those nonsensical eight parts of speech, it helps you get rid of a lot of stress on frills in sentence structure. One of the best teachers of writing in the country in the last five years, and very crucial to our program, is Francis Christensen of USC. Grammar is what he stressed; he taught through grammar. He would point out, for example, how Hemingway began with modifying phrases. You know, "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I will begin my talk with an anecdote." Now that "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking" is considered very sophisticated, and teachers don't even bother to teach it because--they just say, "Don't write short, jerky sentences," but they don't bother to say how you can get around writing short-- One way is to use an initial modifier, which would be "unaccustomed as I am." Christensen helped the students see how to do that.

Jim Gray has spent lots of time doing that, and it works very well, especially in the black community because the black community uses that kind of rhetoric all the time. He was simply cashing in on the powers of black English, which are more elaborate, less simplistic than the grammars of white English at this level. So he had very good luck with letting the black community use its own powers of language of this kind.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

Teiser: What about memory work?

Miles: We could do more with, I think, use of memory again. I have a very bad memory, and I stopped being a Classics major because I couldn't memorize all the lines I was supposed to learn. So I'm not too enthusiastic. But on the other hand, I think some simple use of memory throughout school would be good if we would decide how to do it reasonably. I think memory would give students the security that they now don't have.

Teiser: I was thinking of this in connection with the fact that Leonard Bacon's daughter said that he could recite long passages of Shakespeare, and I remember that my father could. Perhaps that was part of the education of that period.

Miles: And a lot of it was very dead wood, and you can make fun of it. On the other hand, some of it might be good. I know a lot of people who can do nothing but recite long passages from Shakespeare. They don't inspire me.

Teiser: I suppose one thing about learning things, if not by heart, at least becoming very familiar, is that so much literature, particularly of the past, is allusive. I suppose if you don't know what it's alluding to--

Miles: Of course, they could learn literature of the present, besides; it doesn't have to be the past.

INTERVIEW VIII -- 25 September 1977

[including portions of Interview VI and VII]
[begin tape 1, side 1]

Teiser: I'm afraid we should recapitulate what was inadvertently lost on the tape, which was a discussion of the Bay Area Writing Project. We're going to fill in and then add on, is that all right?

Miles: Fill in about the Bay Area Writing Project.

This very interesting work with the Bay Area Writing Project began actually way back in 1960 when Jim Gray, Ken Lane, and Leo Ruth, three young supervisors in Education--all supervisors of teaching of English--had a lot of good, lively ideas about teaching English. I joined with them, and a visitor by the name of Dick Worthen from Diablo Valley, and others, had a big meeting in 145 Dwinelle with lots of teachers invited. The teachers seemed to like it, so we kept on having meetings. It turned into something called the Chancellor's Conference in Teaching, every May. These young men had the virtue of winning progressively the interest of more and more teachers throughout the Bay Area and throughout the state.

Also at this time teachers were organizing somewhat because there were great problems under the then superintendent, Rafferty, whenever he was in. So they organized the California Association of Teachers of English, and various branches of that, and they had conferences at Asilomar, at Yosemite, and in San Francisco and Los Angeles. Great activity of teachers trying to figure out how to cope with the social problems of the sixties. The picture of teachers giving up on teaching just 'cause things got rough in the sixties is really pretty unfair because, while I'm sure some teachers gave up under too many students and too much pressure, they were constantly doing more and more studying of how to meet those very problems.

Miles: There was an interesting summary today of reasons why SAT scores had gone down over the last fourteen years or something. One of their main points was that teachers had held less high standards. I would really like to take five or eight hours to debate this point because, for one thing, standards are not necessarily limited to SAT standards, which are white, middle class, eastern seaboard standards. I think maybe our teachers have taught marvelously new things that aren't being yet examined for. On the other hand, the pressures of the sixties, and the failure--here I go again!--of administrators to back up the teachers under these pressures meant that teachers simply didn't have the strength and time to give the extra effort that they needed to do all the new exploring they had to do. But that's what these very good teachers did, with our supervisors.

We developed a kind of strong esprit de corps. I say "we" because I was in on it, but they really deserve the credit--and others too. Miles Myers, Cap Lavin, many, many others who--

Teiser: When you say you were in on it, what do you mean--you met with them frequently?

Miles: Exactly, that's what I mean, yes. They, however, did all the organizing and all the work. They, about three or four years ago when Subject A scores were so bad, organized a four-week program in the summer at Berkeley to invite teachers to come and work in a seminar of twenty-five to help each other develop a program which they would specifically and formally carry back to their high schools and specifically and formally teach in their high schools. They feared they wouldn't get support from their administrators, but we had a dinner for the administrators that following fall and got great enthusiasm from them. This whole program was helped by one of our administrators, Rod [Roderic B.] Park, our provost. Also our chancellor, Al [Albert H.] Bowker, is interested in the whole teaching of writing because he was at CUNY [City University of New York] when they had the open program there and saw how there is a great problem of teaching. Anyway, we had some good support.

This first seminar worked very well the first year, and I went to that part-time, and to the second part-time, and I missed last year. I went again this year part-time. The nice news was that scores in the taking of the placement test, essay writing for college placement at Berkeley, had fallen to about 70 percent failures of all who took it, and after two or three years of our program the failure was only 20 percent. This was enough evidence to finally get real support from foundations, which at first had laughed at us, and it was really "they laughed when I sat down at the piano" kind of thing because really they did come around and ask to help us. Jim now has lots of money and lots of organizations

Miles: all over the state; there's even a branch of the Bay Area Writing Project in New York. It's very exhilarating, because there are simple, good ways to teach if we can get everybody organized and focused on doing it.

Those ways, briefly, substantively are just to focus on teaching the making of reasonable, supportable generalizations and then supporting them. You'd be surprised, as simple as that sounds, how nobody understands what a generalization is, or how to support it. They fool around with things like "what is description," "what is narrative," and a great many old-fashioned left-over problems from the nineteenth century, or else they're very modern and deal with journal writing and expressiveness, which doesn't give them much help in formalizing the support of ideas. So that is a nice, hard working, inventive and successful project I've been in on and enjoyed for now about seventeen years or so. It was not discontinuous with the one I mentioned at Berkeley, the Prose Improvement Program, where we had worked for the preceding decade on teaching our own university students. We keep learning the same thing over and over; if we could manage to spread it far enough fast enough, we wouldn't be in such bad shape as we seem to be in.

Teiser: You said somewhere that a couple of weeks of intensive teaching would--

Miles: Yes, a couple of weeks of intensive teaching, with a double support, one from the teacher of English and one from the teacher of the subject matter. This is absolutely vital to have a double view; otherwise, the students think that English is something special that's being dragged in on them. Or they get a rather fragmentary teaching from their own subject matter teacher. The combination is necessary, and it's the stress on generalization and support of generalization with data. This they sort of know already. It's really the demand for it and the reminder of it that makes them come through with it.

The minority problem is also a problem of voice; that is, the self-assurance of the student.

Teiser: I think we've managed not to lose on the tape your discussion of that.

Miles: All right. Then that's a good place to stop with that. Then we might turn over to other committee work I did, or lecturing and so on?

Teiser: Yes. There were two committees, I think, that you didn't mention, and one was a Committee on Research of the Academic Senate, and the other was the President's Committee on Search for the Chancellor of the Berkeley Campus.

Miles: Yes. I forgot about those before. The Research Committee I was on fairly briefly--I learned a lot on it--because that is a rather pathetic committee. It distributes money which the University has to aid scholarship of faculty members, aid research. But it has so little money that we sit around quibbling over whether we should give a man \$300 or \$320, and if he has five children we decide to give him \$320. There's a real pathos that I could hardly bear. The National Science Foundation supports the sciences, and so this committee, though it was heavy with scientists, was very aware of the fact that we needed more support for the humanities. We did, I remember, support some very interesting projects, like stone rubbings from Asia, and researches into musical analysis. But actually that figure \$300 is roughly what we were able, as an average, to give people on this. You know you can't do terribly much research [laughing] for a year on \$300.

What I learned from that committee was mostly a kind of breadth of view and generosity from the men on that committee, as a whole; not in all cases, because there was one man who kept counting the children in a way that bothered me. But a kind of breadth of view which the other committees at other campuses didn't have. I was impressed with the fact that experience and maturity in Berkeley does mean something.

For example, the committees from other campuses would write us and say, "Don't you think that we should dock a professor any amount that he makes after he has done the work on his research?" In other words, if we had helped him \$300 worth, and he sells a book, shouldn't we ask for \$300 back from his royalties? This was a reasonable request and I entertained it happily and, yeah, why not, and fair's fair, and that would replenish the funds and so forth. It was so marvelous to me to hear these men explain [laughing] why that was just nonsense; that our job is to encourage, and the more they make the greater, and the more they try and do, the greater. If we're always going to keep tabs on these little bits of money we're giving them, the whole thing becomes kind of a silly little game. It was that kind of a larger view of what we were trying to do with this money, which was not to trade back and forth but was to get good work done, that was very exhilarating to me.

The Search for the Chancellor Committee was a very hard, hard, hard job. We had a good chairman from the law department, and we had good people who knew a lot. Often I play the role of somebody representing the naivete, innocence, and gentility of the humanities. That's the role I had on that committee. There were about two others of us who did, plus the students who were on the committee were very interesting. I tended always to agree with what the students wanted rather than what my colleagues wanted in the way of a chancellor, and I'm sure we were wrong. We were

Miles: interested in people with interesting ideas who'd written well on the subject of student problems, and the generality--I would say most of the people that we pulled for for the few first weeks of our discussions--are now in rest homes. None of them could stand the gas of the sixties, and they all retired early and are writing their memoirs. Whereas the older, wiser men on this committee kept saying, "You've got to have somebody strong, who can fight, who can even do in-fighting. It doesn't matter whether you like him or whether he likes the students. It has very little to do with charisma." They would always say, "Al Bowker is one of the ones who keeps being brought up, and he's from New York," but everybody said at the outset, "He has no charisma." This is one thing that was said about him, and the other thing was that he was rather careless in appearance. We heard this so often, excusing, on the other side, his wonderful ability to organize. He had done very good work at Stanford in building up the Graduate Division, and Berkeley clearly needed support in its Graduate Division because it was being robbed steadily of its graduate powers because of the political desire of demagogues in the state to fill us up with freshmen; in other words, to provide more opportunities to more people, but not higher opportunities to more advanced students. That was the argument: that Bowker was strong and intelligent in the way of research.

He came, and after--oh, we had hundreds of proposals. All of us investigated the biographies of hundreds of people. Then we telephoned to people we knew in every state where somebody was concerned, or a university where somebody was concerned. We had fascinating discussions with people about their administrators. Finally I think Mr. Bowker was the only one we actually interviewed; I mean he was the first one we interviewed, and everybody liked him--liked not him, because he doesn't exactly ask to be loved, but liked what he stood for. The regents did too, and so he came here.

Interestingly enough, some of our other candidates were later called upon for other jobs in the University. So we did a good job of developing not just one, but a list of good people. It was good experience for me, surely, to be on a committee with such broad-viewed men interested in administration and policies, and also to see how that committee was handled. We didn't do much dilly-dallying, and everything was held very tightly under control by the chairman.

The other kind of work that I was doing at the same time, committee work, was, for one thing, on the Chancellor's Committee for the Arts. That was the other side of my interest, in the arts. There were some prizes set up, Eisner Awards, in five art departments: Graphic Arts, Music, Drama, English, and Architecture. Those were fairly large; that is, they could range from \$600 to

Miles: \$3000 for a student, for the work, as a kind of fellowship so that he could do his work without having to work on the side. The Chancellor's Committee administered those.

Fascinating people on that committee. Joe [Joseph] Esherick was one chairman from Architecture, Philip Brett from Music, Henry May from Drama, for another. Really interesting work and debates we had. Our actual chancellors were never much interested in the arts, so the reports that we wrote to them seldom were replied to. Nevertheless, we did some really interesting reports on fountains on campus and what was wrong with them; what was wrong with temporary structures that remained permanent. We had luncheon meetings maybe every two weeks or something, and it was a great pleasure.

You might be interested if I would give you one kind of anecdote of how things went with students during the years of the arts committee (I think it was established around the beginning of the sixties or earlier, maybe). Eisner had wanted this, that these awards should be very high level, dignified awards; that they should be given at a banquet where the finest wines should be served and the finest food, and that some very good speaker should come. The donors actually left money in the treasury to pay for this particular goodness. As we administered those awards, we also administered the banquet and got the speaker and got the students to come, and so forth. It was interesting to decide where to go for dinner and what to serve and so on. It was all kind of an aesthetic unity. We had a couple of dinners of that sort, with good speakers, like the man who teaches music at UCLA, Jan Popper. Good, lively people.

Somewhere along in these disturbed times, the students who were coming to the banquet, which was at, let's say, six o'clock at the Women's Faculty Club, were caught in a tear gas barrage on Telegraph Avenue. It was a time of lots of barraging back and forth; maybe it was People's Park; I don't remember the date. Anyway, many of them coming from that direction, as most of them did, got caught in a tremendous fracas on Telegraph and surrounding streets, and they arrived at the Faculty Club about half an hour late and absolutely stripped. They were bleeding, they were cut, their clothes were torn, they looked like real orphans of the storm. I would stress the fact that it was physical endurance that these kids went through after they'd been through a police line, or trying to get around a police line, or trying to get through the tear gas. And they were crying, and they said that they couldn't come to the banquet but they just came to report. They couldn't get their checks if they didn't come to the dinner, and they wanted to get their checks and go home and clean up.

Miles: Well, Joe Esherick, who was chairman at that time, a very cool architect, I thought was really superb. He sent out for a whole bunch of big Band-Aids and gauze wrappings and some kind of disinfectant, and sent them down to the respective restrooms in the Faculty Club, told them to bandage themselves up and come to supper because they probably needed some food anyway because they were probably mostly in shock, which they were. They did this, but in expectable student fashion. They also, with great humor, removed quite a bit more of whatever clothes they had left. So they were really bare; and really, above the waist, as they sat around the table, this was one of the less formal of the banquets. You couldn't see anything but bare skin. There maybe would be at these banquets, say, considering the judges and so forth, there would be maybe forty people. So it was quite a hilarious dinner, full of anecdotes of brutality, and jokes, and lots of wine (which they never noticed how good it was), and so on. It was kind of a major absurdity, the whole thing.

Our speaker that year was Allan Kaprow, the man who talks about happenings. You know about Allan Kaprow? He was down at California Institute of the Arts. This was the man who, in the sixties, was so famous for the new sense of art as happening, which you've heard about in Golden Gate Park and with the Beatles and with Ginsberg and so forth, and with the students as a whole. Well, Kaprow was a leader in all this in the East, and he told us about the importance of art in this instant, spontaneous way, and how at the California Institute of the Arts one of their assignments was to build ice houses--ice structures--and the one most complete and yet most easily destroyed, of course, would be the winner (except competition is bad, so you don't have winners). So the students would make up teams, and they would build these ice houses in the middle of parking lots at midnight, and on freeways, and I can't remember where else. Then they would get it all done, they'd rush to meet the dawn light and the first traffic, and then when they made their deadline and the first cars kept coming and pushing over these things, then they would walk away. There was kind of triumph, you see, in this concept of art.

The young man next to me--young black student--we'd been talking about his future in music. He said to me (I'll curb some of the language), "Jo"--he didn't know me from Adam, but he called me Jo--"I'm, as I've told you, a student of the violin, and I hope to be a great violinist some day. I practice the violin at least eight hours every day, and I am so goddamn insulted by this so-and-so who's standing up there talking about melting ice houses--I think he's insulting every one of us here who've devoted our lives, as he evidently hasn't, to the perfecting of some art--that I'm leaving." He stood up, threw his wine glass into the middle of the banquet shape of the table, said this again to the assembled multitude and invited as many as wished to leave. And most of them left.

Miles: That was an example of motivated and rather interesting violence, as I experienced it. Allan Kaprow, who had, I felt, created another interesting happening, did not respond as I thought he should by saying, "God, we've really got a good happening here," but was just furious. I never could understand that. I thought he [the student] had triumphed beyond belief.

Teiser: Isn't that interesting!

Miles: It was. Actually, the whole event makes a kind of center in my mind of how there's wrong and yet right in the student point of view.

The next year, the students on our committee--there were always students on our committee, of course--said, "We just can't have any more banquets. We don't want any more. We never have wanted them. You've just got to break that part of the bequest." Whether we had to go to law, I'm not sure. I was on another committee called the Prize Committee where we had to go to law to try to break the bequest for \$1000 for the best Latin translation from Cicero, which nobody, even for a thousand dollars, wanted to do!

The dead hand of prize-giving is very, very interesting. I decided I'd never leave a prize for anything because I couldn't possibly tell what would be happening ten years from then.

Anyway, it was agreed that we would have a picnic next time--not a picnic in the hills (there were too many people) but a picnic in the same room, which was a nice, simple room, and we invited [Howard K.] Warshaw of UCSB, the painter, to come and talk. That was extremely informal. We had wine and cheese and crackers and sandwiches, and he talked, and there was a fair amount of discussion. But somehow that didn't seem like a good solution either. We tried that a couple of times. Joe Esherick was so interested--he had kids of his own--so interested in trying these things. But we couldn't quite seem to hit it off, and the students said, "Why the blankety-blank do you make us come to anything? Just mail us our checks!" which was a little angrifying to those traditionalists who felt they ought to come through with a little ceremony.

Then we tried something that has now worked out to be quite nice, because it suddenly dawned on me, "It's not really that the students want their checks. What do they really want?" You know the answer? Obviously, I'm sure you could say it: They want to be heard. It's not the money, it's the voice that they want. Henry May and I, the next year, tried--and it was a total failure, but it was because of our lack of realization of the problem--tried

Miles: to have a dinner in which they read their prize-winning poems, their prize-winning stories, or they played their prize-winning music, or they showed their prize-winning dance films on a screen, and so on. Well, we didn't realize how much rehearsal that was going to take. Besides, they weren't very responsive at all; they thought we were tricking them into something, they weren't sure what. The lights didn't work and the screen didn't work, and it was one of those bad media things where nothing works, and nobody could hear anybody. We went home very unhappy.

But we got maybe a dozen letters from students after that, saying that was it, "Do that again, though it didn't work this time. We will volunteer to run the machine, and we will volunteer to collect the stories," and so on. So now we've done it maybe three times. Now what we have, in the Art Museum, catered by the Swallow, is just a kind of an antipasto and wine, and then we have the whole show from about seven till nine in the Art Museum. Or I think the last time we had it in Hertz Hall, because there was so much good music to be heard that it seemed to need Hertz.

Now we've solved it, and I think it's a good story of trying to adapt a prize to the people, and also to the times. Temporarily we've solved it, but I'm sure there's going to be some new problem and new difficulty. But it was really interesting how--you see, again, you were talking [off the tape] about "the boy stood on the burning deck."* The Eisners, who gave this money, felt that the intrinsic quality of a good banquet and a good speaker--that is, the tradition of listening to "The boy stood on the burning deck," so to speak--was the nicest thing they could do for good people. But the sixties and seventies are saying, "No, let us be heard. We don't want to listen to anybody else. If anybody's going to recite, let it be us." I'm not saying this is better, I'm just saying it's different. Again I say I wish we could somehow, sometime get a combination.

Teiser: Is this same spirit shown at commencement now?

Miles: Yes, very much so, and we have far better speakers at commencement than we ever had in the past, and they are student speakers and they're awfully good. And student poetry readers, and this and that. It's mostly a student fiesta. On the other hand, I much regret the loss of the commencements in the stadium because I regret the loss of those marvelous Chinese families with their thousands of relatives, from Grandma down to Baby, with their big

*That is, the tradition of making students learn poetry by heart.

- Miles: picnic lunches, coming there to see some kid graduate, looking for him in these hordes of kids down on the field, finding him and taking his picture 25,000 times, and that whole mass feeling of ceremony I like too. But again, that's old-fashioned; it's too impersonal now.
- Teiser: Partly I suppose because kids aren't put through college so much nowadays as they put themselves through--is that part of it?
- Miles: I think maybe so. But for a while the parents would say--oh, the parents would complain! A lot of parents would come up and bawl the liver out of me for the fact that there was not enough ceremony for their child. But now they're coming back in such-- I think we had our graduation in Wheeler [Auditorium], which holds seven or eight hundred, and we couldn't even get the people in. So, the parents are now coming; it's now formal enough for them. There again we've hit a kind of happy medium for the moment. Always experimenting. [Laughter]
- Teiser: It's interesting that the University should be so responsive. I don't know that it always has been.
- Miles: It isn't the University, it's the departments. The University just abolished the big one; it didn't do much about it. It just said, "We can't afford to have those big fights. Do what you will. If you want to do anything, do it." This whole burden has been on the departments, I think; that is, they may have got some help, but I haven't noticed it. They get money that used to be spent the other way, for lemonade or whatever.
- The next step I took in committee work was just very exciting to me, and sort of led to where I am involved now. Would you like to have me go on with that at the moment?
- Teiser: Yes.
- Miles: We had spent a great deal of time in the Prize Committee deciding which students should get the gold medal, the student who had an all A average in chemistry or the student who had had an A+ average in physical education. I was so irked by this nonsense about one A+ and another A+, and which field is better than which field, that I asked not to be put on that committee any more. That was a natural committee for me to be on, since I was interested in writing. But a lot of it seemed like quibbling to me, especially the gold medal kind of thing, and so much depended on grades, and grades to me is such a foolishness--at least at that level, when you're quibbling about whose A- is better than whose A-. So, I said I didn't want to be on the committee but that I would be willing to serve on a committee that dealt with ideas in some way.

Miles: They hit me back with a really major blow: they put me on the Committee on Privilege and Tenure, which is essentially a legal committee, or at least it's a--it should have lay faculty on it, but its chairman is a member of the law department and it has other lawyers on it, and it's involved in faculty appeal for faculty rights of privilege or tenure. That is, if somebody is not appointed to tenure and feels the lack of appointment was unfair, or somebody who is fined for some reason, like for keeping out billions of library books, and feels it's unfair, and so on--any kind of appeal for rights, faculty rights, to the administration is brought to Privilege and Tenure, and it's a really serious, life and death kind of committee.

I didn't know what I was doing when I made this trade. It was too hard for me physically because you have to sort of stay up all night with this thing and have hearings and so on. But I did stick it out for a couple of years until I had a sabbatical, and it was fascinating. I was so impressed with the people in the law department. I guess I was on two or three years, and the final year I was not impressed with the man from the law department, which shows it wasn't a total bias. The power of the good men to see the overriding generalizations that control the conclusions, in contrast to the power of this third man to quibble, as it seemed to me, on small issues--that was just as bad as the Prize Committee then.

But those first two or three years were really stimulating and exciting and opened up my mind to the heart of the University from terms of faculty rights point of view, and University politics in terms of finagling, and then, as I say, this whole matter of ideas and how they operate. At first I felt that I could say nothing, but gradually as I was on for a while I did develop a few principles that I thought were valid.

One of the men on the committee for a while was Mark Christensen, who later became vice-chancellor, who's supposed to be--everybody says he's too nice. But he became chancellor at Santa Cruz and had too much trouble to handle it. I thought he was marvelous at elucidating principles, too (he's a geologist). I really looked forward to every meeting even if they went on too long.

By now I was hooked on committee work. My friends laugh at me for this, but I think one of the most exciting things--and of course this does relate to teaching freshman English--is to see a good, valid generalization emerging out of a messy situation, and see it emerging in the minds of people. The great thing about teaching is when suddenly that kind of light comes in somebody's eye that says, "Oh yeah. I'm beginning to get the

Miles: picture." This is true, as you know, with little, little children. When some little child begins to get a notion of something, to see the wheels turning around in their head, there's just nothing better, from my point of view. And I was seeing it happening in very august brains, and it's very stimulating there too.

Some time after that I went on to another committee called the Planning Committee.* I remember some of my friends would be on the committees that appointed me (we had a thing called the Committee on Committees, which appoints people to committees), and I remember some of my friends saying, "Jo, do you really want to be on another committee? We've talked about putting you on such-and-such, but isn't that really too much work? Are you just a committee freak, or what?" I would say, "If it's a good, thoughtful committee, put me on. I'd enjoy it." My friends tease me about this. I even like good department meetings. [Laughter] I really like good discussion of that kind. On the other hand, a bad department meeting or a bad committee meeting, there's nothing more awful, because it's just people assassinating each other with language, which is very bad.

The Planning Committee I've been on for about three or four years. That is trying to get ahead of ad hoc brush-fire kind of decisions, and trying to study the University at a distance and say what is going to be needed in the future and how should we meet it by acting now. And I must say, it's not a success story, except that our good men have been consulted often by the chancellor and the vice-chancellor, and I think this has been fine. But as a committee, our decisions have not been upheld by the [Academic] Senate. We're considered way too far out; most people, in fact, say you can't plan, so why try? Or we spend a year working up to a decision, and the decision on that subject is announced by the administration, and they hadn't mentioned that they were working on it (in other words, they were supposed to tell us), and so on.

I don't see that we have solved thinking far enough ahead to offer relevant solutions to current problems. When we are called in on brush-fire problems, we have enough perspective to help them, and that part's all right. When I've talked briefly with my friends in my own department and colleagues in other departments about the ideas we're entertaining for the future, they're all horrified. They think it's capitulating to all-University concepts instead of to Berkeley; there's a great tug and pull, of course, between--When President Hitch came in, President Hitch was very strong on robbing Berkeley to pay Paul, and so we lost 110 faculty members with nothing to take up the slack except our own hard work. It's ever since then that I think our faculty has felt so driven and so exhausted, because they've really been doing the work of 110 nonpeople, and those FTE, those full-time jobs went to other campuses

*Committee on Academic Planning.

Miles: which, with the argument being a good one, were intended to grow and could not in their youthful state stop growing, whereas we could manage better to stop growing than they could. Berkeley and UCLA--mostly Berkeley--have been taking up a lot of the difficulties of the whole error by the demographers who predicted that there were going to be twenty-seven thousand on most of the campuses.

I mentioned that one of the villains in my life is administrators, and another villain--major villain, I guess--is demographers. How they could have predicted that we were going to need nine campuses of twenty-seven thousand each, knowing all that everybody knew even then, I can't conceive. And why we went along with that, I don't know. The campuses are perfectly reconciled--the campuses don't especially want to have twenty-seven thousand; they're reconciled to ten thousand. But a lot of the planning has gone awry because of this. So I've grown more and more interested in the nine-campus structure and work between campuses, and Planning has involved all that. There I've got to know such people as Mel [Melvin M.] Webber and Marty [Martin A.] Trow and Fred [Frederick E.] Balderston. These men are in planning, business management, and just really marvelous people. To have a chance to meet such good people on a big campus is exciting.

If you were on a small campus, some little place like Scripps, you would meet all the people in other fields, and some of them would be extremely interesting. But I don't think you'd have the sense of scope that you have here; these men, if you don't see them around, it's because they've been called to Holland to advise the Dutch government or something. It's really interesting to hear the world that they deal in, what they know, and how they can manage to work toward the future. Each one of these men, as he's been chairman of our committee, has had different ideas for how to get ahead of the problems, and I think maybe we are a little bit ahead.

For example, this year the relation between professional schools and Letters and Science has become very important because students are all looking for tickets, and the ticket now is the professional school. This is a sad illusion, but it's an illusion that's fostered not only by what they read about medicine, law, and so forth; it's also fostered by computer sciences. There's not enough practical aid in Letters and Science any more so that they can feel secure with it. It seems to me we have to at least compromise enough to give them some kind of technical training in Letters and Science. For example, yesterday I read an article that said somebody made a study that people who can use computers are more self-confident about everything they do than people who can't. This would be an example of how we could help them get self-confidence in figuring, in arithmetical operations, computational

Miles: operations, which do relate to thinking things through. So why don't we help join technology and philosophy in this way? But Rod Park, our provost, has just been back to a reunion or to a meeting at Harvard in which Harvard has reinstated the old breadth requirement, like Greek history and so on, and I'm afraid we're going to go back to the old Harvard routine, which I think is not for Berkeley and not for the West, if for anybody now.

We have done studies, we have begun studies of all the professional schools, compared the professional schools in other parts of the country, invited speakers to come and talk about professional problems in different fields, got very deep into the problem of the School of Education here, which is being reassessed and reevaluated in some crucial ways. One of the ways that's interesting is they just discontinued Jim Gray, Leo Ruth, and Ken Lane because they don't have tenure, they don't have professorial status; they were supervisors.* They're cleaning out all supervisors, so they just cleaned out these three men who, for all their success and hard work over these years, could now find themselves without jobs. I'm glad I'm a little bit in on the other side of that. I don't think they'll continue because I don't think they could possibly face the anger of the California Association of Teachers of English if we told the public what was going on here; I don't think the University would want to face that. And everybody's keeping very politely quiet about it.

But these terrible bureaucratic absurdities keep on happening. It's a mixed thing; it's great to be on the good side, and it's absolutely shattering to be on the bad side. That's why I'm right now on that committee. I can't even explain--nobody can understand how they could do such a thing. Probably, our guess is that this is a legalism; but this is no way. And it takes up time and feeling.

Another absorbing problem has been women's lib. We've had at Berkeley a fine group of women graduate students who worked with the Modern Language Association, which was having some uprisings in terms of favor of women's leadership, under some women in the East. These girls wrote, these women wrote to them and worked with them, and started their own little set of protests and operations here at Berkeley, saying that there were only three faculty women in the department and they didn't provide much of a sense of model--this has always been my problem, is I never provide a model! They wanted more women and they wanted them right hurry up, and they wanted more recognition.

*Apparently the plan was abandoned. The two supervisors were still employed and active in the School of Education as of August, 1978.

Miles: The same thing was happening nationally; they had some big, upsetting meetings nationally, and we had our upsetting meetings locally. They didn't ask me to be a part of this because, as I say, I think women always take the attitude toward me that if they'd lean on me I'd fall over--I gather. I mean I felt sort of on the sidelines. The other women in our department didn't want to be thought of in that way. One of them said, "If I thought I'd been invited here because I was a woman, I wouldn't have accepted. I want to be invited here for myself and as a scholar." I think I felt that way too; at least that was always my idea when I was young, is that this women's lib stuff was--well, I never thought about it. I simply liked working with men; there weren't many women around to work with. The ones, when I came to Berkeley, that invited me to join with them and discuss research were marvelous bluestocking ladies from the twenties but very old. Two or three of my friends on the faculty were women. But I didn't get into anything that seemed like women's coherence. I had not been accepted by women's colleges. One little thing stuck in my mind when I went to professional meetings in New York: it was the men that invited me to lunch and were friendly to me. No woman did. So I guess I had a kind of strong bias in that direction.

Then one of these young women came around to see me and said, "I think I want to talk to you, because I don't understand what's wrong with the department. They're fighting us and they won't give us what we need. What's your advice? Would you come to one of our meetings?" I said ho-hum and ta-ha, "The department hasn't been as bad as you think. We've moved slowly, but always when I've been teaching here there've been five or six women in the department. But they've been wives and they've left when their husbands have left, and that was the concept of the fifties." The fifties were great killers to women's rights, because women wanted the men home from the wars and wanted to take a back seat, and there weren't the big applications. It wasn't that the department was crushing them but that they weren't asking.

However, these women, of course, were part of the big surge of the sixties. The men were in war, and the women were taken in as graduate students. We immediately gave a proportion of acceptances to women graduate students in proportion to the applications. I never saw unfairness as I would recognize it. They were so suspicious, however, and so dubious that I'd been too cloistered to understand, that much against my will I did go to some meetings and did join with them, and from then on was on the committees. I learned so much that was important to me to think about, because I had really been too aloof. The deans of women had never been pleasant to me. Every time I'd gone to them on something crucial, they'd always turned me off.

Miles: To be specific and to tie this with other things I was saying, women do not seem to me to generalize well. When I would go to a dean about a crucial issue, she would hand me a particular reason why we couldn't do it, but she'd never discuss the issue. So I have certain intellectual biases, I think, and emotional biases too. But this was such a great bunch of women in the department, and they were doing so many things that I felt wrong, by being challenging and kind of, "Well, chairman, we're going to stick our toes in the door here until you answer us."

I was also very fond of our chairman at this time, John Jordan, a young man who I thought was absolutely heroic at handling the troubles of the sixties flexibly. He wasn't sympathetic with these women, because they were very belligerent to him and he was used to a milder approach. There was a lot of incipient toe-to-toe stuff going on there that I thought would be fun to try to avoid. So this was quite interesting--to go to their meetings and see how much misconception they had.

I persuaded them to do a history of the function of women in the English Department since the beginning, which changed their mind quite a bit because, considering the availabilities, it wasn't all that bad. We had had women Ph.D.'s, they had got good jobs, we had women staff members--but they were wives, and that was a particular problem but it was part of the problem of circumstance. The first woman professor we got after I was there was not a howling success, but maybe the men weren't the best judges; that's the only thing I can fault them for.

These women developed this great challenging thing, that we were going to have this big presentation at one of the spring meetings of the whole department, and we were going to insist that they appoint one woman per man every year from then on, until some kind of parity was reached. Well, considering there were about sixty men in the department and three women, that was the year 3000. But I suggested that we phrase it a little differently and we write it up a little differently. They were willing to compromise and they, thank goodness, asked me to make the request. I was so glad because, while I hated to be put in the role of something I thought was a little absurd, on the other hand I was so glad that my tone of voice could be one of fairly common sensical and not railing, which they were tending to do. And so I read this petition to the department, and without any discussion they voted for it unanimously! That was such a nice thing; I was right that the women were too afraid of a sense of opposition that wasn't all that strong.

We now have twelve women in a department of about sixty. We have about a fifth women, and many of them have tenure. I think we could avoid all the hassles of the eastern tribes. Like when I was

Miles: at Wesleyan for a couple of weeks, and Wesleyan women seemed to me just chewing the fat all the time on all these problems, terrible issues. These women that worked together so well have interesting jobs. About half of them got very good jobs. They were our first women appointments to Dartmouth and Princeton and so forth, and they're doing well. Two or three of them still don't [have jobs], though. One of them is secretary to a dean at Mills and she's studying administration that way. The problem hasn't been solved, by any means. We've still got a long way to go. I learned so much about how right they were, as much as how wrong they were. I've gone to women's underground meetings and I've gone to the Women's Center, and I've done a lot of things that were against the grain with me. The University did a very bad thing at not appointing some women lecturers for full-time work when they petitioned, some very fine people. The trouble was with them that they'd all been here long enough that they'd made enemies, and one enemy is enough to make that all difficult.

I went to a lot of those protest meetings, and they by no means were overstating a lot of the unfairnesses against them. Many departments still have no women in them, and just look at you and laugh and say, "Why should we?" There's some great absurdity going on.

Lucy Sells, one of the women--students--on one of our planning committees, found out this fine thing that's been so helpful: did a statistical study showing that where women don't get ahead in college is in the heavy sciences, the hard sciences, because their high school, their junior high school advisers (women!) steer them out of mathematics. Now, that one fact is worth so much knowledge; that junior high school advisers really have tremendous power for segregation, which they use to the hilt, and women have not been able to get into the heavy sciences. Now we're having heavy tutoring for math on the campus, which is a good thing. So many ways--we have a good Women's Center headed by Margaret Wilkerson, a black dramatist, where we're getting some money for research and for helping bring up this average to discount some of these disadvantages that women have. Lucy also pointed out in her statistics that women drop graduate school more than men by about 40 percent. And here's another nice present, by the way. When Lucy published this and we talked about it in the department, and it seemed clear that the only reason that 40 percent more women were dropping than men in graduate study was the sense of insecurity and that they weren't making it, we decided that was partly the department's fault, lack of mutual aid. This was done all over the campus. Also, women tried to give more security by having more meetings in the Graduate Division. That 40 percent has now been eliminated. No more women drop now than men in graduate school. Again, it was a very simple solution, and that was to not let the woman feel she was alone in this whole thing.

Miles: Now, the Women's Faculty Club too, instead of merging with the men's as it had intended for financial reasons and the encouragement of the administration so they could have the women's building for other purposes, and because it seemed absurd to have two clubs (but the reason was that in the twenties the men wouldn't let the women into their building), the Women's Faculty Club voted last year not to merge with the men's because its life style is too different, and its life style is really different, and one of the ways its life style is different is it won't generalize. You ask, "Should we raise the rents on the garages?" and instead of saying, "How much would we need to raise the rents to be able to afford this charge, or to make it worthwhile?" we say, "No, we'd better not because Susan Smith, one of our older members, couldn't afford it if we raised the rent." This just boggles my mind!

I go to meetings--I was asked to be on the board because they thought I could argue better with the Men's Faculty Club about some of this merger bit. It's incredible to me what we spend time on in terms of charming details. But I must say, it really touches my heart. We have this really lovely president who's a former head of big works in the library, went to Wellesley I think. To see her work, to see those committees work in what you can really call a feminine way, is really a good lesson for me. I feel that I have been reformed in my old age [laughter] against some of my biases. I've been working on that quite a lot recently, to save ourselves from getting chewed up by the men's life style, which is rather grim. [Laughter] So I must ask you to lunch over there. Have you been there lately?

Teiser: No.

Miles: Gerrie [Scott] hates it.

Teiser: We have a variety of other things to ask you. If we may have another session with you, we will continue.

Miles: Do you have something on your mind right now about what I was saying here?

Teiser: Not necessarily.

Miles: Because, again, I always feel tempted by thinking how many of these things come together--I don't want to overgeneralize, but there's a quality of a work of art and a quality of a student composition and a quality of a university organization, whether it be a club or a group or the whole schmeer, that's similar, that's shared in common, that I think is fascinating--there is a sense of coherence, of parts working in a whole, of the articulation. That fits in with grammar (you know, the articulation of a sentence). There are

Miles: such nice kinds of basic principles. On the whole, I think the people that I love the best, that I've got to know the best through these kinds of works, are the people that are aware of this and are trying to do something about it. Many in the academic world have this quality, I think. Some artists--well, I'm not sure about proportions, but some artists and some administrators and some faculty members and some just people, just friends, have this quality and are able to help you with your own writing.

Usually there's some group or other that meets in Berkeley, where we discuss each other's work and are quite harsh with each other and help each other. That group is different from one time to another, different people in it. Many times we ask new people to join who've just come to town, and they can't stand it; they think it's much too rough. At this time of year, many people come to town and want to join groups of this kind, but then feel that the rigors are too great. But they really aren't great because if you get the right people these aren't ad hoc condemnations or sniping at the details, but they are the grasping of the sense of the work that you've written, and where it doesn't jell. In other words, the most practical kind of literary criticism you can get is something like these other things I've been mentioning.

University Professor, Readings, Journeys

Miles: Another thing that got me interested in all the campuses is that it appears--I didn't know about it until it happened--we have something called the University Professorship, which I gather they want to have instead of chairs. I think that Harold Urey said he'd like to be a University Professor--visit campuses and visit labs and be kind of an intercampus operator. So they made him one, and then they made some other scientists University Professors. These stressed, as I understand it--nobody's ever heard of it [laughing] until you get involved, but I guess around 1971 I was made one--

Teiser: Seventy-three, I have.

Miles: Seventy-three, okay. It seems longer than that. No, I think you're right. It appears that Harold Urey had said to Mr. Hitch that he thought just to have all scientists was wrong; that there should be people from the humanities too. They appointed three people from the humanities that year, roughly--Neil Smelser and Lynn White and me. Then later [Sherwood L.] Washburn from Anthropology and [Murray] Krieger in criticism from Irvine and UCLA,

Miles: and maybe more. Anyway, the stress is on that you've done a lot of work and that you have general recognition in other countries as well as here. I think the process is your department nominates you, and then it goes on to higher committees and so on. One of the requirements is supposed to be that you actually do visit different campuses and know a little bit about different campuses.

Teiser: Is this for a full academic year?

Miles: It's forever. I'm a University Professor of English. It has never been thought through, so nobody knows what it really is. I think that Harold Urey kind of invented it and Mr. Hitch went along with it. Mr. Hitch seemed to enjoy having us all to dinner. I think they put a thousand dollars in the budget to pay our expenses to travel around, and to pay for some substitute while we're gone, and this kind of thing.

Teiser: Doesn't it pour a lot of extra work on you?

Miles: It depends. When we were talking about naming more University Professors this spring, we were consulting each other about whether it wouldn't be better to--they're either going to kill the whole thing or develop it in some way. Neil Smelser and I wrote letters around saying, "We suggest that there be people from every campus, which there aren't now, and that we have a kind of consultative role and travel around, and especially help our younger colleagues travel around to develop more of a sense of the other campuses." There is now too much sense of alienation between campuses. But Glenn Seaborg's secretary wrote back and said, "Were you sending us a suggestion or a job description?" which I thought was sort of cute. [Laughter] Yes, it would be a major job as we're thinking of it more. But for me it wasn't, because for a number of years I've been invited to different campuses to read poetry or to talk about poetry, to teach for a week or something like that anyway. I would usually ask for a leave, or I would do it in my sabbatical. That was one thing I did during my sabbaticals was go around to different campuses, because I have a lot of friends and I've been here a long time. So I would read or teach. I had such a good sense of different campuses this way. No, it wasn't much extra work; it was just something I did as--writers tend to get invited to give readings at other places. I had been other places, like Vancouver and Houston and Denver and Boise and New Mexico and New York, and so it was nice to see the range at California too.

Teiser: Have you been to all nine campuses?

Miles: No, and I'm working on that. I've never been to the Medical School.

Teiser: Oh, that's too far away. [Laughter]

Miles: I keep teasing my doctor (Morton Meyer), who's a teacher over there. I said, "I think you ought to be embarrassed! The Medical School is afraid to ask me." He said, "You're not kidding!" [Laughter] But I've been to all the other eight, or seven, or however many that would be. I've been to some of the state colleges too. They're fun too; I wouldn't put them down. Sonoma's lots of fun. And the community colleges--Diablo Valley and De Anza and San Francisco State and City and so on. I enjoy meeting poets from different places and talking to students. Since I've been lucky enough to have good help to help me get there--my student help, of course, has been a very important part of my life--it was no more extra work to be invited as a University Professor. In fact, it was great, because I didn't have to be invited formally by the chancellor as the rest of them do, and I didn't have to go to a dinner and I didn't have to have a red carpet. I just went on my normal poetry invitations and then later reported back that I had been as University Professor. I kind of went incognito, which was fun. Except now they didn't have to pay for me; now they were getting me free, so I went more often. [Laughter] I loved a whole quarter I taught at Riverside.

Teiser: Was that part of your being University Professor, the quarter at Riverside?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: I see. That wasn't '73, was it?

Miles: No. That was about two years ago, must have been '75. This last year I went down to Irvine for a half a quarter and shared that with somebody else, John Ashbery.

Teiser: What were you teaching?

Miles: I was teaching a workshop in poetry. At Riverside I taught two introductory courses--

Teiser: In poetry?

Miles: No, one was a seminar in critical theory, that's right. At San Diego I did an interesting thing. Roy Pearce asked me to write a poem for the opening of a new building, a new arts building down there. I went down ahead of time to see the building so I could write the poem. However, the contractor wouldn't let me in, although he had promised to, so I could only write from the outside. But then I went down to the big festivities they have--

Miles: They had a week for the opening of this building, a big celebration of this art center, and I went down to that. I was celebrating, lots of fun, Nancy Hanks came out from NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], and I met lots of interesting people that I hadn't met before, like--what's the name of that marvelous dancer?--I'm sure you know her, the woman from San Francisco who's down there now in dance studies? She's a very interesting person. Well, I can't say her name. But I met a lot of interesting people and went to a lot of the concerts and debated about how the Music Department was down there. I loved that whole quality, the whole different sense of meaning that San Diego has. The word that I heard about every thirty seconds down there was the word *avant-garde*, which of course I never hear up here, or not very often.

Then another time I went to UCLA to a meeting of university professors of English worldwide, and that was an interesting gathering, because most countries just have one professor. Then I also did some lecturing and some poetry, both at UCLA. Santa Barbara was good for poetry, Davis was good for poetry. Every one of those places I would love to go back to, and I have been back to them; I've been to most of them three or four times. They're just so likable. But I must manage to get to the Medical School by some hook or crook; I don't know quite how. [Laughter] I want to be able to say I've done my duty and been to all the campuses.

This too has given me a sense that there's a lot of unnecessary conflict between campuses, that it's done by competing administrators, that the faculty couldn't care less. A lot of the faculty comes from Berkeley anyway, and they want to rely on Berkeley and they want to be left alone to do their own thing, whatever that may be. A man who wants an especially good course in English or Greek doesn't particularly care whether there are twenty-seven thousand or ten; he just wants a clear-cut policy about how his university is going to operate, and leave other things to Berkeley.

This picture doesn't percolate through when you go to administrative meetings, because at administrative meetings they're always talking about, "Oh, well, Davis wouldn't stand for that." Who does "Davis" mean? Some ambitious administrator. I feel the faculty doesn't have enough voice, and much more should be done to get coherence and to get especially the younger members of the faculty to visit at various places. The unions oppose me here. The AFT [American Federation of Teachers] says that if we let a policy in of having faculty members go to other campuses, they would then say our tenure is in the whole situation rather than at Berkeley. This of course would be a fate worse than death. The union is another one of my enemies [laughing] at the moment.

Miles: I think it would be great if our younger members would voluntarily and with interest, before they had kids in school and so forth, or older, afterwards, if they're getting a little bored, go to another campus and get to know a different set of people, different qualities of value, different ways of doing things. I think this would be beautiful. But we have not yet sold our new president on this, to say nothing of our faculty.

Teiser: If you have some outstanding specialist in one thing, might that not keep him shuttling and never give him time, if there were such a--

Miles: That's what Lynn White and Glenn Seaborg are exactly afraid of. I think you'd just be sensible; you don't have to go every time they ask you, any more than they have to take you if you want to go. This would be a voluntary agreement on all sides. This would also be planned in terms of their own programs, maybe two or three years ahead sometimes. Neil Smelser was asked all at once to teach on every campus. Obviously he couldn't do that. He wanted to plan ahead. But then he got other responsibilities--that he had to be chairman because his department was in trouble. Then he decided he had to get away from the department, and so he's in London for two years doing University Abroad. So he's serving the University very strongly for the past four years, but he hasn't got to any of the other campuses the way he'd intended.

Well, we'll just have to see how the Powers That Be work all this out. There's a majority of us. The younger members all think that it should be developed this way, but many of the older feel it's too much of a burden to discuss it.

You asked about lectures?

Teiser: Yes, there were two lectures. One was the Gayley Lecture. It was earlier; I don't know when.

Miles: Yes, that was about 1960. The English Department has an annual lecture called the Gayley Lecture, and it elects one of its members to give that lecture. I gave it one year. I remember it as rather a strain, because I don't tend to teach by lecturing nor do I tend to stand up that long. The room that I gave it in was the kind that slants upward, and it's really hard for me to stand up that straight. But it was okay; it was a nice audience. It was on the "poetry of praise," which was about American poetry in the nineteenth century, and Whitman and so forth.

Miles: The Faculty Research Lecture* was easier and more pleasant, though it was bigger. It was a huge audience by my experience; it filled Wheeler Aud. That's a traditional lecture where a faculty committee, I guess of your predecessors, elects you. It's awfully seriously taken, I'm learning, now that I'm on the committee to elect the next faculty research lecturer, how seriously they take it. One of the men said to me the other day, "There's no place on this campus where I find more moral and intellectual judgment more deeply probed than on this committee." It's very hard to weigh what people in any one year should be considered lecturers; they are supposed to have done research that's inventive, and they're supposed to have been doing it progressively, and so on.

At one of the meetings they said to me, "Did you ever go to Faculty Research Lectures when you were first here?" I said, "I went quite faithfully because I always liked them as a form." I think that when I was very new here I went to one by Ivan Linforth on the Greek gods, which really was impressive. So I went to many others, not all of which were that impressive, but many of them were. I went quite faithfully, maybe every third year or something like that.

Then they doubled. They couldn't just hold it to one as the faculty grew, so they now have one twice a year. I didn't go quite so often. But then the committee made the point, which I thought was interesting, that many people who become faculty lecturers say that, that they have been interested in the past. It doesn't prove anything except a kind of interest in scholarship that's very abiding, because they don't ask you if you'd be interested in lecturing or anything like that. But I guess the people that are interested, are interested in university research in general and therefore are considered to have more general concerns than some.

Anyway, that was a very nice experience.

Teiser: Does it parallel in any way your magazine Idea and Experiment?

Miles: You mean getting to the public?

Teiser: Yes--getting the results of university research out beyond just scholarly--

*Delivered 18 February 1976. See Appendix.

- Miles: Well, let's see. I wish it did. I don't think the Faculty Research Lecture does go to that public, to that alumni public. I think it goes more to faculty themselves or to the townspeople. I was asked to make it over into an article, and it was published in a magazine called Critical Inquiry at the University of Chicago. But that's still a highly, highly special quarterly. Unhappily, I don't think it's yet very popular. But, I did get a lot of response that was sort of popular. I mean, for example, a couple of university presidents wrote me and said that they had had it multilithed for their faculty, and kind of interesting things like that.
- Teiser: It was most interesting.
- Miles: It did have some general ideas in it, though it was an effort to generalize about my actually very specific research. It's always hard to balance very specific research with wider generalizations. In other words, the simple 1A problem is a really great problem in a research lecture; that is, to get the generalization from the data at the same level! But anyway, it did turn out happily in terms of the response I got. Also, just meeting the other research lecturers is very, very pleasant.
- Teiser: How did you meet them?
- Miles: The chancellor gives a dinner, and then Sigma Xi gives a dinner for the science ones (there's no celebration for the humanities, but the science people celebrate), and so they invited me to theirs. Then this committee that works again on finding the next one--works very hard! After all, you've got to read everybody's research that's going on, in order to. So, that was good.
- I was pretty frightened in both cases because, as I say, I'm not an experienced lecturer. My limit was always about seventy, so to get seven hundred was [laughing] a little too much of a jump.
- When I say my limit was seventy, I had done another kind of lecturing or reading--which maybe I mentioned; I'm not quite sure--the kind of poetry readings where you go around to other universities and meet with special groups of teachers. Some of those I would mention as being also extremely informative to me and fun. One was in Vancouver, one was in Texas where the National Council of Teachers of English had a panel of ten poets. People who came to that four or five days of reading literally said that they came on buses from small schools in Texas, and that it was really worth the price to be told that there are writers still alive today that are publishing, and they came to see that we were really alive. There was a kind of interesting discovery of how these meetings mean more in other places than they do here. James Dickey invited me to the Library

Miles: of Congress to read there and to have a kind of talk with him and some other poets. Then I also read for the Library of Congress recording system, and that was about an hour's reading.

That ties in with something else I might have mentioned before, that is recordings and collections.

Way back in 1939, a young man called on me from Buffalo. His name was Charles Abbott, and he said he wanted to build up a good library at the University of Buffalo, but he hadn't any money. His idea was to start collecting authors who published in 1939, which I had, and just start building from there (maybe it wasn't quite that limited). Anyway, he asked me if I would from then on give my manuscripts and letters and so on to the University of Buffalo, which of course I felt very flattered by in those days, and I think was a really neat idea, because he got a lot of us who were in that generation before collecting manuscripts became such a game. For a long time I did send my things to the University of Buffalo. Later they became less interested; with the death of Abbott, I'm not sure what happened to that program. I really haven't heard about it later. But he was a very fine person.

Then there's a fine-books library at the Washington University in St. Louis. There is a poet by the name of Mona Van Duyn, and she then asked me to send my things there, and they would make a bibliography. I think they were taking ten poets or six poets and just taking care of all their stuff. At that point I asked our library whether they would like to have my things; Buffalo seemed pretty far away, and I had no particular connection with St. Louis, and I thought I'd rather give them here. But George Hammond, who was head of our Bancroft, said he didn't want them; they weren't enough connected with Mexican history. I did, then, send them for a number of years to Washington and they did make an interesting bibliography. Another one was then made by somebody for some degree at Scripps College. So I have a very helpful set of bibliographies, which I never in the world would have thought of keeping for myself. Also a lively "profile" done for Journalism, which makes me very busy but doesn't reflect my peaceful side!*

We also had recordings made in Texas and Washington, D.C., and then somebody from Folkways Scholastic came out and made a recording here. So there is a record, I think it's called Today's Poets, Volume II, in which I share a side with Bill Stafford and others.

*See Appendix.

Miles: But the funnier record is even one that came earlier that was made by Evergreen Press--is that the Don Allen press? The one where I share a side [laughing] with a lot of people, like Allen Ginsberg, and that's a really comical one, just because the mixture of people on there and the mixture of poetry is sort of surprising.

I think those cover the main readings at a distance except one at Colorado and New Mexico and Boise and Hawaii, and the one that I made in San Diego for that special opening of that building that was kind of a different project.

Teiser: Was that recorded too?

Miles: I think it was, yes. It was published in the--I think that no editor liked it outside of San Diego. Finally somebody who had heard it in San Diego wrote and asked if they could print it in the San José Studies, which happened to be edited by a graduate of San Diego, who'd read it and liked it. I was glad to get it in print because I didn't have any copyright on it or anything like that, and that was sort of complicated.

Would this maybe be a good place--since I've been talking about trips--to talk about other places for other reasons?

Teiser: Yes. But finally, after Dr. Hammond retired, you did get your papers--

Miles: Oh, you want to get my books into the library. [Laughter]

Teiser: I want to get your papers into The Bancroft Library. I don't want to leave them hanging.

Miles: Before that, the step was that a former student of mine, Leslie Clarke, became head of our Rare Books room. By that time I was sending them all to Washington, but I did ask her if she'd like a lot of my old little magazine, because I had a really neat little magazine collection. Just out of sheer inertia, they just kept coming and I kept reading them and keeping them. For a number of years, and I've always since, contributed my little magazines to the Rare Books room. Then eventually, yes, I think maybe, I asked Jim Hart if he would accept my poetry, and he said he would. Then I said, "Okay, if I'm going to give you my poetry, I would like to give you my prose manuscripts too, my research stuff too, because I hate to keep scattering it all around, and to send that to Washington and the other to you--" Well, he allowed as how he didn't want the research. It took me an awful long time to really foist everything off on him.

Teiser: They're there now?

Miles: They're there now, yes. Now I finally have unloaded everything--all my scraps and letters and everything--on the poor people. Jim [James R.K.] Kantor is archivist, happily.

Teiser: And you're continuing to give things to The Bancroft as you get batches that you want filed? [Laughter]

Miles: Yes, yes. Every time my study gets too crowded, I just put everything in manila envelopes and take it over there. I do have some basic copies, some basic texts, handwritten texts of everything I've written, that I haven't given them. But I've given them typescript and bookscript and things like that.

Then, besides, this kind of talking and reading was fun for me because I hadn't had a chance to travel much before. For one thing, my mother was ill for a decade, and for another thing it was hard for me to get help to get away, and it was hard to get around. I think the first trip I took was in 1950 or '51 to give a paper on Blake at the English Institute in New York. That went perfectly well, so that gave me more courage.

Then I had some really nice friends--I mean, I'm fond of my friends, and I've got a lot of them, and they mean a lot to me. But these two or three sets of friends had a kind of special understanding of the fact, how much it would mean to me to travel. And so I've been with them on long trips and short trips, across the continent a couple of times, and to New York and through New Mexico and across the Cascades, and even in the Beckermans' San Francisco as if it were Europe. One time the Steinhoffs, who are teaching at the University of Michigan, were in the University of Michigan program in Provence. They suggested that I fly over and meet them and spend a week with them as they finished up their finals and then they would drive me up from Provence to Paris and put me on the plane. That was kind of adventuresome, but it worked out very well. Air France was very nice, loading me from plane to plane, and it was a really outstanding adventure. It's nice to have been to Europe once, to have a little sense of what is European. I liked it so much, indeed, that when I think about going back to Europe again, I would just as soon go back to southern France, because it felt like home to me. In fact, it was the place I'd always wanted to go, and it was rather a coincidence that that's where they were.

Teiser: Where is that university--which town?

Miles: Aix-en-Provence, which Kenneth Rexroth said used to be the best little city in the world. A great little city. I also went with the Elliotts, George P. Elliott and his wife, a number of times to New York and various places, and up and down this coast, as they were very fond of Mendocino County. As most people go away on their sabbaticals, and I hadn't done that because I hadn't felt able to, what I did on my sabbaticals was to stay home and take courses, or study other subjects than the ones I knew about.

I must have had more sabbaticals that have slipped my mind, but I think very early in the forties I remember asking the Harrises, Fred and Mary, if I could watch them rehearse plays, because I was still wanting to write plays. They finally said I could if I came regularly. I went over twice a week, all afternoon, and watched them rehearse. One whole semester it was Hamlet, and another whole semester it was an original play, the adaptation of George Ade, and quite frivolous, called The Sultan of Sulu. But a young man by the name of Bob Porter had written all the lyrics for it, which was interesting to me, and a very good contrast to directing Hamlet. Those were adventuresome hours for me, those afternoons watching those rehearsals, and I became very fond of the Harrises and the students. They made me a member of Mask and Dagger, which was a drama review, and I made many friends there that are still very close to me because we still go to plays together. We have a play reading group, and so on. That was another kind of depth that was kind of like the traveling.

I used to go in the gate of the campus I didn't normally go in, so I wouldn't see anybody I knew. I'd try to pretend I was not in Berkeley, as it's very hard if you're here to stay unconnected. This summer I totally failed, as you know.

Then the next time--I think it was the next time--I wanted to study anthropology or sociology, and Leo Lowenthal, a very interesting professor in Sociology, said to study practical working sociology, not theoretical. And Karl Kroeber told me to study anthropology, but again, thinking it would be better to go on a field trip or something, which was hard to do....So the anthropology course I took was rather poor; it was read off of 5 by 5 cards--a rumor which is not unfounded for some teachers. The other one I took made a great difference to me because it was in quantitative analysis, given by a young man by the name of Hanan Selvin from Columbia, a student of [Paul] Lazarsfeld. I got very deep into quantitative analysis, statistics. I don't mean I learned to do it, any more than I learned to write a play. But I learned how it worked, and he and I wrote an article together, and that just widens out in another very nice direction.

Teiser: Did that not tie in with your studies of words?

Miles: No. That's a good and important question, and I hardly ever get to say no like that because hardly anybody ever asks me; they just assume it. Most of my work was not statistical.

There was another interesting little episode. One summer I got a letter from a man by the name of Edgar Anderson from the University of Missouri, I think--or was it Washington in St. Louis? I forget now. I guess it was Missouri Botanical Gardens. Anyway, he wrote me and he said, "I'm coming out to lecture at the think tank at Stanford,* and I'm lecturing on turbulence. Your studies fit right in with this because you're one of the few people I know that does much arithmetical, quantitative study; most people do statistical studies, and it's very important not to do statistical studies but to continue arithmetical studies." This was all news to me. [Laughter]

He was a botanist, and he came, called up and invited himself to breakfast. We sat out on the patio, and he told me which of my shrubs were happy and which of them weren't happy. He liked the vine on the garage. He said it was really a very happy vine. He told me all about his theories, and he gave this talk at Stanford that I went down to, which was called "Potatoes, Poetry, and Turbulence," or something like that. He was doing work for Lockheed, or one of the big airplane firms, on quantitative analysis of--well, it wasn't propellers, but turbulence created by their energy. Then he showed how--anyway, he had scales of estimates which my poetry fitted into the way his studies of potatoes did. It's just such fun. He wrote a book called Plants, Men, and Life, which our University Press has recently republished because it has kind of an underground reputation. It's a charming little book.

He was a very eccentric man. I remember that we had dinner together at Stanford. He brought the dinner, and it was all health food stuff in paper bags. He had a rival. His best friend there was a statistician, and they just constantly argued why arithmetic was better than statistics. He wrote an article on my work for the University of Michigan Quarterly. Kroeber had written an article on my work for MLA, and these sort of conflicted with each other. I was never quite up on the level of theory where they were, you see. All I knew is that, practically, I knew I didn't want to do statistics because I didn't want to sample works of art.

*The Institute for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences.

Miles: It did turn out all right. I did work with statisticians, and Elizabeth Scott became a good friend of mine for this very reason. Elizabeth Scott was very helpful to me; I revised my work many times because of Elizabeth, and this was in terms of security of data. But we both agreed that to sample you have to tell something different about a work of art. I wanted to talk about whole works of art, to talk about representativeness rather than sampling. Those were ways of widening out.

A third way was the most recent one I remember doing. It's quite a while back now, but it was to try to find how to read music, which I had never learned because my teachers in school--and I hadn't had much chance to go to much school--but I did go to the fourth grade and fifth grade, and the teacher there thought I had read music because I had memorized the names of the notes without realizing I was doing that. This had been a great sorrow to me, that I could never tell which note was higher and which note lower, and I thought I could pick this up in a basic music course. I couldn't find one easy enough until I finally got down to Jack Swackhamer's Introduction to Music for Teachers, because all the rest--even freshman music--assumes the knowledge of piano. So I did take Swackhamer's course and wrote a couple of songs, one of which Bud Bronson said sounded like the Japanese National Anthem, which was a nice idea in that I wanted it to sound floating but I didn't exactly like the nationalism of it! I spoke of this earlier. That was also an experience that went on for a couple of years, because I also listened to Andy [Andrew] Imbrie's readings of Beethoven Quartets, and I listened to Seymour Shifrin's composition course, music composition--so different from our kind that it was a fascinating development.

Then I suppose what happened in the later years was that my sabbaticals were either taken up by student riots and tremendous student problems, or I did have a couple of health problems. I had a breast removed for cancer, and I had a hernia, in reverse order. Those mostly just took vacations, but they slowed me down a bit, and so there were a couple of sabbaticals there I didn't do much, and then I guess some of this committee work became very absorbing. So I didn't get any real adventures in the last two or three of my sabbaticals. In fact, believe it or not, the last one I forgot to take [laughter] because I was so involved in interesting things. I would merely end up my sabbatical story by saying that I got too involved to separate one thing from another.

Despite the difficulties of getting work done and staying separate in town, there are a lot of advantages. So many of my friends get so dislocated when they go abroad, and it takes them a quarter to get gone, and a quarter or two to get back, that I felt a certain kind of smugness in having mine more easily and more simply and yet very adventuresome.

[end tape 1, side 1]

[begin tape 1, side 2]

Miles: I'm still thinking about interesting places and what effect they had on my life. I don't guess I could say that a place like Boise did in any way that's spell-outable, but I've never lived in a small town and I've sort of always wanted to have the sense of a small town (well, I did for six months when I was in Palm Springs, but mostly my life has been suburban). Boise was a fascinating place to me.

I went there on an interesting project. Boise got some money from the federal government, from NEA, to have a series of TV broadcasts on environment, and to bring into this lectures and officials from the town, and the arts and graphics and poetry. They invited four different poets to come and represent four different issues. I was in the spring, and I was supposed to talk about the city. Their feeling was that I had done a lot of poetry on the city, which I was surprised to hear, but I was willing to accept that idea.

Since I was the fourth, and they'd done this three times already, they were very expert at it. So they just really undertook, in two or three days, a live broadcast for an hour or two, with the mayor there and debaters on either side of the question of saving the foothills of Boise, saving the town of Boise. They used my poems as sort of--I would not like to say musical accompaniment because they were more intelligent than that--but as sort of background. There was a very fine photographer who did the visual background for the poems, which was just delightful.

For example, I have a poem about a moon rising over a beauty shop, and he had a really neat picture of this moon rising over this beauty shop.

Teiser: He went and took them as illustrations for your poem?

Miles: Yes. Oh, it was all very well worked out. I sent the poems ahead of time, they printed them up in a folder--it was all community involved there. They had an art gallery where they showed the stuff. It was really masterly. One of the chairmen--they were both people in English, and one of them's husband was a secretary to the governor. I suppose he's now busy, since that governor is now busy. Anyway, to be involved in an open-ended broadcast with debate, argument, pictures, poems, was fun, and the people were great.

Another place I went where I got new ideas was Hawaii, where I taught for a summer, where the idea would be--I was told--that I'd have to take account of the fact that students were not,

Miles: say, as good as our students, especially in summertime. And most of the students in my class were Japanese, and they did ask rather peculiar questions. Like when I said, "I don't want to make any assumptions here that you're not aware of," and one boy said, "Miss, what's an assumption?"

On the other hand, they were so sensitive in ways new to me to literature. They'd never heard of haiku; they'd heard of Tennyson but not haiku. They were not raised in their own culture; they were very afraid of their own culture, but they had a kind of sensitivity, say in the use of metaphor, which was so different that it was just really like teaching a whole new world. I did that for I guess six weeks, and that was very illuminating.

Neighbors and Family

Miles: I thought too, as I was thinking about this, that one thing I haven't mentioned that's been important to my life is my neighbors. The neighbors in my childhood, for a while--I mentioned, I think, our very nice dead-end street with fascinating people on it. Then we moved to West Los Angeles and had really no neighbors, because it was a building subdivision, and the neighbors we had were mostly contractors' cousins. Nobody was long enough there to get to know anybody. Well, I did mention my neighbors that I was interested in teaching composition to, but that was rather rare. When I lived for four years on the other side of this campus, that was living square in the student community. That was extremely interesting. It was during wartime. The students sort of patrolled and ran the student community; I was very much impressed with student responsibility and student action in those four years.

Then I moved to this house and have had extremely good neighbors here--not close and cozy but just very nice straight-forward families growing up, which has been nice, seeing the children start at age three and move away at age thirty. A very nice Baptist minister, a very nice physicist, a very nice man who was one of the early dispatchers for United Air Lines, a fellow who used to be the University Explorer, a refugee doctor from Germany, and now my former dean of graduate studies, Will Dennes, lives down the block. An unusual kind of neighborhood in that it wasn't, as I say, exactly club-like, but it had kind of a mixture of children growing up and interesting people that were very likable.

Also I've had a certain amount of student help, living in, to help me, as well as some part-time housekeepers, that have been

Miles: likable and illuminating;* to live with students is a nice idea, I think, and you keep getting new ideas. Then probably, since I'm mentioning varieties, I should probably mention that one of my brothers has always lived nearby in Oakland, in the real estate business, and the other one lived in Japan but is here now. I've had also two nieces and nephews, and now I have grand-nieces and nephews. This explains what I do on July 4 [laughing] and Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. [Laughter] I think I've taken care of all the days now.

Teiser: Do you have an alternate home?

Miles: When we lived in Los Angeles, my father was a restless type. He was sort of a free agent in his insurance business, so we would go to the desert, back to Palm Springs, which we loved so much, in the winter, where we camped out in Andreas Canyon. In the summer we went down for a while to Coronado, and then built a little shack on the Roosevelt Highway, Los Flores Canyon. So this became part of our lives, to have a shack somewhere and go to it, and this seemed like part of the world to us.

When we moved up here, we couldn't find anything like that. Northern California seemed to us antidemocratic in the way that there were not nearby easy places to go to, like the coastline; you had to go far to Tahoe and Yosemite and Santa Cruz, and so on. We determined we would lick this problem by starting up at Martinez or Antioch, and just following the shoreline down, and we were sure we would find a little cove or coastline spot that we could buy or rent and build a shack on. We were trying to impose the pattern of one place on the other.

I think we actually did--I think I know more about that shoreline than even the Hercules Powder Plant does. But this is what we found, of course, all this industrial use and all the barbed wire, and it was very discouraging. We went from Antioch down around to the Alameda Yacht Club: nothing. It really seems to me disgraceful, this shoreline. It's a little improved, now, and the Save the Bay group has fought very hard to improve it even a little bit. It's like pulling teeth. We finally did find the one little place where it's not too much like pulling teeth--Point Richmond. The part of the point that goes out beyond the little town. There was nothing for rent or sale there because a man by the name of Tiscornia, a San Francisco businessman, owned

*See Appendix.

Miles: all the lots. When he died, he left them all to his secretary. There's a very mysterious quality to Point Richmond, because there's still plenty of empty lots, but absolutely everything is very tightly held.

Teiser: Does she still own it?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: He owned the site of the Bank of America headquarters.

Miles: Oh yes, I know! And on Kearny Street he let all the buildings run down. There are famous stories about Tiscornia.

Well, we gave up. We worked and worked and worked and worked, and gave up. We looked up a lot of records in the court house, and wrote to people. That's the way I found this house, because this was just a little victory garden, but we found this by looking up records and two years later having somebody wanting to sell, which was nice. But that didn't work there.

There was a funny thing (I suppose it's not important). There was an ad in the paper for a little house in Albany that didn't cost much money. I answered the ad, thinking at least maybe I could just flee to Albany. The real estate man handling it said no, that wouldn't suit me at all, it was in a dump or something, but he would look for me. Then he found these lots in Point Richmond. He said later that he'd worked so hard on it because his daughter was getting married, and he absolutely had to have some money for the wedding. So that was my motivation for getting my lots. They were very inexpensive, and we built an inexpensive little house--

Teiser: They were outside of the Tiscornia ownership?

Miles: Yes, they were just being sold at that moment by a tug captain that needed cash at that very moment, and I did have cash. That's the way we built this house too, is that my mother sold the house we had in Los Angeles and got cash for that, so we were able to build this house at an amazingly inexpensive price.

Teiser: Should I ask about this house--did Geraldine Knight Scott plan your garden?

Miles: More than that. She held my hand throughout, because after we got the lot, I was going to wait till after the war to do something about the house. But I was so stuffed up in that apartment, I was really desperate. We could be allowed to build a house because my brothers were in the war, but it could only be one of two plans;

Miles: it had to be war housing. One was Mason McDuffie's, which was atrocious, and the other was J.M. Walker's, which I thought were very pleasant little houses down on Sixth and Seventh Street. He did one for his mother, for example, that I thought was really charming. We asked him if he would do one on this lot, and because we had the money--he desperately needed money because he was doing everything on account in the war effort--he used all his old materials, like his old doorknobs and nice floors and stuff, and he wasn't doing it with mass-produced stuff. But Mother's lawyer said he would quit as her lawyer because he said the house would fall down after five years, and he did indeed quit. [Laughter]

On the other hand, Gerrie and Mel [Scott] both recommended it, and they thought there was nothing wrong with Plan 5 war housing. They recommended where it be placed on the lot.* Walker's young architect was a very nice young man who's now a millionaire, building condominiums in Hawaii. They were all eager to do something individual; they were tired of the mass stuff. And they were the greatest people! They could only do the basic plans. Well, this is Plan 5 war housing. It's turned around, and the patio was added, and the windows were lengthened into doors, and the window boxes were taken off, and the arches were taken off between rooms, and those connecting doors were put in to separate this room from the study so we could make it a big room (which we never have), and so on. It was just a delight.

When we built the house at the Point, I said, "I've never had a chance to have a real architect and start from scratch." But that turned out to be miserable! These guys had been so adaptable, and there were only five hundred choices instead of five thousand. But the talented and brilliant young architect I had at the Point kept getting 200 percent over the budget--just heartbreaking! So that shack and this house cost almost the same amount of money, which is absurd, because this house is so much more functional in so many more ways.

Teiser: Were you under war pricing restrictions, however? Weren't materials under ceilings on this house--

*I also got the contractor to make the patio and the floor of the house on the same level, which required changing the footing at the front of the house. [Geraldine Knight Scott]

Miles: Yes, oh yes.

Teiser: --and they weren't on the other?

Miles: No. I fortunately didn't have any money, so that contractor just said, "Pay the architect for his plans," and then did it his own way. That was a very nice contractor by the name of--no, I can't say his name. But he was a literary man who was dabbling in contracting, and very honest. [Added:] Willis Foster.

That shack, then, that was about 1950, and we did use that for about a decade, until my mother got so that she couldn't drive out there. But it was a good decade. Now my brother lives there, my Japan-Hawaii brother, and he's enjoying it. It's just incredibly beautiful. It's just a matter of sheer wonderment that that place exists for anybody but millionaires. Have you been there? Have you seen it?

Teiser: No. You once invited us and we weren't able to go.

Miles: Oh! It's too good to be true.

Any other joyful topics like that, or do you want me to talk about the arts?

Arts and Other Ideas

Teiser: You've said several times, and I think we've discussed this in several ways, that one of the values of poetry, good or bad, is what people say as an indication of what people in a time and place are thinking--is that right? Am I saying what you think?

Miles: Yes.

Teiser: So that it's a sociological document rather than literary--

Miles: Not "rather than." That is, one of the ways that social values find external form is through literary expression. But the expression is literary, and the literary expression is rather slow. I have not done any correlating of times here. Language that today expresses, I think, some of the values of today in very strong ways was begun to be stressed by poets in the early nineteenth century. So there's a very slow progression; it isn't that it just springs up and flares down again. If you take the whole history of English poetry, from Chaucer on, or even before Chaucer, and you take the main language of that poetry, about a

- Miles: fourth of it is the same now as it was then. So those values are surviving through that whole five hundred years or more, whereas some of the values in the different periods have come and gone, and we don't see them any more. Then some of them--some of the values--are being expressed today for the first time in poetry.
- Teiser: Are you comparing highly selected poets of earlier periods with a very large mass of poetry, unselected, today?
- Miles: No, I'm taking exactly the same kind of poets, and the same number from the same sets of times. In other words, I define a generation as thirty years, and I take that time and I take the poets who are born in that time, of a certain degree of surviving reputation. Many people say that that's a danger, about surviving reputation, and it may be slightly, not very.
- Teiser: When you say "what the students are writing" or what is being written here generally today, that's an unselected mass.
- Miles: That's true, that's true. The selected mass that I've studied-- I could name the names to you, the ones that I based my generalizations in Poetry and Change on. I not only had the student mass here, but I also had all those people I wrote about in the Massachusetts Review--everybody in the seventies and everybody in the sixty-fives. But there's only ten that I based my generalizations, my mathematical data, on because I had ten in other periods. I can't remember them all, but Ginsberg is one and Gary Snyder is another, James Tate is another, Thom Gunn, LeRoi Jones--anyway, that type of level.
- Teiser: Again--I'm asking a question and not asking it clearly--this is a whole different subject: When you look at what is being written today and look at the mass of it as an expression of what people feel and think today, aren't you looking at a much wider segment than, say, your Elizabethan segment? (I don't know why I'm arguing with you!)
- Miles: Let me try to answer that by telling you about the very minute study that I've done of language from the scholarly point of view-- for example, I have pointed out that nineteenth century, eighteenth century language tends to stress words like bird and moon and air and wing and tree. Okay. By words like those, I mean words of nature of a fairly minute discrimination. And that some of those are now dropping away; you don't find so many birds and leaves and trees and wings and moons and stars in the poetry of today, anywhere, unless the person is quite old-fashioned. There are many more words today in poetry--remember it's just these ten people I'm talking about, but also more widely--of types of street and road and wall and house and window and door. I think you can

Miles: see that there's kind of a quality to those words that they share that's different from the other. What I talked about in Poetry and Change was that the context of those words repeated over and over suggests some different kind of context of interest than the words of wing and tree and stream and sky and stars. The context may be very different from the ten that I looked at and the hundreds that are writing around here in Berkeley, but their emphases, their attentions are focused in much the same way.

An example of your point that's interesting is that I--for a while, when you doubt what you're doing, you're often very upset by what you don't find. I was pretty interested in all these doors and windows in modern poetry. I picked up a copy of Poetry magazine and I said, "This is a good place to get some good whole examples. An easy short-cut to writing my article, I'll just whiz through Poetry and pick up a bunch of doors and windows." There wasn't a door or window in that whole issue! I thought there must be something wrong if that would be true. So I looked at Poetry throughout the year, and then there was a sampling but a not very interesting sampling. Then I realized as I overheard a number of conversations saying that Poetry magazine today is not very representative of modern poetry, I then said to myself, "I'll look at a number of magazines and just see what I find, but also I'll look at other books." And as a matter of fact, then it came very fast because I got a list of books for the 1970s, just a list of the names, and many names had these words in it--The Bed by the Window, The Door to the--you know, that kind of thing. They were so important, then, that they were used for titles. So, it's tricky, but there is a relation between minute particulars which support just those limited generalizations, and generalizations which you draw out of vast amounts of material.

Teiser: Thank you for explaining that.

Miles: So, you'd like to have me talk about the arts a little bit?

Teiser: I mentioned to you before we began this interview that I'd like to ask about the sources of originality. I was thinking of that in relation to your own work and what you could judge from your own experience. Your scholarship has been creative, your poetry has been creative--originality is what I mean, not creativity but originality. I don't know about your teaching, if your teaching is original or not--it's effective, I understand. [Laughing]

Miles: Sometimes, sometimes.

Teiser: But where do you think originality comes from?

Miles: I think originality comes from making new connections. That is, when you see a connection that somebody else hasn't noticed or hasn't seen, and you make it, and then other people do see it, then that's originality. If they don't see it, it's never noticed, it can be original till the cows come home and nobody will notice because nobody's picking up what you've noticed.

There is one book on this subject. I think the man's name is [Homer Garner] Barnett, and I think it's called Innovation, and it's a very interesting book. It's a fascinating subject, and nobody's really tackled it. But this book Innovation does this, and it was a great help to me because I was concerned with innovation in my literary studies. I wanted to know where things came from and how long it took them to get going, and so forth, and he makes some very interesting points about lastingness, and what is the measure of lastingness or measure of originality if it doesn't last, and so on. (See the last sections of my Continuity of Poetic Language.)

I know this is off of what you were asking about me, but in a little way, when I was talking about my sabbaticals and my few journeys, I was meaning to make the point that these were important to me because they let me see old connections in new materials, or new connections, and to come back here and see new connections in old material. In other words, Aristotle says that the heart of poetry is metaphor. What I think he means by that is good; that is, you see a possibility of comparability: as if something is as if something else. And you see the possibility of relating those two things as they haven't been related before.

I'm sure this is true, for example, in inventions, in technical inventions like the steam engine (this is apparently how Robert Fulton got going), and I think this is true in teaching writing. In my own writing, well, I just have the feeling that if I get an idea that I know I want to do something with, it's probably an idea where I see some connection that I want to try to explore in my mind. Or if I hear somebody say something that I think connects up with other things I know, and I'm not quite sure how, I try to explore it by writing about it.

As for my scholarship, I think that is original in that it's trying to--it's too original; not enough people believe in it. I'm trying to connect repeated usage or steady assumption with a sense of artistic value. It's just very hard to get this point over. Linguists don't want to relate artistic assumption to linguistic materials; they don't want to cope with artistic assumption. And artistic assumption people don't want to relate their materials to something they think is as mechanical as linguistics.

- Miles: These are all examples of making connections that aren't normally made, where the danger is, as they say, you fall between two stools. This is the danger of interdisciplinary study, which is so hard to regulate and encourage. Indeed, I tend to think you shouldn't try very hard; that is, I think it's safer to keep to categories and departments. I love category jokes, I think category jokes are just great, because category jokes are the whole humor of what you're talking about--a person who sees connections between categories is a metaphorist and a kind of poet and a kind of a--well, I don't want to say poet; I mean he's a kind of an artist, in any material you want to mention. Category jokes are really just beautiful for stepping on the toes of assumptions, of generalizations.
- Teiser: Would you tell one?
- Miles: Oh, I knew you were going to ask me that and I wouldn't be able to. [Laughter] Oh dear. I've been trading them around lately. Did I tell you the one that I heard about two months ago that I've told to everybody and nobody thinks it's funny?
- Teiser: Yes, but tell it on the tape.
- Miles: I hate to put it on the tape. And everybody tells me I don't tell it right and it's not funny, and I still chuckle inwardly. It was just on television. It was just two gag men standing in front of a curtain talking, as they do in vaudeville, and one man said to the other--these were just sort of sloppily dressed bums (I have to explain this because people tell me I should say how they looked--it doesn't matter how they looked!)--and one said to the other, "Are you Jewish?" and the other one said, "Not necessarily." Didn't I tell you that?
- Teiser: You did, yes.
- Miles: See, you didn't even remember it!
- Teiser: I remembered it perfectly. [Laughter]
- Miles: But you didn't remember it as funny. [Laughter]
- Teiser: I told it to my father, who is a connoisseur of jokes, and Jewish, and he didn't get it either.
- Miles: Well, there you see. I'll tell you the classical category jokes are the elephant jokes. "What is grey and heavy and weighs six tons? An elephant six-pack." I'm not saying it right, but that kind, where you take three miscellaneous qualities and add them together, and then you create a category to fit them. This is the

Miles: classic kind of joke that the kids tell. There are many more. "Why does Uncle Sam wear red, white, and blue suspenders?" is a very good example. You immediately say, "Aha! We're talking about patriotism here--Uncle Sam stands for patriotism." Or "Why does a fireman wear red suspenders?" "Aha! We're talking about the category 'firemen'." And this makes you foolish because you're not getting to the crux of the problem, which is keeping up the pants. Don't you think that's nice? Well, so. [Laughter] Where do we go from there?

I think that's all I can say about originality. You said not creativity, but I think they're all--I don't think you create out of nothing.

Teiser: I was just changing words because creativity is so overused.

Miles: I know, it's a bad word today. But I think to create is to originate. I think it doesn't fit badly with the physiological sense of creation; that is, that two people get together and create a third is really the same point. You're bringing, to some degree, unlikes together, and you're getting another kind of unlike or like. So I think the metaphor is a decent one, I mean the root is a decent one; it's just that we often misuse it. Genesis confuses us.

In teaching, many people scornfully say, "You can't teach writing or you can't teach art." Well, of course you can. And what you can do is just this, is to afford the opportunity for more unlikes and more likes to get together and splash around in the student's mind, set off sparks, set off ideas, until one works for him. What the untaught student is, unless he's been teaching himself, of course, but what the helpless, needful student is is somebody who's just swimming around in his own juices with no new ideas and no new assumptions and no new questions. That's what teaching wants to get him out of. It happens with ideas in abstract courses as well as writing or art or music courses. But they're all perfectly teachable. That's why it's fun to teach: you see it. It may be in the heart or the lungs or the brain, but you see it in the eyes, and you can watch it happen. Of course, you can also see it in the products that sometimes get made.

[end tape 1, side 2; begin tape 2, side 1]

Teiser: You mentioned that comments on your work have just appeared in Style. Is it a magazine?

Miles: It's a magazine, a journal they call them, which comes out quarterly and has articles stressing study of style. This summer issue, which just came, has articles especially on historical study of style, the use of history to help understand style, the use of style to help understand history--a really important topic

Miles: which I don't think this magazine--I read these articles and I don't think they really tackle it yet. I have never found a study of history that I thought really faced the idea of history whether it's a question you asked before about originality or origination. What I think needs to be studied there is that process by which old, assumed, standard materials weary people to the degree that they start looking for something new, and then that makes them see the old in a new light, and so they invent some new form to handle the new or they may even consciously go back and search in the past. The people born right this minute are probably going to go back and search the past in new ways. At least that's what they've especially done in other last generations of a century. There have been people who have been aware of the passage of time and centuries and so on, and we have gone as far away as we can go in the direction that their predecessors have gone and then started looking backward for something new. At least, as I say, this has happened in other centuries. I would think it might happen again. But historians haven't studied this. They haven't studied the motion of time.

Thomas Kuhn has studied the motion of scientific revolutions, and there he says they come by little explosions. In other words, these connections are very explosive, in his view, as they come out in scientific experiments. In arts they aren't because in arts you can see them quietly happening from just a few to more to more to more to more to the whole thing.

You can see somebody like Thomas Blackmore initiating the use of a certain vocabulary--in a minor way merely--which brings him the scoffing of his compatriots--not just because he uses the vocabulary but because he is not terribly good at it. But he does initiate. But he's not given credit for that. That's the vocabulary which Milton later is given credit for initiating, because he does it so much better in terms of blending it into the cultural surroundings. I don't think this issue of Style has tackled that fully enough.

A lot of the articles refer to my work because they say I was a pioneer in making quantitative studies. Sometimes they say statistical studies, which is not true unless you want to use statistical very loosely and just mean frequencies. Then they point out a lot of errors that I've made and that's too bad, but I have and I don't know how to avoid it. The editors gave me a chance to reply and that's what I say--let's get on with the business of studying the theory of history and not worry too much about errors because, for one thing, when you deal with masses of data and you start trying to correct errors, you make more. So it's really better to leave what you've done after the best kind of correcting you can do once. Leave them and then let people who are using them for a particular purpose make the corrections.

Miles: When I do try to correct, that is what I try to do, I try to do a specific study where I dig a well down deep and do it all over again to check it out rather than the old surfaces. It's not like proofreading. You can't find errors very well that way, and you do make more. I don't think I've made many errors that would change the validity of the generalizations I'm making, and furthermore they are correctable by people who have a motive for doing it better than I did. But my drive was to go forward into a field I could generalize further about because, after all, just checking is unmotivated, unless you know what you want to set forth. So, anyway, that's what's in that journal.

You asked me a while ago about my idea about the arts in Berkeley. I guess partly I've been thinking about the arts in Berkeley as arts on the campus. When you mentioned that the other day, I said, "What do you mean? I can't remember." That's sad because the reason I couldn't remember is that I've been so defeated on it that I pushed it to the back of my mind. You have said you felt I was persistent in nature and I challenge you to learn whether my persistence ever pays off in this field, which it hasn't in all these decades I've been working on it.

In the first place, Berkeley, as an institution and as a functioning financial body, is not interested in art. It's interested in facts and forces. So power structures simply bypass the arts at every point. Secondly, Berkeley attracts students and teachers and people who are really interested in the arts and are really very good. So better people come to Berkeley without any motive for aid at all than, say, in my opinion, go to Michigan where there are huge, wonderful awards. That would be disputed by Michigan, I'm sure, but I have the feeling that we get awfully good and interesting and inventive people in the arts in Berkeley. At least I have some evidence of this. For example, Seymour Shifrin certainly felt he had marvelous students here in music. About painting I'm not so sure. Painting is a puzzling subject because of San Francisco versus Los Angeles in patronage and all that. But graphics in inventive ways if not traditional easel painting are certainly interesting here, and the whole tradition of [Richard] Diebenkorn and the Six and so forth, painters whom I at least admire a lot. Certainly there has been lively work in poetry, and as I think I said one time, Hayden Carruth's anthology called The Voice That Is Great Within Us, which is one of the first recent collections across the board, across the country, about poetry today, includes so many from here.

So we have on the one hand a tremendous demand, and on the other hand a tremendous lack, and no way to get them together. Expensive big buildings don't do the work. As far as teaching goes, we get really very little help in teaching. That is, we don't have the materials for classes. We don't have traveling shows. We don't

Miles: have recordings. Or we have them all, but they're all skimpy and scattered. We tried for many years to get a room for poetry. I've always wanted a room for all of the arts together. My ideal has been a room where students could read poetry aloud, hear it, hear some music, see some paintings on the walls, make some connections.

This gets in what you asked me about originality and teaching. This is my interest in students, to help them get out of wherever they're stuck and move ahead in some new direction. So this gets with everything that I've been saying and trying in my own life. It's amazing how hard it is to make any of this work. The reason I have now pushed it from my mind is partly the fact that the students themselves have sabotaged themselves. The theft problem is so great that we can't do anything that would have free usage of materials. Student self-sabotage is naturally always my greatest worry. There's always plenty. We have made one compromise now which is to have a little corner of the Morrison Room used for poetry. It's quite lovely and it makes me very happy to think of it, because there are forty shelves of poetry there and it's a pleasant room. Students can drop by there. They can't take notes, they can't read to each other, they can't speak above a whisper, and there is a custodian there so they're not supposed to be able to steal, which they otherwise clearly would. But with all those foolish restrictions which are now necessary, it's workable, and it makes me really happy.

On the other hand, just to mention a plan that hasn't worked and it's so beautiful--there's this old power house down by the creek which is a beautiful old building built of brick. The old power lines ran through there. [Interruption] It's a beautiful building and it used to be used for art exhibits and exhibits of utensils, good working objects a lot of times. When the big art museum was built, where we were supposed to have a meeting room for the arts but Peter Selz denied that finally, the idea was that we could use the power house as a meeting place and have exhibits and classes and pictures and poetry. It's across a charming little court from the Pelican Building where publications are held forth, where Pelican publishes its magazine, and Occidental and Poetry Review and so on. In between there's just a little land and a little pool and some grass and two Chinese dogs, which if they were turned around to face the street would provide a very interesting little entrance to this little complex. So we could call it the Art Triangle or the Art Quadrangle, and you get to it by crossing a bridge from the regular campus. It's really a nice dream. It's great--the students sit around on the lawn. They use this place anyway; they read to each other there and they sit around there and they argue there and so on.

Miles: However, earthquake hazards prevail, and the police need a place to register bicycles, so that's what the power house is used for. Blue and Gold needs more darkrooms, and so that's what the Pelican Building is trying to be used for. So despite all my hopes, the situation now is just about zero. The student body leader is saying that the original magazines that are published aren't worth much, and graduate offices would be great in the Pelican Building, and here we have all these bicycles to register and there's just nowhere. So we are nowhere. It's hard for me to believe--all the time we've spent on this, with all the different committees and all the different ideas and hopes and plans and fears, that we are now farther away from any center for the arts on the campus than we have ever been. So this is not to end all these discussions on a negative note, but it's to say that life ain't easy. But it's to say also that this place is various and imaginative enough to invent new possibilities of unpredictable kinds.

INTERVIEW IX -- 22 February 1979

Winding Down

[begin tape 1, side 1]

- Teiser: The last time we talked was a few months before you retired; as I understand, you retired and got ill at the same time.
- Miles: Two days apart.
- Teiser: The other notable thing that has happened is your winning of the prize which brought you much note, the Academy of American Poets' 1978 Fellowship--with its \$10,000 award.
- Miles: Money makes a lot of difference to people!
- Teiser: I wonder--do you think it was all money? You've had other honors--
- Miles: Yes, I have, and nobody even knew or flipped or turned a hair. See, the newspapers react to money.
- Teiser: We weren't here when it was announced, so we didn't see all of the press on it.
- Miles: Oh, there was a lot of press.
- Teiser: Well, let's take it up as we come to it. Start with whatever next happened of significance--
- Miles: After our last talk, eh?
- Teiser: Yes.
- Miles: And that was in, you said, the end of '77?
- Teiser: August '77.

Miles: August '77. So that was really only about a half a year before retirement.

Teiser: That's right. We were getting it out of the way so you could get busy and retire.

Miles: Things did get very, very busy in that last year, '77 to '78, because I was trying to finish up so many things, not only teaching but that very interesting planning committee [the Committee on Academic Planning] I was on managed to write a report. By a miracle, everybody on that committee agreed on it, diverse as they were, and we had a very happy ending where we all congratulated each other on the report, which spoke of the need for much more personal discussion of the problems the University was facing. And we were going to discuss this in the next meeting of the Academic Senate, because it was a senate report, but then there turned out to be an emergency on confidentiality, so Chancellor Bowker needed the whole afternoon. It was simply placed on file, and we then asked individuals, members of the senate who had read the report, to come and speak with us, a group of people that we thought highly of. Some chairmen and some other interested people came to lunch and told the committee what they thought of this idea. They thought it was impossible.

Very interesting feeling of all the leadership there that one couldn't raise issues in department meetings, which was really alien to everything that I'd grown up with in our department, which was that that's where you discuss the problem. And sometimes you had fights, but mostly you didn't. Also in political work that I had done with the Democrats in Berkeley, we usually raised questions and left a Sunday night meeting with a consensus where we didn't even need to vote. So I was really appalled by the attitude of this leadership: don't rock the boat, don't upset your faculty, don't tell them anything, don't ask them anything, let everything go on in sort of a blind way until there may be a disaster and we don't know.

Teiser: What kind of a disaster was--

Miles: Well, what you're reading in the papers now: Governor Brown's governorship was going to lead to financial straits (that was even before we knew about Proposition 13, but that's another financial strait). And, of course, behind that the sinking of enrollment, which nobody agrees on whether it's going to sink or not. But the whole condition of straitened circumstances, changed student demands, would lead to very interesting discussions of how much any discipline should alter its methods and procedures. And the great size of the University and the fact that we had grown so desperately during the sixties would also not only lead to some sense of retrenchment but also some sense of reorganization and re-orientation of the people who came in so fast that they still didn't know they were there.

Teiser: You mean the faculty?

Miles: Faculty, yes. Students too, I suppose. And so, because in the sixties we did much more discussing with the students because they wanted to discuss--now students didn't want to discuss. Nobody wanted to talk about anything. Now when you talk to a student on Dostoevsky, he says, "That's all very good about Dostoevsky, but what is our mid-term going to be about, and what grade am I going to get in the course?" So this is a new, important problem too.

Our happiness on the committee, which means a great deal to me because it was so--it emerged out of real, real disaffection and chaos--was short-lived as far as talking to other people, but then we only had the hour at the luncheon to talk to them. Maybe we could have convinced them too if we'd had more time.

Anyway, that fell very flat, and nothing happened. We made some particular recommendations for easing strangeness and alienation of faculty from each other, and none of those were carried out. So, in other words, it was a non-success. But [it was] an interesting report, and I'm glad it was printed, and maybe something will come of it.

Teiser: Where is a copy?

Miles: It would be in the records of the Academic Senate, April '78. And everybody on the committee said they signed it with pleasure, and that's really rare.

So then, when that was done, I felt pretty relieved--as we met up until the last minute on that. And I got through.

Let's see, I had a very difficult poetry class where students were either very shy or militant against each other. (that happens every once in a while), and made it sort of hard at the end. So there was a real feeling of, "I hope I finish here before I fall on my face."

Then, it was a very happy and pleasant kind of retirement. The Committee on Teaching [of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate] had an award for good teaching [the Distinguished Teaching Award], and they had a banquet for that, and it was the first time they had tried this banquet idea. It was very elaborate and costly to them, and a lot of fuss and feathers, and it was fun to be in on.

Teiser: How many people were there?

Miles: Six of us. One was a good friend of mine, and the others I didn't know but were very interesting people. It was extremely

Miles: interesting to me because at the same time they were going through this fuss of giving us this banquet and these votes--and they took it very seriously, you know: Who would you vote for, and what would be the criteria?--at the same time they--and I guess I mean here the faculty, who was probably ignorant--were allowing some of the best teachers in our university to be let go after years. That is, the young men in education, who had done such leaderly work as supervisors of teachers in the School of Education. (I've talked about this before on tape, I'm sure.*) They were the liveliest and most constructive people in the department, and they were put on one-year notice, which legally, many lawyers say, was not only dirty pool but illegal. And the fight hasn't still come to a crux because they haven't yet given their notice.

But the irony of this weighed so heavily upon me, and I spoke about it but people didn't particularly want to listen, because they'd gone to a lot of work to decide who the distinguished teachers should be. I didn't ask for any letters from friends in college because I don't like the process, but they did use the Bay Area Writing Project as an example of a kind of teaching--not just personality but, you know, stuff I had done over many years. So I didn't feel too bad about that. But the fact that the authors of the Bay Area Writing Project, aside from me, were being so badly treated at the same time I was being retired was pretty silly. Something that has developed more in the past year is this great problem in my mind of the relation between the system and the individual, and the power of the system to ignore the individual though the individual is what the institution is based on.

Anyway, then we had a very nice retirement dinner, which was pleasant. We didn't call it "retirement dinner." Jim [James D.] Hart retired too, and it was a kind of buffet in the late afternoon in the Women's Faculty Club. The sun shone in and everybody looked very happy and pretty. And the chancellor came over and gave Jim and me citations, which is supposed to be great.

He told me, when he gave me mine, that he wished it could be in the form of a pelican. This was humor to the end. That was another fight that I totally lost--I along with my student and faculty companions. Without giving us a hearing, without going through any due process, the chancellor just one day put locks on the Pelican Building doors, cleaned up the building, and sent thirty-two Graduate Association secretaries in there, and sent the student writers down into an old darkroom in the basement of Eshleman. So there was, again, an excellent example of not only

*See pages 200 and 213.

Miles: not justice but not due process either. None of these drastic actions that I was involved in at the end of the year had anything to do with decent process. So that battle was lost and is still lost. I had many telephone calls from people saying, "Who are those strange people in the Pelican Building?" and "How could you have given up on that?" and so on. It was very sad.

The students are so far just publishing out of the darkroom, and as I said before, they won a good many awards and so forth, so they're still doing good work.

Then I had a lunch with Betty Neely, who was former dean of women, and she warned me not to be bitter when I retired, because it was appalling what they did without fair consideration. She was still so bitter, but she wanted to warn me not to be--which is very good, because at the same time I was having all these rather superficial honors, these terrible things were happening underneath. So her warning was very helpful.

Then I decided that after retirement I'd better go on a quick vacation and get these things out of my mind. So I made a reservation up at Bodega Bay, and my helper and I went up there for a couple of days. It was beautiful weather, and I sat in the sun, and we drove around. I said, "Look how great it is! Of course you can relax if you like the outdoors." We drove home and I stopped to see my brother, and he said, "Why don't you stay for supper?" So I did. After supper I said, "I don't seem to be able to swallow." So, to make a long story short, that turned out to be an emergency gall bladder operation. It nearly did me in, and I was in intensive care for ten days. Medicare won't pay the surgeon's fee, because he made it so high because he said it was one of the hardest operations he'd ever performed. And they, on the other hand, don't make that exception. So it turned out to be very expensive, in more ways than one. But it was a weird one; it was a twisted gall bladder, which he said he'd never seen before.

So I was pretty sick for maybe two or three months. But it was very charming: I said, "The one thing I hate to miss is, next week"--I said to the surgeon, before the stitches were out--"one thing I hate to miss next week is I want to go to a friend's son's bar mitzvah." My medical doctor is Jewish, and he said, "You can't miss a bar mitzvah!" The surgeon came early, a couple of days early, to take the rest of the stitches out so I could go to the bar mitzvah. And I went. [laughter] I was very wobbly, but it was very nice to get back on my feet that fast. So I went to a couple of other parties, but aside from that I stayed home for a couple of months.

Miles: I guess the best other things I should speak of are just in terms of the work I've been doing, all of which seems to me to kind of be putting ends on things. That's why I had a feeling it would fit in with this tape, because all these things are sort of dusting-off stuff. I haven't had time to start anything new at all. It's amazing that after a year--since we were talking before--how busy I am just trying to keep up with the past. Isn't that a curious thing?

I guess in the middle of the fall I got this very large monetary award from the Academy of American Poets. It's a good award that's been won by good poets, and it's also this gigantic sum, for poetry. Because it was money it was publicized in the papers a lot, and that's much different. I won an equally good award for scholarship about three years before that, and nobody ever mentioned it [laughing] because there wasn't much money involved. This led me into a tremendous amount of publicity--calls from the newspapers, and then the University decided to make a play on this. The University has taken a role in this past six months of publicizing me as a good example of a graduate of the University of California and a teacher here, in a rather surface way. And I think because they know they're not being fair to individuals, they pick out an individual that they have been very fair to, over-fair to, and publicize that person, whereas actually, if they had treated me the way they've treated these other people lately, I would never have done all these things.

Anyway, I've had lots of invitations to talk and all sorts of celebrations, up, down, and sideways. For example, I just came back from San Diego where I was given an award for teaching and writing, a very elaborate occasion and very nice, lots of fun.

Teiser: What award was this?

Miles: Well--what was it called? I guess it was called the Author of the Year. That's right--a California Association of Teachers of English Author of the Year. It was a plaque. But it was a nice party, and nice people. There were a thousand teachers or something, and I talked on poetry. I enjoy those, because I think English teachers are a pretty nice type, as a whole. And they're of course getting younger and younger. [laughter] That's not in terms of the old joke that I'm getting older, but they really are, because unless they all dye their hair, you really don't see much grey hair in one of those crowds any more.

Teiser: Maybe they can't stand being English teachers for long.

Miles: [laughter] There's a new phrase that I heard down there for the first time, and it's very common now, and it's sad. It's called "teacher burn-out." And it's a serious phrase; I mean it's a phrase for what's really happening to lots of teachers. They're getting no appreciation, no credit; they're killing themselves for less money; at the same time they're threatened to be dismissed.

So then--let's see, what else has happened? Oh, I got lots of lovely letters from older students--that part was really great. I had lots of very nice letters from students who read about this in the Daily Cal; or there was an article in the alumni magazine [California Monthly], there was an article in the University Bulletin; there was an article in whatever. And students and teachers reacted to this and wrote me letters. So that was pleasant. But also I wrote millions and millions of answers, which took up a lot of time. And of course read millions and millions of manuscripts that were sent to me by people who said, "I was in your writing class in 1946 and I'm still writing, and here's a large volume of my work which I thought you might like to see"--which I did, but it was very time-consuming.

Teiser: My word! You really don't turn anyone down?

Miles: Oh, you can't. Can you imagine writing a letter, "Dear student from 1946, You've just sent me a bunch of stuff I don't have time to read." You couldn't do that.

Teiser: You couldn't.

Miles: I don't know who could.

Another interesting thing that has grown up this year is that I've been asked by lots of groups to come and talk on special projects that they have. For example, there's a special project of a group in the Institute of Governmental Studies which is studying images of California from different points of view--architectural, political, economic, and so on. It's interesting to go to those and to listen to the various celebrities in the various fields, and I'm going to talk eventually on poetry.

There's another one, an all-day seminar on the classical lyric, which I'm supposed to talk on with a group, and that's just the Classics Department. And so on. These I enjoy. These are just local student things which give me a kind of ongoing feeling of relation to the students and to work they're doing and to interesting ideas.

I go to my office once a week, keep my same office hours, because everybody warned me that if I didn't I'd fall on my face. And besides, I couldn't ask all those people to come over here.

- Miles: So I meet with everybody over there once a week, and that's been fun. I spend more time on individuals than I would have in the old days, and I'd rather spend more time on larger groups, because I think they teach each other, whereas if you just talk to one individual--you know, the tutorial system I'm not too fond of. Nevertheless, I've been doing that. So I guess my life, in relation to the campus, is about the same as it ever was, except I miss Freshman English, of course. But I see plenty of graduate students and so on.
- Teiser: Do they just talk with you informally, or are you actually working with them on projects?
- Miles: A number--maybe half a dozen graduate students--hadn't finished their theses when I retired. I was not in charge of any, I was careful not to do that, but I was a second reader on many that I couldn't control the dating of. So I've been seeing them. And then, as far as poetry goes, I've been working on my new book, and it's going to be published in the fall.
- Teiser: What is it?
- Miles: It's going to be called Coming to Terms, and that's a book of new poems. So, I've been trying to revise and get those in the right order and do all the kinds of things you do when you're getting a poetry collection together.
- Teiser: I thought you were going to say, when you started, that you haven't had any time for poetry.
- Miles: Oh! No, I have lots of time for all those things--for poetry, for teaching--not so much for scholarship, because that takes a quieter, slower momentum than I've had time for. But one nice thing did happen there, I think, that I was pleased by. (I'm not sure I should be, because I don't know the powers that run it.) But the United States has a magazine called Dialogue which they send around the world to represent American thinking and American problems, and they, to my surprise, extracted and printed one of my articles on the language of poetry, which was pretty surprising! It did deal with cultural change and with current social aspects a little bit. But it was fun to be in this magazine with a lot of sociologists and historians.
- Teiser: Did they shorten it, actually? Did they revise it?
- Miles: They said they did. I haven't taken the pains to find out. I mean I read it, and it sounded all right, and I didn't particularly notice what they did to it. Whatever they did sounded okay to me.

- Miles: And so I guess that talks about poetry and talks about ideas are the main things that have happened.
- Teiser: Did you retire from being University Professor as well as Professor of English?
- Miles: This is another thing the University hasn't got itself together on. I've written to ask a number of people what my role is, and they give me different answers, and they also don't bother to check with each other and decide. Mr. Saxon*is interested in the University Professorship, it seems, and the last report I wrote, he answered. However, it wasn't his job; the man who was supposed to answer didn't. And that man I asked whether I should still go to other campuses and who would pay travel and so on, and I said, "Do University Professors fade away?" He said, "In effect, University Professors are just like everybody else." What does that mean? Because we have a travel grant and so on--does he mean we still have it or we don't? So I've been putting that off a little bit, because it's kind of expensive if you pay your own way. Oh--that's another whole thing I should mention that's interesting too. I know I'm sounding cross about the University, but I think it's important to put on the record, you know, it's got to get itself together. It's so hard for the individuals who serve it now, because its system is so antagonistic to individual problems.

The retirement system is now divided between statewide and local, and I still haven't got some of my pension; I still haven't got a clear statement of how it's going to be distributed. After six months of struggle, I don't know where I'm at in terms of funds at all. They conflict with each other. I call Faculty Retirement and they say that question should go to Accounting; I telephone Accounting and they say that should go to Faculty Retirement. I'm referred to a different name each time, and all these names never heard of the problem, and so on. There's one nice person there named Mr. Cranston, but he himself confesses that he doesn't know what the other offices are doing. They keep changing rules in the middle of the stream. So I've made all sorts of plans that will now never work out because they abolished those rules in about October.

What got me on to that? It was something I was talking about about ways and means--oh yes, the University Professorship. So I am going to go to Davis and Irvine, but I don't know how I'm going to get there as far as payment goes yet. I haven't faced the powers that be yet. And then I'm also going to go to Texas and to Cornell, because I know they're going to finance the trip.

[end tape 1, side 1; begin tape 1, side 2]

- Teiser: You've been invited to speak at Texas and Cornell?

*David S. Saxon, President of the University of California.

Miles: Yes, I'm going to read poetry at Austin--University of Texas--and talk with some friends in education there, and then in the fall I'm going to go to Cornell and to Columbia and teach for just about two weeks each, in October when the weather hasn't got too cold yet. So those ought to be nice adventures. Then, I think by that time maybe things will have simmered down enough so that I can get back to quieter work. Oh, I've just been asked to give the Ewing Lecture at UCLA in 1980!

Oh yes--something else that I've been doing this year, on the basis of that prize I won on scholarship a couple of years ago, is that I'm now a judge for that prize, which is called the Lowell Prize, of the Modern Language Association. We have to read about a hundred scholarly books in six months to pick a winner.

Teiser: When you say read--

Miles: I mean read.

Teiser: --do you read them all through?

Miles: Sure!

Teiser: Do you ever start one and say, "Oh, this is awful," and look in the middle of it to see if it continues to be awful?

Miles: Yes, I do that. But I would say that's reading in the sense that-- I couldn't pass an examination on every page, but I could pass an examination on the structure, theme, and general set-up of the book. So I've read only about forty books so far, and we have a hundred by April or something.

Teiser: Do you learn a lot of things you don't want to know?

Miles: No, I love what I learn! Really, seriously. I'm not fond of biographies; that's not my favorite subject. And maybe I don't want to read about Edith Wharton's early years. But usually something comes out of it that's amazingly interesting and a surprise to me. I always have liked scholarly writing. It can be very stuffy, of course, but it's always dealing with ideas in terms of very thick, concentrated, collected evidence.

Aside from these books, Mel Scott may have told you I was reading a book of a cousin of his on E.E. Cummings which the cousin had asked Mel and Gerrie to read, and they let me read it too.

Miles: At the same time I was reading another biography for a publisher on Sara Teasdale. And these were quite close contemporaries, and to read these two and see how differently--and side by side, really, practically simultaneously--and see how differently the biographers tackled the problems of how a poet works in his life and how the poetry relates to his life was really interesting to me. One of them--the Sara Teasdale person--used the poetry as evidence for the biography, whereas the E.E. Cummings person much more used the biography as evidence for the poetry, which of course I would much prefer. He wearied of this towards the end and started throwing in the data. But Mel and I and Gerrie, we all wrote him and said, "Oh, do more with the poetry," and so on, and I also said this to the Sara Teasdale person. There needs to be a lot of interplay to make it make sense.

So there's my least interesting form [biography] and yet you can see that that is interesting too, whereas the theoretical ones, like the use of myth in the Renaissance and so on--these are of course just really, really fascinating. So I don't mean that there aren't bad books, but it's a gamble and you never quite know. Dick [Richard] Bridgman, in our department, and I are both reading, and we tend to read, I guess we'd say, about six books a week, and that doesn't mean we have to. But that doesn't mean a book a day; you can settle down for a long evening with maybe two or three books. You have to be a very fast reader, which I am.

You can read stuff that you don't think you want to read. For example, Dick and I were meeting in the hall one day and just commenting on how little we wanted to know about a book called Zola's Crowds. Zola's Crowds indeed! I'm not that fond of Zola in the first place, and the crowds, so what? But it's a fascinating book. Maybe I like it because it has somewhat of this theme that I've been thinking about--this relation of the individual to the group.

That brings up another thing that's been interesting to me. I decided that when I do do a new job, I'd like to write an essay on bureaucracy--this same question that I raise. And you can help me with it [speaking to Teiser and Harroun] because you doubtless know a lot about it, and I know nothing, and I don't want to go and read a lot of books on bureaucracy; that would be worse than death. But I think if somehow it could be thought through it would be interesting, I mean just on the superficial level--what is the problem with it? As one of my friends in Government Studies said, "Well, what would be the alternative--autocracy, monarchy, oligarchy, ideocracy? You'd better not blame it too much until you consider the alternatives."

Miles: I don't know historically about the history of bureaucracy. I looked it up in Webster's and it says--the root is lovely, the root means a hairy rug to cover a table with. [laughter] And the root is "hairy," the root isn't "rug." I don't have to go further into how that then developed. There's another nice definition, somewhat related, that I ran into, which is that a filing system is a way of losing things alphabetically. [laughter] Do you like that one? So what has come of this is that I've been having lunch with some friends that are in the bureaucracy, and we've been talking together. There was a student body president, a nice young woman at Santa Barbara, who because she was student body president was on the Board of Regents for a couple of years. She got so interested in it that she's up here now getting a Ph.D. on the question, "What is the relation of autonomy to accountability?" which is another way of saying the same thing [that I was saying]. So somebody sent her over to see me, and she was really fun to talk to, from a younger point of view. So this is my little sort of side luxury; I guess this is my example where I have been able to start ahead very slowly, just a little bit, but thinking about an idea that would be fun to develop.

Teiser: You're going to have to do a serious study of Proposition 13 too, aren't you?

Miles: I'm not going to do a serious study of anything! This is just going to be a little jeu d'esprit. [laughter]

Teiser: I think Proposition 13 is supposed to cut the fat out of the bureaucracy, isn't that it? [laughter]

Miles: I'm sure that it's too much for me and there's nothing I can do with it, and so on.

Teiser: Yes, write it without finding out anything more about it.

Miles: That's right, that's my point, yes. By no means find out anything about it. [laughter]

But in a way of summarizing, I think--and I really do want to summarize, because I think this stage of my life is really pretty much finished--the good part is that in some ways I've been forced to be individual. I haven't been able to blend into the crowd, and as a whole I've been helped to be individual by the world around me. I worry a great deal, as I get to this point in my life where I'm now being given credit for being an individual, about the fact that that isn't happening very much to the people I see around me; that people are not given credit for being individuals, that they're being stopped by the system. That bothers me.

- Teiser: However, how much force in the development of individuality comes from the person, the independence of spirit of the person?
- Miles: Grant that. Grant that as given in both my case and other people's cases. Sure I had independence of spirit, but I couldn't get two feet in this bureaucracy we've got around here right now if I hadn't built up some momentum.
- Teiser: Let me go back to something you mentioned earlier, when you were talking about your report. (And this doesn't have to be on the tape, but it interests me.) You said the problems now--and maybe I'm misunderstanding--were created, at least in part, by Proposition 13 and the Governor's attitude toward the University, which meant economic cutbacks, less money.
- Miles: Plus student cutbacks; there's going to be fewer students, demographically.
- Teiser: Well, theoretically, fewer students need less money.
- Miles: Theoretically, we started with fewer students and the numbers were supposed to be ideal, and the build-up was just supposed to be an emergency build-up.
- Teiser: Yes--so?
- Miles: Who ever heard of going back to the way it should be?! This is a curious attitude: say thirty is ideal, you build it up to fifty because of emergency. You say to your teachers, "It's a matter of life or death--you've got to sacrifice yourself temporarily." It's like temporary buildings! They're the most permanent buildings on the campus. And it angers me because it's not only illogical and destructive but it's morally wrong--it's wrong to treat people that way.
- So we'll never go back to what we once agreed was right. What we agree is right tends to be wiped out by any petty little emergency.
- So this young student I talked to from Santa Barbara was saying--and other people have been saying, as we've been talking about this--the way to get a decent relation between autonomy and accountability, or between individuality and group, is to be aware of shared values on which you base your procedures. And to go back to our report, as we were saying, we are now not aware of shared values, and we should be and we should get together and find out what are our shared values.
- Teiser: The larger the institution the more difficult it is to find those?

Miles: I don't think so, because I know Mr. Sproul had lots of faults, but this university had 23,500 people in the late forties, and under him it was a real working, sharing of values. I'm not giving him all the credit--Earl Warren deserves a tremendous lot of credit too for backing him up; the faculty deserves a lot of credit for, again, it was working very, very hard. But it wasn't to the point of faculty burn-out or teacher burn-out, which is really destructive. And the students, of course, had energy because they were coming back from the war and so on, and they were really gung-ho for going ahead. It was a very fine time. It had nothing to do with size. Very small places today, the smaller the tighter, the more constricted. Santa Cruz is having trouble. The smaller the more the students say they don't want to be homogenized, and that's partly because of size.

[telephone interruption]

Teiser: I wonder how much an institution is shaped by its leaders, and in a state like California where the governor is so close to the leadership of the University, what the effect of our two most recent governors has been--if they have not been factors in what you are speaking of.

Miles: You mean Reagan and Brown?

Teiser: Reagan and Brown.

Miles: Well, for one thing, yes, Reagan had a very different idea of what a good education was--namely, his, which was a small, cozy school in the Middle West. And Brown went to the University of California at Berkeley and didn't like it, so has a real animus, as I gather. At least one can see that he does for what you call scholarly education. So they both pulled in a direction which we see us moving in: everything's going to be downgraded two years. The junior college is going to become a training school, the college is going to become a junior college, as you see this plan at Santa Cruz; the university is going to become a college, graduate school is going to become university school (that means taught at less costly levels and less exploratory levels). And this is sad if you believe, as I think a lot of us do, in exploration.

I think we've just cut out thirty-five managerial positions at the University, just at Berkeley, so as not to touch the faculty. Cutting managerial positions sounds like, "Oh well, that's cutting out the fat." But each one of those people was a support for certain faculty actions, for certain faculty knowledge, certain faculty inquiry. Without support, the faculty just can't move. I don't know enough about how many could or could not be cut, but I mean in terms of concept, it isn't just "fat" by definition. People need a certain amount of fat, and when you talk about faculty burn-out, that means when you ain't got any fat left, for energy.

Harroun: How are you going to be able to make your opinions known on these subjects?

Miles: I don't know. I don't know. I think quite a lot about that. At the university level I think we have some good leadership--Saxon and Bill Fretter, and I think that Bowker certainly has done some very smart things in rescue work, and so has Mike Heyman.* They're not all bad people. (Some of them are bad, I haven't mentioned.) But they become victims in a system that they themselves are bosses of. Wouldn't it be possible to have a system that grows more out of the rank and file, the grassroots, and that that system would have a sense of values which they could recognize as really shareable, instead of ones that they either invented themselves or impose?

We have a little group called the Victorian Club which meets once a month and has the motivation of reading long Victorian novels which otherwise you wouldn't have time or incentive to read. The one we're reading for tonight is called North and South by Mary Barton--is that right? Sounds wrong. Anyway, it's a marvelous little book--no, I'm sorry, it's by Mrs. Gaskell. It's published in 1885; I think it was written earlier. This reminds me of Arnold Bennett, who comes a little bit later, with the Stories of the Five Towns. This is of a family that moves to a mill town, to an industrial town, in northern England, and there is a very interesting passage in which the young woman, who is trying to understand the industrial psychology and is faced up with a strike and has never seen strikes before, and all this whole threatening violence, says one thing that seems strange to her is that the owners have never talked to the strikers. Well now, you know, of course we build in a whole industrial complex of negotiation and conference, and I'm sure that the people I'm talking about, in the situation I'm talking about, would feel somehow that they have conferred and met because they've conferred with representatives, you know. But if you happened to see that marvelous picture of the Kentucky mining strike where you see the miners' faces, you see the miners' wives, and you know they haven't been talking to anybody, they haven't been heard by anybody--their representatives are already miles out of their league, in talking to the owners.

Education is already way, way too far into an industrial pattern, and it's forced into that by HEW and the government in Washington. We've slipped into this industrial pattern to such a degree that we talk about hiring and firing professors instead of appointing a professor. We don't seem to be able to rally our forces enough to set up our own system of values which can be sustained. And maybe that's, as you say, because we don't have enough strong individuals in the profession. I don't know what to

*Ira Michael Heyman, Vice Chancellor of the Berkeley Campus.

Miles: say about that. Maybe that's true. But on the other hand, professors are people who have sort of chosen not to get out into the fight but to stay in their laboratories and libraries and work it another way. That quality of theirs is now being exploited in a strange sort of way.

We have some marvelous people at Berkeley who have--in terms of collective bargaining, we've had to go that road, which is an industrial road, with the legislature, with the Regents, and so forth. And this was forced on us, and this was just so bad to put us into that industrial pattern, and most of the faculty just dug in their heels and said, "We won't collective-bargain! You give us some decent living wage or we'll leave, but we will not strike, we will not bargain." In other words, they're that old-fashioned; they won't accept industrial models. Which is fine, it's noble. But what do you do? I mean, you see, this is an example of where a pattern is forced on you, where your individuality is stomped on by the system.

We have a real heroic leader in the law school by the name of Dave [David E.] Feller who has negotiated for the faculty and has won a fine set of terms in that he's given the faculty--in the legislature the bill passed that each bargaining unit should be the faculty of a campus. Now there's an assertion of the individual--that the values of the campus faculty will be the values negotiated for, not the values of K through 12, not the values of educational systems all over the country. And so that, last year, was a great achievement, which I was in on only a little bit in that I was a member of the board of that group. So that isn't discouraging, but where are more Dave Fellers? Nobody has given him any banquets.

[end tape 1, side 2]

[added April 1979] You see my muddle of fear and affection, all at once; oh, have you heard of the Berkeley Fellows? A hundred of them? Pillars? Now I'm one. And this week at Charter Day I sat next to an alumna who's a farmer near Stockton. Row crops. She was homesick for the crops, all the way from 1928. When the new carillon played, we were sentimental together.

Transcriber and Final Typist: Lee Steinback

APPENDICES

From "Bibliographical Introduction to Seventy-five Modern American Authors" September 1976. Gary M. Lepper

Josephine Miles

LINES AT INTERSECTION. New York: Macmillan, 1939.

Hardcover, dustwrapper.

"FIRST PRINTING"

POEMS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions (1941).

Wrappers.

No statement of first edition.

WORDSWORTH AND THE VOCABULARY OF EMOTION. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

Wrappers.

No statement of first edition.

ALSO: New York: Octagon Books, 1965.

Hardcover, dustwrapper.

No statement of first edition.

NOTE: New preface by the author.

PATHETIC FALLACY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

Wrappers.

No statement of first edition.

ALSO: New York: Octagon Books, 1965.

Hardcover, dustwrapper.

No statement of first edition.

NOTE: New preface by the author.

LOCAL MEASURES. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock (1946).

Hardcover, dustwrapper.

No statement of first edition.

MAJOR ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH POETRY. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946.

Wrappers.

No statement of first edition.

- THE VOCABULARY OF POETRY. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946.
Hardcover.
NOTE: Comprises the 1942 publications of *Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion and Pathetic Fallacy in the Nineteenth Century* in addition to *Major Adjectives in English Poetry*, all three bound together.
- AFTER THIS, SEA. (San Francisco): Book Club of California, 1947.
Single sheet, folded.
750 copies.
- THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF POETRY IN THE 1640's. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948.
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
University of California Publications in English, Vol. 19, No. 1.
- THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF POETRY IN THE 1740's and 1840's. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950.
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
University of California Publications in English, Vol. 19, No. 2.
- THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF POETRY IN THE 1940's. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951.
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
University of California Publications in English, Vol. 19, No. 3.
- THE CONTINUITY OF POETIC LANGUAGE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.
ALSO: New York: Octagon Books, 1965.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.
NOTE: New preface by the author.
- PREFABRICATIONS. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.
- ERAS AND MODES IN ENGLISH POETRY. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.
ALSO: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
NOTE: Revised edition.

- POEMS 1930-1960. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1960.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.
- RENAISSANCE, EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY, AND MODERN LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
- IN IDENTITY. (Berkeley): Oyez, 1964.
Broadside.
350 copies.
Oyez 3.
NOTE: 27 copies, numbered, signed by the author in 1964 but published in 1965 in portfolio entitled *Poems in Broadside. Oyez. First Series.*
- RALPH WALDO EMERSON. Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press (1964).
Wrappers.
No statement of first edition.
University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers #41.
- CIVIL POEMS. (Berkeley): Oyez (1966).
Wrappers, no priority:
1). 500 copies.
2). 40 copies, uncut, for the use of the author.
- BENT. (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Unicorn Press, 1967).
Wrappers, no priority:
1). 450 copies, brown wrappers.
2). 26 copies, lettered, signed by the author, orange wrappers.
- SAVING THE BAY. San Francisco: White Rabbit / Open Space, 1967.
Wrappers.
- KINDS OF AFFECTION. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press (1967).
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
"First edition"
- STYLE AND PROPORTION. Boston: Little, Brown (1967).
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
"FIRST EDITION"
- FIELDS OF LEARNING. Berkeley: Oyez, 1968.
Wrappers.
- POETRY AND CHANGE. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
Hardcover, dustwrapper.
No statement of first edition.

TO ALL APPEARANCES. (Urbana, Ill. : University of Illinois Press, 1974).

Two issues, no priority:

- 1). Hardcover, dustwrapper.
- 2). Wrappers.

No statement of first edition.

Additional entry submitted by Gary M. Lepper 3 September 1978

THIS SOFT PAPER. (Berkeley): Inkslingers (1976)

Broadside, no priority:

1. 75 copies.
2. 25 copies, numbered, signed by the author.

Gary Lepper
 10 La Mesa Lane
 Walnut Creek, Calif.
 94598
 "Bibliographical Introduction
 to Seventy-five Modern
 American Authors" Sept 76

1/24/73--Thayer--File 4942

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Berkeley--Josephine Miles, poet and professor of English, has been awarded the distinguished title of "University Professor" at the Berkeley campus of the University of California.

The appointment was announced today (Wednesday, 1/24) by U.C. President Charles J. Hitch and Berkeley Chancellor Albert H. Bowker.

Recommending the appointment last week to the U.C. Board of Regents, President Hitch said: "Professor Miles provides unparalleled inspiration by the clarity of her thinking, her imagination, will, integrity, and humanity."

Professor Miles is the eighth U.C. faculty member to receive the honor, which designates a senior faculty appointment in the statewide University system.

The special professorship was established some 15 years ago by The Regents.

Other University Professors are Chemists Glenn T. Seaborg and Melvin Calvin, Physicists Edward Teller and Charles Townes, and Sociologist Neil J. Smelser, all of Berkeley; Historian Lynn White, Jr., of UCLA; and Harold C. Urey, professor of chemistry, emeritus, at San Diego.

Professor Miles is a distinguished scholar, teacher, and poet, whose work has received international acclaim.

(more)

Her eighth volume of verse is about to be published, and her poetry has also appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers, including Poetry, New Directions, New York Times, Yale Review, and Saturday Review.

She is also the author of two books, "Eras and Modes in English Poetry" and "Style and Proportion: The Language of Prose and Poetry." A third she has just completed is "Poetry as History." Her books have been translated into several foreign languages.

Textbooks she has written are "The Ways of the Poem" and "Classical Essays in English."

She has been acclaimed a superb teacher at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and she has received a commendation for service to English teaching by the California Association of Teachers of English.

During the early 1950s, she was one of the founding editors of Idea and Experiment, a quarterly journal which for some five years carried articles by U.C. professors on their research and publications.

A native of Chicago, Professor Miles graduated from UCLA, then earned her master's and Ph.D. degrees from the Berkeley campus. She has been on the Berkeley faculty since 1940.

She has served on the Campus Committee on Prose Improvement, and the Chancellor's Committee on the Arts, as well as Academic Senate Committees on Research, and Privilege and Tenure.

Among her many awards have been a Guggenheim Fellowship, an honorary Doctor of Literature Degree from Mills College, and a Fellowship from the National Foundation on the Arts. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

In 1968, an "Homage to Josephine Miles" was published in the national magazine Voyages.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
THE FIRST OF TWO LECTURES OF
THE SIXTY-THIRD ANNUAL
FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURES



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1976

4:00 P.M.

THE AUDITORIUM OF BENJAMIN IDE WHEELER HALL

Lecturer for 1976

JOSEPHINE MILES

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH



Subject

WHERE HAVE *GOODNESS, TRUTH, AND
BEAUTY* GONE?

*The second of the 1976 Faculty Research Lectures
will be presented by John Verhoogen, Professor of
Geology and Geophysics, on April 15, 1976*

JOSEPHINE MILES

Josephine Miles was born in Chicago, June 11, 1911. Academically she is a daughter of this University, earning her B.A. at UCLA, her M.A. and Ph.D. at Berkeley. Joining the University faculty in 1940, she advanced through ranks to become Professor of English in 1952. Her poetry began early to be recognized, and brought her many distinctions. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Science in 1964; and in 1965 received from Mills College the honorary degree of D.Litt. Her superlative, far-reaching service to her own University was acknowledged, as a crowning honor, by her appointment in 1972 as University Professor.

Josephine Miles has the unique distinction of being one of the most sensitive poets of our age and at the same time—two gifts that virtually never reside in one and the same person—a lucid, imaginative and innovative analyst and historian of modern literature and poetry. Her volumes of verse now number more than a dozen; her poems frequently appear in anthologies, and work of hers has been translated into foreign languages both European and Oriental. The national literary magazine, *Voyages*, in 1968 published a 16-page "Homage to Josephine Miles."

In literary analysis, she has ranged from the sixteenth century to the latest decade of the twentieth. She has published ten critical monographs, uncounted essays, and a handful of collegiate textbooks. Her adventurous mind moved beyond the familiar along a path of discovery. The originality of her critical approach and her analytical techniques are probably unique. Studying the kaleidoscope of vocabulary among English poets through the last four centuries, she has in a sense rewritten the history of our poetry from the Elizabethan age to the present.

The earliest of Josephine Miles' studies of the changing language of English poets was *Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion*. In it she employed the method for which she has since become well known, in which she first tabulates and next analyzes those words a given poet uses most frequently so as to show that the very language itself reveals the author's underlying interest and intention. From this initial inquiry she went on to study the significance of the major adjectives used by poets ranging from Wyatt in the sixteenth century to Auden in the twentieth century. By isolating one part of speech—the adjective—and considering both the frequency of its use and the actual words most commonly employed by specific poets, she was able to present clearly objective data to investigate. Then by her own sensitive scrutiny she demonstrated the nature of the shifting sensibility of English poets over a period of four centuries.

She wrote a series of monographs that in the same way studied the primary language of twenty poets who wrote in the 1640's, of twenty who wrote in the 1740's, of twenty who wrote in the 1840's, and of twenty of her own older contemporaries in the 1940's. She made striking discoveries of similarities among poets of each period who were commonly thought to be quite different and she made equally revealing explanations of the differences among language preferences in separate centuries. From these findings she went on to make a penetrating inquiry into the whole sweep of English poetry since 1500, culminating in a study entitled *Eras and Modes in English Poetry*. Her latest scholarly work, *Poetry and Change* (1974), received the 1975 Lowell Award for literary scholarship from the Modern Language Association.

Josephine Miles' precise inquiry into the vocabulary of poetry has brought out an understanding of both continuity and change that is of great significance to the study of literature and language, and also an important contribution to sociology and psychology.

THE BI-ANNUAL FACULTY RESEARCH LECTURE



HISTORICAL STATEMENT

On April 29, 1912, at a meeting of the Academic Council, a special committee appointed by President Benjamin Ide Wheeler "to consider the feasibility of establishing at the University a series of lectures for the presentation of results of research at the University of California," reported favorably on the proposal. The committee's report was adopted. It provided that the Academic Senate shall elect annually as Faculty Research Lecturer one of its members who has distinguished himself by scholarly research in his chosen field of study. The first lecture of the series was delivered in the week of Charter Day 1913. Because of war conditions no selection was made for the year 1919. The lecturers in the several years have been as named in the list below.

FORMER LECTURERS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1913 WILLIAM WALLACE CAMPBELL,
Astronomy | 1945 JOHN S. P. TATLOCK, English |
| 1914 JOHN C. MERRIAM, Paleontology | 1946 RAYMOND T. BIRGE, Physics |
| 1915 ARMIN O. LEUSCHNER,
Astronomy | 1947 EDWARD C. TOLMAN, Psychology |
| 1916 FREDERICK P. GAY, Pathology | 1948 WILLIAM FRANCIS GIAUQUE,
Chemistry |
| 1917 HERBERT E. BOLTON,
American History | 1949 ROBERT H. LOWIE, Anthropology |
| 1918 RUDOLPH SCHEVILL, Spanish
Language and Literature | 1950 GRIFFITH C. EVANS, Mathematics |
| 1920 GILBERT N. LEWIS, Chemistry | 1951 AGNES FAY MORGAN, Nutrition |
| 1921 CHARLES MILLS GAYLEY, English
Language and Literature | 1952 STUART DAGGETT, Transportation |
| 1922 CHARLES A. KOFOID, Zoology | 1953 WENDELL M. LATIMER,
Chemistry and Chemical
Engineering |
| 1923 GEORGE R. NOYES, Slavic
Languages | 1954 ROY E. CLAUSEN, Genetics |
| 1924 CARL C. PLEHN, Economics | 1955 EDWIN M. McMILLAN, Physics |
| 1925 HERBERT M. EVANS, Anatomy | 1956 MURRAY B. EMENEAU, General
Linguistics and Sanskrit |
| 1926 FLORIAN CAJORI, Mathematics | 1957 MELVIN CALVIN, Chemistry |
| 1927 ANDREW C. LAWSON, Geology | 1958 STEPHEN C. PEPPER, Philosophy |
| 1928 A. L. KROEBER, Anthropology | 1959 GLENN T. SEABORG, Chemistry |
| 1929 SAMUEL J. HOLMES, Zoology | 1960 EMILIO SEGRE, Physics |
| 1930 WILLIAM POPPER,
Semitic Languages | 1961 BERTRAND H. BRONSON, English |
| 1931 WILLIAM A. SETCHELL, Botany | 1962 LUIS WALTER ALVAREZ, Physics |
| 1932 WILLIAM HAMMOND WRIGHT,
Astronomy | 1963 ALFRED TARSKI, Mathematics |
| 1933 GEORGE P. ADAMS, Philosophy | 1964 CURT STERN, Zoology |
| 1934 WILLIS LINN JEPSON, Botany | 1965 MARY R. HAAS, Linguistics |
| 1935 FREDERICK J. TEGGART,
Social Institutions | 1966 LEO BREWER, Chemistry |
| 1936 JOEL H. HILDEBRAND, Chemistry | 1967 YUEN REN CHAO, Oriental
Languages and Literature |
| 1937 KARL F. MEYER, Bacteriology | 1968 HEINZ L. FRAENKEL-CONRAT,
Molecular Biology |
| 1938 ERNEST O. LAWRENCE, Physics | 1969 KINGSLEY DAVIS, Sociology |
| 1939 HENRY FREDERICK LUTZ,
Egyptology and Assyriology | 1970 FRANCIS J. TURNER, Geology |
| 1940 GEORGE D. LOUDERBACK,
Geology | 1971 DAVID BLACKWELL, Statistics |
| 1941 IVAN M. LINFORTH, Greek | 1972 HORACE A. BARKER, Biochemistry |
| 1942 DENNIS R. HOAGLAND,
Plant Nutrition | 1972 SHERWOOD L. WASHBURN,
Anthropology |
| 1943 ROBERT J. KERNER,
European History | 1973 WALTER W. HORN,
History of Art |
| 1944 ERNEST B. BABCOCK, Genetics | 1973 EARL R. PARKER, Materials
Science and Engineering |
| | 1974 DANIEL MAZIA, Zoology |
| | 1974 JOHN H. REYNOLDS, Physics |
| | 1975 WILLIAM J. BOUWSMA, HISTORY |
| | 1975 GEORGE C. PIMENTEL,
CHEMISTRY |

THE MONDAY PAPER

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Miles honored with top award for American poet

The highest award of the Academy of American Poets is being given this year to Prof. Emeritus Josephine Miles of English.

The Academy's 1978 Fellowship, which includes a stipend of \$10,000, honors Miles for "distinguished poetic achievement."

The 37th American poet to receive the award, Miles joins such other honored names as Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound and Marianne Moore.

Miles retired from active teaching last summer after 37 years on the faculty. She was honored on campus this year with a Distinguished Teaching Award and earlier was honored by Berkeley's Academic Senate as Faculty Research Lecturer.

Most recent of her nine books of poetry is *To All Appearances: Poems New and Selected*, published in 1975. She is also author or co-author of five volumes of criticism and editor of several textbooks.

Her poems, she has said, speak for "acceptance and praise of all appearances, however alien they may seem to the truths underlying them: the appearance of magnitude in the appearance of power, of confidence in doubt, of death in age, of joy in simplicities, of large ideas in small talk."

Among Miles' other honors are fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Blumenthal Award of *POETRY* magazine and an award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. She is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Annual election of a Fellow of the Academy of American Poets is by the Academy's Board of Chancellors—12 eminent poets who also act as literary advisors to the Academy.

IMAGES OF CALIFORNIA CULTURE SERIES:

A SESSION WITH JOSEPHINE MILES

Josephine Miles, poet, teacher, and scholar, will be the principal speaker at our fourth session and will talk about "images of California." Her presentation, she says, will consist of "poems and other stuff," and she promises to disagree with most everything that has been said before.

The meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 28, from 3:00 to 5:00, in the lounge of the Women's Faculty Club. We must begin promptly at 3:00 because we must finish by 5:00 to make way for another event.

Josephine Miles, an internationally acclaimed poet, has written nine volumes of verse and several critical works on poetry. She was raised in Los Angeles, attending L.A. High and UCLA. She received her Ph.D. from Berkeley and stayed as a teacher. She has been associated with the University of California for 50 years and is the first woman to become a University Professor. Several months ago she was honored with the Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets, an award once held by Robert Frost, Ezra Pound, and Marianne Moore.

We invite you to attend. The combination of a small audience from the arts, humanities, and social sciences and the "specialness" of Josephine Miles promises a most interesting event. Her presentation will be followed by coffee and conversation among everyone present.

IMAGES OF CALIFORNIA

A SESSION WITH JOSEPHINE MILES, POET: A REPORT AND INTERPRETATION

Our recent session was the occasion for us and Josephine Miles to think about images in general and her California images in particular.

Jo was cautious about images and skeptical about her images of California. However, the previous session, which featured Lewis Baltz, an urban landscape photographer, gave her both a way to think about imagery that was important to her and a reference for the selection of poems -- streets, houses, and other urban scenes.

The session was in part a response by Josephine Miles to Lewis Baltz.

Visual images did not excite her; her enthusiasm lay in a fuller meaning of imagery, one involving all of our senses. There is an image of lavender, she said; an image of the salt-smelling sea, of Mozart's music, an image of sound. What do we mean by images of California? Jo asked. Are we speaking simply of pictures of California?

Jo argued strenuously that we pay attention to the imagery of tone -- "the tone we take toward California." Our seeing is colored by our attitudes, our feelings (i.e., irony, flippancy, cynicism, anger, naivete, hopefulness, love). In examining images of California, we must discern tone.

Jo was forthright in her judgment of the tone conveyed by Lewis Baltz's photographs: those pictures, she said, were loaded with comment; although Baltz found a gold mine in the industrial parks of Irvine, California, he did not love them. Jo loved the kind of architecture she felt Baltz did not because from 1940 she saw "the square of blankness" replace the kind of architecture she had experienced, and it was new and good to her. Her first poem was chosen to illustrate the old; it is called "Row" and was published in Lines at Intersection in 1939.

Some of the roofs are of Hopi Indian decision,
They cut square into the sky with plaster,
The tan edge going up two stories past the windows
And turning north and east for straight cement horizon.

Some have old noble English temper peaked,
Alternate red and green shingles but getting the drift,
Gabled to peer out of a possible anciently fallen snow,
And clear superior against gray sky.

All of them look west and take in sunset,
Keep their ferns warm the length of supper,
Sparkle their cups of milk and all accompany
With aerial music that evening sun go down.

Images of California, for Jo, have been images of artifice. California is a place of artifice: its constructions may reveal but frequently obscure reality (i.e., movies, the Rose Parade, mission bells, the poems of John Steven McGroaty, poet laureate of California) and are insubstantial (i.e., prefabrications), full of show and intended for petty purpose (i.e., searchlights). For her next poem, "Seer," which was published in the same volume as the first, Jo suggests that we pay attention to the place, the building. Notice its shabbiness amid the light and wind.

The psychic metaphysician sat tight in the white
Shine of the rocks outside Riverside,
It was like living in a world of mirrors
The left hand rocks and leaves so took the light,
The left of cornflakes in the kitchenette
So took the light.

Is it wind or is it a new year, asked the psychic metaphysician
Resting his hand upon the parlor chair, and the flare
Of answers long lying in that dust dazzled him,
The left hand cups and mirrors so took the light,
It was like living in a world of answers
The hand so took the light.

I shall be prodigal with thine information,
The psychic metaphysician knelt and spelt,
Changing fifty cents to forty on his sign,
It swung against the porch and took the light,
It was like living in a world of sight
The sign so took the light.

In 1956 Jo published Prefabrications. It contained two poems which were about "a spirit of building" Jo was experiencing; for prefabrication, Jo felt interest and horror. The first poem is called "Summer."

When I came to show you my summer cottage
By the resounding sea,
We found a housing project building around it,
Two stories being painted green row after row
So we were set in an alley.

But there is the sea I said, off the far corner
Through that vacant land;
And there the pile of prefabricating panels
And the cement blocks swiftly
Rose in the sand.

So darkened the sunlit alley.
 Ovid, Arthur, oh Orion I said, run
 Take rags with you, send me back
 News of the sea.
 So they did, vanishing away off and shouting.

The second poem is called "The Plastic Glass" and is in the tradition of "art mirroring life" literature. Jo will say that she is impatient with artifice and ironic about it, but she loves it too, and the love arises from its potentiality. The poem, says Jo, is more a description of a feeling than of a place. That feeling, she suggests, is gladness at being in the Bay Area, in Berkeley.

A saint I heard of saw the world
 Suspended in a golden globe; so I saw
 Shattuck Avenue and the Safeway Stores
 In Herndon's globe of friendly credit.

And where the car moved on, there the whole trash
 Flats of Berkeley floated in suspense
 Gold to the Gate and bellied to the redwood
 Cottages.

And I would ask the saint at what expense
 This incorporeal vision falls to the lay mind,
 And search the breast
 For revelations of unquietude.

But in this dear and christian world the blessing
 Falls not from above; the grace
 Goldens from everyman, his singular credit
 In the beatitude of place.

Jo devotes her most recent volume of poems to appearances, that realm within which artifice occurs. She read two new poems from that volume (To All Appearances, 1974). They are about suburbia, about tracts. The first poem, "Tract," is about an outworn tract -- a place Jo describes as a prison.

Old tract, the houses of wood-siding
 Old callas at the drain pipes, a frontal
 Cedar, line among lots
 Cabs, a wagon, a pick-up
 And the bay not far, a dozen miles over town.
 A boy on a bike now and again
 Makes up a tunafish sandwich and starts off.
 Few go out otherwise, they stay in to listen.

For some tracts, a whole range
 Of mountains takes the bay's place,
 Holds all the answer or loss
 Behind curtains as tears.
 For some, beyond the outskirts of the houses,
 More callas, more houses.

Jo tells us to pay attention to the difference in tone, in sound, of these two poems. In the first, there is a sense of waiting, of nothing happening, of people stuck; the drain pipes are clogged. In the second poem, "New Tract," there is a sense of activity. However horrifying tracts can be, says Jo, they contain tremendous energy. The new tract is part of a process of building, of spreading, seemingly without limit, without horizon -- but with costs.

Streets under trees
lamps in their windows
gathering dark,

Comfortable coming of home,
fussing and crying, tears of the tired, yet lamplit
windows under the trees
trees under opening stars.

Work done, car in the port,
children cleared and asleep under stars,
why not enough?

Held in the hold of the mountainous night
And the bend of the street,
why not enough?

Building and bearing
street after street in the town to the mountains and on,
state after state in trees of the plains with a plenty or spare
and by rivers
why not enough?

Later from night,
trees upon street
droop of the dark sides, haggard of morning,
show that it was.

Jo concluded her reading with two unpublished poems which were written after a visit to Southern California and at a time, Jo says, when memory was taking over and her childhood and past struck her very hard. Since I am not clear about their copyright status, I will not write them down. The first is called "Trip" and is about her coming from Detroit to Palm Springs when she was five years old. I will write down instead a published poem, one which she told us from memory, one grown so worn to her she cannot bear to read it; for I think "After This, Sea" makes much the same point that "Trip" does.

This is as far as the land goes, after this it is sea.
This is where my father stopped, being no sailor,
Being no Beowulf, nor orient spice hungry
Here he let horizons come quietly to rest.

What he fled is past and over,
Rafted roof and quilted cover,
The known street and the known face,
The stale place.

This is as far as the land goes, here we are at length
Facing back on the known street and face, all flight
Spent before our time in building the new towns,
Letting these last horizons come quietly to rest.

We have a special pressing need
We of the outer border breed
To climb these hills we cannot flee
To swim in this sea.

This is as far as the land goes, here the coast ranges
Hard and brown stand down to hold the ocean,
Here the winds are named for saints and blow on leaves
Small, young, yellow, few, but bound to be ancestral.

Nowhere are so still as here
Four horizons, or so clear.
Whatever we make here, whatever find,
We cannot leave behind.

That poem was published in Lines at Intersection in 1939. She did not feel a pull to India or a threat from the Pacific; she felt stuck: "well, here we are and we've got to do something about it."

Her final poem, "Easter," suggests enormous potentiality. It makes the central point of the session, its resonances in other poems, especially perhaps in "Seer" and "The Plastic Glass," namely, that out of tackiness, improvisation, bargaining, indeed, out of artifice, arises possibility. Our Spanish and Catholic past, for example, is largely fabricated. Its images are hardly sustaining. Carving soap missions in the fourth grade is, for many of us, the depth of its hold. However, the Spanish romance suggests grace and leisure, just as the Asian romance suggests values at variance with those of mainstream America. Unfortunately, in this multi-cultural landscape of Chicanos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans, most of us have experienced the barest contact with other cultures. The myth of a multi-cultural heritage, authenticated, Jo suggests, by the kind of labor and help that supports the dominant European American culture, is undermined by what Jo refers to in a poem, "In the neighborhood of my childhood, a hundred lungers," as deprivation, absence. Jo wonders if such romance can be the basis for life-affirming images, images of California that can sustain us, upon which we can thrive. She says that she has no idea what to do with California, what to make it. But in an age which demands assertion and is uncomfortable with irony, we need affirmative images for

California which would shake the earth and "unearth those possibilities that we are only sensing." Jo is alive to the possibilities of new forms. She suggests that the metaphor of the frontier may be most apt: frontiers are tacky in their constructions because they are improvised, temporary. In a landscape of artifice, there is enormous energy and power. Jo, who may well find her images of California obscure, has through her poetic voice a tonal force.

So what we have, says Jo, is a "cheerful belief," an idea that out of the tacky comes something wonderful and illuminating. So the searchlights bring ticket buyers; the psychic metaphysician offers reduced prices for illumination. Jo asks, How do we achieve a finer sort of illumination, a realization of potentiality? At the beginning of the session, Jo raised the question, Why are we concerned with images of California? Here is her answer: "I think that shift between noticing something and achieving something and realizing the relation between them is awfully important and I don't see my way clear to it at this point." How, she asks, can we discover a decent picture of where it is we need to put our energy?

James D. Houston, the novelist who will be our next speaker, in part will address that point.

Jim Hughes
March 22, 1979

Ph.D. Dissertations -
Josephine Miles, Director

(* published)

- * Ray Fraser--~~on~~ Renaissance Imagery
- * Burton Kurth -- Milton's Christian Hero
- Daniel Knapp -- American Drama in the late 19th century
- George Crane -- Marston's Satire
- Sister Francesca Cabrini -- Samuel Garth's Epic Satire
- * Albert Ball -- Charles Churchill's Sublime
- * George T. Wright-- The Poet in the Poem
- * William Baker -- The Grammar of Modern Poetry
- Lee Winters -- Modern Imagism and the Chinese Book of Odes
- * Michael Cooke -- Byron and 17th cen. Modes
- * Ernst Bernhardt-Kabisch -- Southey and Romanticism
- * Carl Dennis --Emerson's Poetic World
- * Edward Pechter -- Dryden's Critical Theory
- * Ruth McConnell-- Conrad's Imagery
- Mary Tyson -- Ovidian Humor in Renaissance
- * Mary Beth Nelson --George Crabbe and 18th c. Poetic Narrative
- * Suzanne Juhasz -- Metaphor in Modern Poetry
- * Dennis Jarrett -- The Language of the Blues
- * James Welch -- Tennyson's Landscape of Time
- Robert Becker -- Narrative Structure for Spenser and Milton
- ⊙ Robert Wilson -- The American Poetic Sublime
- * Donald Bogen -- Poet and Manuscript

A PROFILE OF JOSEPHINE MILES

by Katharine Livingston
1973

It is the Spring Quarter on the Berkeley campus, and mornings are mild, turning bright as the fog lifts. As the Campanile bells strike the hours, Sproul Plaza fills with successive waves of students. They move in a river through Sather Gate and then scatter north, east and west toward classes. On Tuesday mornings between ten and twelve, Josephine Miles holds office hours on the fourth floor of Wheeler Hall as she has done for more than thirty years. In 1967 she wrote a poem called "Office Hours."

Here is my second chapter on Philip Sidney's ethic
What did you think of Chushingura? I saw you at it.
Here's my translation of Statius, Be critical!
I hear you write poetry, so does my mother. She's in
Hong Kong and I'm homesick.
Do you still have the paper I wrote two years ago? I'd
like to reread it.

What would you do about Viet Nam? Please sign this petition.
Did you have a student who wrote a book on Milton? What
was the name of it?
I'm hot on the trail of Dryden's brother-in-law.
Would you like to read these poems in a couple of medical
journals my husband subscribes to?
I just noticed walking by what a great view you have from
your window.

Please explain these marks you put on my paper: you liked
it, why correct it?
Will you come to a discussion of poetry in politics at
4:10 today?
Why should you have three meetings scheduled for that time?
That doesn't make sense.

In six years the mood of the Berkeley campus has considerably changed. The quarters in the academic year roll by quietly and routinely, distinguishable only by season, no longer by political

crisis. The tension, the fears, the vitality and brash urgency of the Sixties are muted. But Josephine Miles' office, small and lively, is still a mecca for students in need of aid and comfort, or just good conversation.

Today a somewhat stiff and self-conscious young man, winner of an Esiner prize for poetry is discussing with her the problems of getting published. "I don't think that many people realize that editors are trying to find a poet, not a poem," she tells him. "They want to be able to say we are presenting a new poet who has never been published before." She advises him to send off six poems that have something in common. The young poet is doubtful; he's still experimenting. "Anyway, I did send some poems to Hyperion. The editor turned them down because he said they were too formal and 'not enough from the heart as Josephine Miles would say'." He grins at her shocked expression, and she begins to laugh. "Does that sound like me? You sure can get misquoted in this life."

The next visitor is a former student who's been away from Berkeley for a year. "I haven't looked anyone up. I'm lying low trying to finish my thesis, but I had to come see you." They talk a bit about her subject, which is Italian Renaissance Art.

Another woman sticks her head in the door to confide that she thinks she's about to be offered a job thanks to Miss Miles' recommendation.

The phone rings every few minutes. The two campus literary magazines have had their funds cut off by the Associated Students'

Senate and Miss Miles is trying to rally support to save them. She's arranging a noon meeting to discuss strategy.

At a quarter to twelve, however, she is deep in conversation with still another visitor, a woman with a heavy Slavic accent. They are discussing Russian structuralism. "Her name's Valentina," Miss Miles explains later, "and I don't know her last name or even where she's from. She called up last week out of the blue and asked me to read her book. She's done a translation of Ouspensky, a Russian critic who does structural analysis, and she got the manuscript back in proofs and just panicked." Miss Miles likes the book, and Valentina is almost tearful with relief and gratitude. Miss Miles attempts to caution her that she doesn't know that much about Russian structuralism, but Valentina insists, "It doesn't matter. I have such faith in you, Miss Miles."

She is already late for her meeting when again the phone rings. This time with a dinner invitation for the weekend. "I can't come. I've got to receive an award in Los Angeles." UCLA is honoring two distinguished alumnae: Josephine Miles and John Wooden, coach of the University's famous basketball team. "I told my nephew about it and he's so pleased that I get a chance to meet Wooden. He's sure we'll like each other."

Earlier this year Josephine Miles received another more prestigious award. "The distinguished title of University professor" may not sound like much, but it is the University of California equivalent of the Triple Cross or the Légion d'Honneur. Since it was created fifteen years ago, the University Professorship has been awarded eight times, to chemists Glenn Seaborg, Melvin Calvin and

Harold Urey, to physicists Edward Teller and Charles Townes, to Neil Smeltzer, a sociologist, Lynn White, an historian, and Josephine Miles, Professor of English and poet. Until 1973 the honorees were mostly scientists (including four Nobel laureates) and all men. In recommending Josephine Miles' appointment, President Hitch said, "Professor Miles provides unparalleled inspiration by the clarity of her thinking, her imagination, will, integrity and humanity."

Josephine Miles' career as a poet began, she says, at age eight, and "it didn't come from within. I lived next door to two older girls, about ten and twelve who subscribed to St. Nicholas, a children's magazine, a nineteenth century kind of magazine really, with Andrew Lang fairy stories and illustrations. These girls kept pushing St. Nicholas at me. "Why don't you try working the puzzles, look at the pictures, look, you can send in your own poems and stories! I resisted that. I would walk around the corner just to get away from those girls and their darn old St. Nicholas. Then we moved and my mother asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I asked for a subscription to St. Nicholas because I was homesick for those girls."

Eventually Josephine became a regular contributor to the poetry contests, and a member in good standing of the St. Nicholas League (which she pronounced lee-gew), but only after she and the editors of the magazine had a misunderstanding. Josephine didn't know the rules. "In June they'd print poems about camping and then Halloween poems or something in October. I read the poems about camping and would then write one of my own and send it in the fall." After several such miscalculations, St. Nicholas lost its temper, and sent Jo exasperated letters telling her to please read the rules.

She wrote poems and plays throughout her childhood, and then in high school. Nothing was published, however, after St. Nicholas, because she was far too shy to venture much beyond the school paper. When she entered Berkeley as a graduate student, she joined a poetry club. The founder of the club promoted the work of the members of her club with a much more enterprising spirit than they could manage for themselves. She sent Josephine's poetry to the Nation and the Saturday Review, where it was accepted. Her first book of poetry, Lines at Intersection, appeared in 1939. She has published seven volumes since.

Miss Miles remembers being interested by imagists like Carl Sandburg when she was in high school, and later, in college, she and her friends formed a kind of cult around W. H. Auden. ("He was our little epigram book.") She recalls being hit hard by Dylan Thomas, and finally by Wallace Stevens, but she can't really name a poet who made any great mark on her style. St. Nicholas and traditional poetry (Poems Every Child Should Know, Scots ballads) had more influence on her than any poet she read later. "If I had to go to a desert island with one poet, it would be Yeats. But I haven't been able to write like him. Theodore Roethke has, and I think it's been bad for him."

In 1921 T. S. Eliot published an essay on John Donne which caused a major re-evaluation of the seventeenth century poets by modern literary scholars. Eventually the new interest in Donne, Marvell and Herbert led to a revival of metaphysical poetry which

reached full bloom in the mid-thirties. The movement had a profound impact on John Crowe Ransom, Theodore Spencer, Allan Tate, and for very personal reasons Josephine Miles. Before the renewal of interest in intellectual poetry, the prevailing fashion in the thirties was the populist imagist tradition. The ideal of imagism was a tough objective poetry, taken directly from observation and presented without interpretation. Marianne Moore called it "the raw material of poetry presented in all its rawness." Poets in this tradition were supposed to cram their lives with physical experiences, to ride freight cars, and see the world, to be "out on the road."

Josephine Miles has been severely crippled by an arthritic disease since childhood. Physically she is quite helpless, dependent on others to carry her from place to place. The metaphysical revival freed her from the sense that her physical limitations necessarily confined her poetic power and imagination. Magazines like the Kenyon Review and the Southern Review became interested in the poetry of an intellectual sensibility. Suddenly, "there was somewhere to put my feet. I had a world to write for."

It was a great relief to have it acknowledged that one could be a poet without tackling Life in the vast and vagabond sense. But, of course, the stigma against "academic" poetry is still kicking around. Miss Miles recalls with amusement an afternoon when she and Allen Ginsberg were sitting her garden in the sunshine. Ginsberg suddenly announced with a sweeping gesture, "What this patio needs, is a whole bunch of dog piss."

Josephine Miles' world is very much a world of talk. She talks a great deal herself, enthusiastically, and at length on any subject that is offered or that comes into her head. Her speech is an odd and vigorous mixture. It combines a precise and erudite literary vocabulary, current hip idioms, and surprisingly corny vintage slang from her youth. She tells stories, reminisces and theorizes, but unlike many people who talk for the pure pleasure of it, she never loses track of the person she's talking to, and she listens with absolute attention and a quick understanding. She usually settles herself next to a telephone and every few minutes conversations are interrupted by its ringing. She will break off to answer, enter into another lively talk with whoever is on the line. Then she hangs up, turns back to her visitor, and without an "um" or "where were we," plunges back into the sentence where she left off. Much of her poetry is patterned on the rhythms of vernacular speech. One of these talk poems was published in an anthology called Poet's Choice in 1962, with an explanation of why she chose it.

Reason

Said, Pull her up a bit will you Mac, I want to unload here
 Said, Pull her up my rear end, first come first serve
 Said, Give her the gun, Bud, he needs a taste of his own bumper
 Then the usher came out and got into the act:

Said, Pull her up, pull her up a bit, we need this space sir
 Said, For God's sake is this still a free country or what?
 You go back and take care of Gary Cooper's horse
 And leave me to handle my car.

Saw them unloading the lame old lady,
 Ducked under the wheel and gave her an elbow,
 Said, All you needed to do was just explain;
Reason, Reason is my middle name.

Her comment: "Reason is a favorite one of my poems because I like the idea of speech--not images, not ideas, not music, but people talking as the material from which poetry is made. So much inert surface, so many hidden depths, such systematic richness of play in tone and color, with these I too easily become impatient in modern poetry because I like the spare and active interplay of talk. Like the young man from Japan, I like to get as many unimportant syllables in a five-stress line as I possibly can. That way they can't be implicative. And the accents of a limited and maybe slightly misplaced pride interest me. Good strong true pride we need more of, and the oblique accents of it at least sound out the right direction."

Her poetry reflects what a friend and fellow poet, Thomas Parkinson, calls "an absorption with the ordinary. She never writes lofty or rapturous poetry. It's a poetry of low level, low key experiences as subjects. Not the big subjects, but suburban ordinari-nesses like mailmen, the sun going down, talking to people on the telephone, an article she read about anthropology--sort of junk really." Her poetry does have a magpie quality. She can't get about much, but when she does make an excursion it's as though, as one friend commented, she'd "been to the beach and come back with pockets full of pebbles and shells." She's a gatherer, noticing, picking up and storing bits and pieces of daily living. Yet despite this freewheeling randomness of selection, her poetry is extremely polished, crafted, and always controlled.

"My main way of writing a poem, is to overhear something that's very live, with an aura of energy around it. It might even be a quotation from a paper, but it's still my tendency to place it in a

more metrical framework than the younger generation does. They'd rather place it in a loose cadence. But metrical frameworks are not naturalistic, so it's more the idea I reflect than the sound."

Miss Miles is keenly interested in the work of other contemporary poets. She would hate to be thought of as an ivory tower academic poet, and she craves communication with those in the mainstream of the art. She is curious, and is thirsty for reaction and response. And, in spite of her semi-serious references to the "younger generation," she has no intention of being left behind. At the same time, she is conscious of her own poetic territory, and resistant of any attempt to push her in any direction but her own. When she was a graduate student, a member of a group of poets from Stanford who were students and admirers of Yvor Winters telephoned and asked her to join them, adding in no uncertain terms that she would have to make a radical change in her style. She hung up without another word. ("I was very snippy in those days," she says.)

In 1964 the Black Mountain Poetry Conference was held in Vancouver. It was an enormous success and the following year a similar week-long conference met at California Hall on the Berkeley campus. The poets involved were a flamboyant and controversial lot including Ginsberg and Jack Spicer and the heart of the gathering was Charles Olson. These were the transition figures from beat to hip. They arrived on motorcycles and the conference was ^{sold} ~~a sell~~-out. Students who couldn't afford the price of admission hung from the windows of California Hall in order to hear. ^{Few} ~~Most~~ of the English faculty ~~didn't~~ ^{ed} attend, but Josephine Miles went faithfully every day with a friend and fellow poet, Archie Ammons. They sat in the back row

and were ignored by the other poets there. The snubbing was a small blow to Miss Miles' pride, but more than this, the conference represented an artistic crisis for her. She couldn't comprehend the poetry, couldn't hear what the poets were trying to do. She felt, she says, like "Aunt Minnie on the shelf," anachronistic and out of touch. But as she and her friend appeared day after day, the poets warmed towards them. She already knew and was friendly with Allen Ginsberg, who had come to Cal's English Department in the fifties to study Anglo-Saxon meters. He abandoned this project gratefully after six weeks. Miss Miles was never introduced to Charles Olson, which she explains with a touch of malice, would have been the mark of honor.

But the significant thing was that after days of listening she began to catch the music and syntax of poetry which had been dead to her on the page. She stopped feeling alien and outdated and began to comprehend what the new poetry was about. Civil Poems was written rapidly within a couple of weeks after the conference, and published immediately. Just what influence these poets had on her writing isn't clear. Certainly she didn't become one of them. Rather, perhaps, they charged her with a new stimulus that produced a new vision of possibilities, but possibilities very much her own.

It is difficult to imagine her feeling far from the center of contemporary poetic activity. She is friends with an astonishing number and variety of American poets, of all types, personalities and ages. She ~~feels a tremendous~~ need to have the action buzzing around her and filtering through her, ~~which is perhaps due to the fact that~~ ^{because} she is very much tied to one place. She lived in Berkeley for six years of graduate school, and then returned in 1940 to teach and has

been there ever since. She lives in a small green house on Virginia Street. It's an unpretentious California bungalow affair, noticeably modest on a street lined with tall Victorian, and coy imitation Mediterranean houses. She has a deep and longtime familiarity with Berkeley, its houses, streets and people, and its changes. And she loves it, with the mixture of affection and frustration that a member of the family feels, both more critical and more loyal than any outsider could be.

Her knowledge of and fascination with Berkeley is such that she would probably choose to live here of all places she could be. But she is also confined here by her physical condition and one wonders how content she is with her house on Virginia Street and her office in Wheeler Hall year after year. She is a woman of driving and adventurous spirit who would thrive on change. As a child Josephine was taken to football matches by her parents, avid sports fans, and was obliged to wait alone in the car during the games. By listening to the cheers from the stands and the directions they came from, she tried to calculate who won, and more often than not she could compute the score as well. She remarked once that "no one has really studied how productive limitations can be, except perhaps Robert Frost, who said poetry in free verse is like playing tennis with the net down. One of the great problems in living now is that people have such a multitude of choices to face, and in an existential world making choices is everything. It's when choices are limited that it's easy to make (intelligent) decisions and my choices were always very limited."

She has explored the vivid microcosm of the University with a vigorous curiosity and pleasure. Most professors use their sabbatical leaves to travel or live abroad. Since this was ~~impossible~~ ^{difficult} for Miss Miles, she stayed at the University and took courses outside the English Department. During one sabbatical she studied music, drama during another and the third she spent learning quantitative analysis. A recent book, Fields of Learning, is a kind of poetic celebration of ventures into disciplines outside English. She began reading her freshman 'classes' textbooks so that she would know about other subjects they studied. Considering how insular most University departments are, and how pre-occupied most professors are with their particular academic concerns, it was an extraordinary thing to do. In the process she was inexplicably taken with the language the textbooks used, their "energy." In Fields of Learning, the poems are entitled "Botany," "Biology," "History," "Physics," and so forth. In each poem a phrase or passage or idea that caught her imagination becomes a poem. Dry textbookese is broken into line and meter, fancifully selected and recombined to make an odd and arresting verse. One poem, called "Chemistry," ends with "Warnings."

In the synthesis, purification, and identification
Of organic compounds
Avoid unstable assemblies of apparatus
Taste Nothing.

Miss Miles' poetry is not emotional, it is not musical, and it is not easy. She bears no strong resemblance to any other contemporary poet. While colloquial in expression, almost mundane in subject, it is not what you would call friendly poetry. Often abstract and oblique, the poems can appear closed off and private. Those in a recent book,

Kinds of Affection, look at love from different perspectives, points of view that are sometimes intriguing in their uniqueness, sometimes so unique as to be inaccessible.

Love at a distance can mean

Love of a dozen

Students sitting around for the last time

Before summer, to come no more,

Tired and sore,

Yet be loved in their measureless aptitude.

Love at a distance can be the good

Work done by a workman, so simplified

He could not do better if he tried;

Only by use.

Or can be the distance at which you measureless move.

That is, far off.

So that love can be drawn

In filaments of thought, in line as thin

As lines latitudes rest upon.

From plenty from perfection, marking these

Measureless distances.

Leonard Nathan, a friend and former student of Miss Miles, now a Professor of Rhetoric and a poet himself, says that one thing he learned from Josephine Miles was simply that poems can be funny. Hers very often are, with a humor that is sly and ironic.

The doctor who sits at the bedside of a rat

Obtains real answers--a paw twitch

An ear tremor, a gain or loss of weight

No problem as to which to ^{is}temper and which is true

What ^arat feels, he will do.

Concomitantly then the doctor who sits

At the bedside of a rat

Asks real question as befits

The place, like where did the potassium go, not what

Do you think of Willie Mays or the weather.

So doctor and rat may converse together.

This is not the poetry of a sentimental person, and though the book, Kinds of Affection, treats in part the currents of love connecting people, it also contains poetic statements which are harsh, eerie and grotesque. This is a poem about a friend's divorce.

Throwing his life away.
 He picks at and smells it.
 Done up. When did I do this up?
 I date its death to the time someone
 Said something.
 Back then.
 Everything else, all striving, making
 Marrying, error
 Is this old bird.
 Pah! He throws it.
 As the long string lengthens
 It begins unwinding
 The ligaments of his hand.

She is at her best when describing short scenes with the sparse but exact detail of a born observer. She has made only one effort at fiction, a short story in college days which she claims as the great embarrassment of her life. "I can't spin the time in fiction. I have no narrative sense at all."

Although she is compulsively disciplined about obligations like correspondence, (she answered 300 letters of congratulation on her University Professorship in one week), she writes poetry pretty much as the spirit moves her. One semester she had an hour free between classes every Tuesday and Thursday, and determined to write two poems a week during that time, just to see the result. In fact, "I gained and lost nothing. I wrote some good poems and a lot of bad poems. There was a pool inside that I tapped more systematically, but I didn't enlarge the source itself."

Josephine Miles is sixty-two this year, and she looks rather older, is extremely bent, and tiny, and frail. She seems perched on a chair, and her feet barely rest on the ground. Her face is round and heavily lined under a smooth cap of short gray hair. Her eyes are hooded, and move back and forth rapidly, missing little. She sits

quite still. Her hands are bent nearly double with arthritis, so that her movements with pen and paper are slow and painfully deliberate. Her voice is surprisingly loud, flat and unmusical, but full of energy and quick to turn into laughter.

She was born in Chicago in 1911 but her parents, alarmed by the progress of her disease, moved to Los Angeles when she was five in hopes the climate would help arrest her arthritis. She is surprisingly nostalgic about the Los Angeles of her youth, ^{the era} ~~During~~ ^{when} the twenties Hollywood became the capital of the film industry, and a hundred thousand people a year poured into Los Angeles in search of California gold. There was an automobile for every three persons there by 1925, but ~~there were~~ ^{yet} no freeways ~~then~~. People rode on street cars as they did in other American cities, and it was not until a decade later that the hot bright Los Angeles sunshine was poisoned forever by smog.

Glimpses Miss Miles offers of her childhood suggest that it was an extraordinarily happy one. There was a close and active family, she tells stories of frequent camping trips, excursions to the beach, of playing (and wrestling) with her two younger brothers. Her parents, she says, were very compatible and very dissimilar. Her father provided the adventurous spirit and her mother the stabilizing force in the family. "They had very different opinions about raising kids and they told us so. For instance, my father would tell us 'Look there's a lousy movie playing around the corner and I think we should go anyway, but your mother thinks we ought to wait until a better one comes. What do you think?' It gave us a sense of alternatives, and showed us respect for other people's points of view.

And my parents were marvelous too, at getting us out in the world doing what we could do best."

George^P Elliott, a long time friend of Miss Miles who knew her mother in later years says that she was a "superb, strong woman" who was chiefly responsible for keeping Josephine out of the crippled child syndrome. "She was murder on self-pity not only in Josephine but in everybody. She had a surprising harsh laugh, a real scorn for sentimentality. Josephine has it too, but it goes along with the most genuine kindness of heart."

Because she wore plaster casts as a child, Josephine missed most of her early schooling. She did spend two years at a grammar school just down the block from her home. She was in her element there, writing and putting on plays, loving it all, teachers, children, principal, but her family moved to a new neighborhood just as Josephine was to begin the eighth grade. There she wasn't allowed to go to school. The principal objected that the eighth grade was on the second floor, that school was no place for a girl in a wheelchair, that it wouldn't be possible for teachers to help her or send lessons home--a brick wall. It was a crushing disappointment, and for Josephine a lost year. (When she speaks of it now there is lingering bitterness in her voice, but she says simply "You can't expect people to be good all of the time. When they're good, it's great.")

That summer at the beach she met some girls from Los Angeles High School who suggested that she try and go there. Armed with a notebook of her writings she went to talk to the principal who, to her surprise, agreed to let her come on the condition that she learn Latin, French and take remedial grammar. First she came in a

wheelchair and later walked from home in braces. Friends helped her between classes. Her schedules were bizarre, since she had to take all her classes on the first floor of the building. This sometimes meant all languages one term, and all sciences the next.

The school had two literary clubs which were rumored (rightly) to be "pre-sororities." Josephine was asked to join one. "I was a kind of screen," she says slyly, "a smokescreen for reality." The literary clubs were mostly good excuses for getting together and having a good time. Cars provided an enchanting new freedom and Josephine and her friends would spend their weekends riding around, going to the beach or up the coast to visit friends in Santa Barbara. It was "lovely. There was a special quality to it. In those days you weren't supposed to be a grind, you were supposed to get gentlemanly C's. If you were bright you didn't let anyone know it. So my friends and I who were interested in writing, were only supposed to do it with our left hands. Even that was good for us. We had fun."

Josephine's parents wanted her to go to Scripps, a small, exclusive Southern California Women's College, so that she could get away from home and be independent. This sounded like a fine idea to Jo until she visited the school. She talked to the dean and looked around the campus and driving away decided, "NO WAY, no way would I go to that school for a million dollars." She thought Scripps resembled nothing so much as a cloister. There was an academic question, too; since she was devoted to and inspired by an old man who taught Latin at L.A. High, Jo was righteously indignant that the school offered no Latin. She was so adamant in her determination not to go to Scripps that her bewildered parents acceded with hardly a murmur.

Josephine then applied to and was accepted by UCLA. She went to talk to the Dean of Women there, explaining that she would need some help in order to attend classes. To her surprise, she met with the same wall of misunderstanding and condescension she'd met when trying to get into the eighth grade. Yes, the woman said, she'd need help, far too much help. She'd have to ask many favors, and she'd be better off at a small college, like Scripps, for instance. Josephine went out past the policeman at the gate. "How'd it go?" he asked her. By this time she was in tears. She explained to the cop that she wasn't to be allowed in because she couldn't stand in the lines to register. Feeling sorry for her, ^{he offered} "Listen, you find somebody to stand in line for you and I'll let you in." Thanks to the cop, and unbeknownst to the Dean of Women, Josephine attended UCLA for four years and graduated.

She speaks fondly of her time at UCLA. She began her studies at the old campus of UCLA, an aged, comfortable, shabby-genteel place in a rundown part of town at the corner of Melrose and Vermont. The school was young and undistinguished, virtually unknown elsewhere. It had no graduate school in those days, but she is quick to explain this didn't mean that professors got involved with their undergraduate classes. It was, in fact, quite the opposite. The professors retreated into their own world, ignoring the students as well as they could. In self-defense, the students organized their own clubs, put on their own plays, held their own discussion sections. Miss Miles compares it to an old-style German education.

In a Logic class her freshman year she met a young man ("Who I was just madly in love with") and he solved her problems of

getting around campus. She had been looking for a strong girl to help her, but he suggested that the men in his fraternity needed to earn money and would be more than happy to carry her around. She has employed students to do this ever since. The system has worked beautifully and in forty years she says she hasn't had an irresponsible helper. "They're my greatest admiration."

There was a great sense of unity at UCLA at this time. Friendships, studies, and the arts were quite wonderfully integrated. "It was ideal," Miss Miles sighs, "and just what there isn't in Berkeley." The peculiar inability of Berkeleyans to organize and work together is a permanent source of discontent to her. Her dream is to help foster the spirit of community in young artists which she experienced at UCLA.

The year after she graduated was lonely and unhappy. Josephine was twenty-one and had set aside the year for a series of long delayed operations whose object was to enable her to move more freely. They failed.

This was 1932, in the heart of the depression. Many of her friends went into welfare work directly from school. Others moved to Berkeley for graduate work, none could afford to go East. After a year of idleness and disappointment, she, too, was persuaded by her friends to come to Berkeley, even though, she says, they all hated it there. Up to this time, she'd been told that graduate school was no place for a poet. "Poets," she remarked ironically, "aren't supposed to think and to feel at the same time." In the end she prevailed on her mother, now widowed, to move north with her, and in 1933 she began her studies at Berkeley.

Even before she began, Josephine had a glimmer of what she wanted to study. She was reading criticism by William Empson, I. A. Richards, and others, and decided that she wanted to do research on the function of language in literature.

The English Department at Cal in the thirties was at its lowest ebb ~~ever~~. As described by George Stewart in his informal chronicle of the department's history, it was mismanaged by the University administration, suffered from poor leadership in its chairman, and was characterized by stagnation and chronically poor morale. Miss Miles points out that she and other students were largely unaware at the time of the straits of the department found itself in. They were inexperienced in such things and had interests of their own.

In these years, the most eminent men in the department were medievalists, and Josephine felt she should study with "the big shots," Arthur Brodeur and J. S. P. Tatlock. This was a qualified success. They were genial and gentle men, but rather appalled by the kind of research she wanted to do. They let her try it, but always demanded a second paper done their way. Matters were greatly improved when she was allowed into the nineteenth century literature seminar of Professor Ben Lehman. She had already been thrown out of his classes two or three times for being "too medieval," and he had a reputation for being very hard to get along with. In fact, she became Lehman's protege and with his support began the research and criticism on poetic vocabulary which has occupied her ever since. Lehman was to prove an important friend and advisor for he later became chairman of the department, and was for some years its most powerful and controversial member.

Miss Miles' critical method, as much as her poetry, is stubbornly her own. It is stylistic analysis by the statistical method. In recent years thanks to the computer this has become something of a rage. It was quite unheard of when she began, though, and thoroughly resisted. Even today, though Miss Miles has published more literary criticism than anyone in the Berkeley English Department, it is received with varying degrees of enthusiasm by other English scholars.

The basic method, to explain a highly complex technique rather simply, is counting the occurrence of fundamental words in a given poetic era, to determine what words are used most and what usage they are given. Employing this method in books like Eras and Modes, and A Style and a Proportion, Miss Miles attempted to designate basic similarities of language from poet to poet in succeeding ages. It has produced some surprising results. It reveals, for example, that John Donne was neither a poetic misfit nor a poetic revolutionary, but was actually far more in agreement with his contemporaries in his poetic vocabulary than anyone had previously thought.

Her conception of criticism runs counter to the prevailing mode of analysis, especially the "New Criticism" which deals with poems as organic entities and evaluates them individually. Miss Miles proceeds poem by poem and poet by poet. But despite the minuteness of her method, her aim is to trace large evolutions in poetic language throughout its history. Her best known work, Eras and Modes, is, as the title implies, an attempt to designate large areas of poetry, and above all to make capacious generalizations about them.

It is not at all the criticism one would expect a poet to do, rather it is the kind of criticism people tend to consider worthy, but not exciting. This because the statistical method does not demand the use of the kind of intuitive insights that make criticism at its best an art in itself. The statistical method sounds faintly plodding. George Elliott worked for Miss Miles counting words when he was a student at Berkeley thirty years ago. "The damndest miserable job I ever had," he remembers, "and I didn't believe in it for a second." More than a few people, enthusiastic about Josephine Miles' poetry, are quite turned off by her criticism. It is a considerable jump from her verse, which is small in scope, narrow-eyed and personal, but there is in her prose writing, if not in her method, a decided poetic quality, particularly in her most recent articles. The following is taken from her essay called "Forest and Trees; or The Sense at the Surface."

A poet's language has its leaf or hand print, the whorls that make it singular, the individuality of its style and engagement. But these do not work in isolation, they are part of the forrest, part of the langue part of the competence of poetry. The strands of common usage which hold poems together in any time and from time to time, seem of such strength and predictable duration that one can see, in literature especially among the arts, the commonality provided by the medium itself as well as by shared cultural values and interests. So the individual is to be read in the context of the language and literature he shares, that is, of his profession in time, his acceptances, his assumptions and what he does with them. A leaf is unique not because there are no other leaves, but because of its singular variations upon the commonplace of leaf in its particular part of the forest.

This is a poetic language utterly different from the kind that appears in her poetry. It is both elaborate and formal. It is rich in imagery, musical and suggestive, in fact highly implicative language.

Whatever the relationship between Josephine Miles as critic and Josephine Miles as poet, she would probably be mockingly amused by speculations about it. One of her loveliest poems from Kinds of Affection suggests that there is no contradiction at all.

When I was eight, I put in the left-hand drawer
Of my new bureau a prune pit.
My plan was that darkness and silence
Would grow it into a young tree full of blossoms

Quietly and unexpectedly I opened the drawer a crack
And looked for the sprouts; always the pit
Anticipated my glance and withheld
The signs I looked for.

After a long time, a week, I felt sorry
For the lone pit, self-withheld,
So saved more, and lined them up like an orchard.
A small potential orchard of free flowers.

Here memory and storage lingered
Under my fingerprints past retrieval,
Musty and impatient as a prairie
Without its bee.

Some friends think of this recollection
As autobiography. Others think it
A plausible parable of computer analysis.
O small and flowering orchard of free friends!

She was asked once about the special quality of this poem, and said, "I really did that. We were living in a rented house and I was just at the age when magic seems very possible. I related that experience in my mind to the work I was doing in computer analysis which my friends thought was dull and alien. But I had the feeling there was magic in that, too, a sense of qualification, a sense of things, and the power they have, whether modern science or prune pit growing.

Miss Miles has been given an impressive number of fellowships and awards for poetry and scholarship, and in 1970 she received a commendation from the California Association of Teacher of English

for the excellence of her teaching. Certainly at Berkeley she is as well known as a teacher as she is a poet or scholar, but when she first finished her doctorate she called it a "research" degree, and did not even consider the possibility of going on to teach. Instead, she spent a hot Los Angeles summer working in the cool rooms of the Huntington Library and hoping for a nomination to work on the Medieval Latin Dictionary. Ben Lehman and James Caldwell, on the Berkeley English faculty, however, who felt she should teach, encouraged her to apply at Mills and Occidental and other small California colleges. To her surprise, none of these would even consider hiring her, and she describes, still with a measure of bitterness, the kind of letters of refusal she got from the Deans of women's colleges. "We clearly could not be responsible for introducing such a sensitive soul into the grind of academic life."

Once in her childhood she and her family went camping in the San Andreas Canyon near a hot springs where she was treated for her arthritis. They were to camp about a mile and a half up the canyon, and Josephine's father hit on the idea of hiring an Indian from a nearby reservation to carry her to the campsite. The Indian was found, and carried Jo in silence no more than thirty yards before dumping her unceremoniously on a rock, declaring "very bad medicine," and left. She made the rest of the trip carried head and foot by her younger brothers who managed admirably with an occasional mishap like dropping her in the stream. The story has a sequel. Last October, Miss Miles went on a lecture tour in New Mexico, and in the company of a young guide went to visit the (reservation at Pueblo) where Scott Momaday, author of House Made of Dawn, and a colleague,

grew up. They wandered about the reservation for a while in search of a woman who sold Indian bread. When they found her, she seemed delighted to see them, invited them into her home, and made a great fuss over Miss Miles, giving her little pats on the head and stroking her head. As they left she remarked to her guide on the woman's friendliness. He replied that Indians of Pueblo believed that handicapped people were favored by the gods. It was "just compensation," Miss Miles says, for being bad medicine. She feels there has been a pattern in her life--"People saying yes and people saying no"--unlikely villains and benefactors, who for their own finally mysterious reasons have held her back or pushed her forward.

In the end, the Berkeley English faculty came through as her champion in the business of finding a teaching position, no doubt feeling righteously affronted that she had been turned down in spite of their vigorous recommendations. To prove she could teach, she was invited to Berkeley to take over the classes of a man on sabbatical, but was warned to bring only one suitcase since there was no question she could stay.

Berkeley, like Harvard, has a strict tradition of not hiring its own graduates until they've had experience elsewhere. An exception was made in Miss Miles' case. After her trial year of teaching she was hired by Berkeley in 1941 and has been here ever since.

Miss Miles has a reputation for being an extraordinary teacher with a singular rapport with students, which she rather shrugs off. "I think it's baloney to say you're a born teacher. I've made lots of mistakes, and plenty of people have hated me. I had

one student who said 'if you ever want to know what Simon Legree was like just take a course from Miss Miles.'" From the beginning, pedagogy intrigued and excited her. The first class she taught at the University was English 1A, and she began with Hamlet. At a friend's suggestion, she began by having the boys in the back row read the first scene. These were still the days when football players sat in the last row and cut up during class. As she intended, "they read it wrong; students always do at first. Then you point out that the wrong man's being challenged and that's the motion of the whole play. It's about people caught off balance. So in a few lines you catch the depths and the surfaces at once. You carry on from there, and they'll never again be able to read on the surface and make the mistakes they always do. That was the most important thing for me to know, that people really need help to get unstuck and move forward."

She is a popular and sought after teacher, but unlike *many* University teachers, she is less interested in individual students with special talents than in the dynamics of a group in the mysterious process of learning. What fascinates her is the evolution of a class as an entity, and the timing and subtle manipulations necessary to make it all come together. She is undeniably fond of her students, but it's a slightly detached, impersonal and generalized affection. She is rather like a benign wizard at work, pulling invisible strings to draw the disparate energies of her classes into a workable whole.

The atmosphere in her classes is relaxed and easy. She sits presiding, very small behind her desk, talking and listening and laughing frequently. It is crucial, she says, for students in

writing classes to get to know each other well, so she frequently holds meetings at her home. Beginning poets, she feels, have to be allowed anonymity at first, and then gradually, as students get to trust each other, they will be willing, even anxious, to expose their poetry to class criticism. Her favorite classes are freshman composition and the poetry writing and she has written textbooks for both. In general she prefers to teach students with little expertise or experience in writing. She would hate the tutorial system and prefers double sections (20-30 students) when possible for her poetry classes. "It's more exciting with a larger group; more people spark each other to better things; there's more reaction and more self-teaching goes on . . . there's a very minimal quality to a group of fifteen."

The informal mood in her classes is perhaps deceptive. Students are expected to attend class regularly and turn in poems weekly. She's firm about deadlines and shows little sympathy for the self-styled independent poet who chooses to ignore the structures of her class. "I'll tell you my worst experience in teaching which happens every quarter. Students come out of the woodwork about the eighth week of classes and want to turn everything in in a lump and get credit without any process. Kids wander in and say 'Hello! what have I missed?' and it makes me furious. There are always these types and they shouldn't bother me, but they do. I don't give incompletes because I think they are bad psychologically, and no F's, because an F means to try and to fail. So I tell them to do all the work in one week in order to get a D, and they just hate that, but it's my wicked solution to the problem."

Equally hateful to her is the quarter system (ten weeks term) which was instituted as an economic measure by the U.C. Regents some years ago. Originally there were to be four quarters in an academic year so that the University could be in full time operation, but summer quarter has been defunct for a number of years and the dubious arithmetic of the three quarter system remains. Miss Miles has remarked more than once, and in great disgust, that "it's a disgrace to the faculty that they let it stay. During a semester you could capitalize on the growth of insight in a class. Here you can be happy they grasped it, but then there's only two weeks left. There's a rate of digestion in a class operation. It's like changing from a solid three course dinner to a ham sandwich. It's just not as nourishing."

Students from her poetry class come in to talk about their poems during her office hours, and she is generous with her time and her opinions. One thing becomes clear. She does not think that poetry is a spontaneous outpouring of feeling or a mysterious birthright possessed and not learned. Talking poetry, she is matter of fact as she is sensitive, and cries of the soul aren't what she's after. Going over a sheaf of poetry which Miss Miles has just identified as "hang-up" poems, she tells a young woman with long hair and wide solemn eyes, "You have to be more self-conscious about what you're doing." It's a notion she repeats in different ways to each student she talks to. She asks one girl to name her favorite poem, and the girl responds with the names of favorites ranging from Ozymandias to Prufrock. "No," says Miss Miles, "I think the thing for you is to read one whole poet all the way through. You might try Yeats. He's a little old for you but he's got a lot of zing. No, I

think Denise Levertov. Read everything by Denise Levertov and when you're through you'll be able to say: 'She's Denise Levertov, and I'm me, and we're different.' She grins, "I was like you when I was young. I wanted to be able to pick and choose poems and I didn't want some whole poet pushing me around."

Another student has written about an incident in her adolescence when she and a group of thirteen year olds, long legged, exuberant, and awkward, were taken on an expedition to attach markings to a flock of black crowned night herons. She is on her second version of the poem, but Miss Miles finds the parallels between the adolescent girls and the gangling baby herons are made too explicit. "You're too patronizing to your material," she says. The second version has more details than the first, intended to capture the mood better, but Miss Miles suggests another solution. "A way to get the reality in a poem is not to add more, but to take out the unreality. As T. S. Eliot said, 'a little reality will go a long way.'"

About halfway through every quarter she asks her poetry classes to do a translation of a foreign poet's work into English. Students choose a poem in whatever language they're familiar with, French, Hebrew, German, Chinese perhaps. Miss Miles hit on the assignment after participating in a prolonged translation exercise herself. Ten years ago, a visiting scholar in Near Eastern languages, Professor Mishra from India, began receiving letters from young Hindi poets asking for translators for their poetry. Miss Miles volunteered and she became a member of a kind of translator's workshop. None of the group knew the language, so Mishra read the Hindi verse onto a tape, and played them (usually, Miss Miles says, managing to string them

on backwards), while he read aloud a rough English translation. It was a kind of stereo bilingual text. The group spent a year on the project, and at the end published a small book called Modern Hindi Poetry. "We got letters from the poets themselves saying, 'I can't believe Americans could understand us so well.' They knew English, of course, so they could judge our work. In reservation, I'll say that I'm still not quite sure about them. There is a quality of slowness in those poems, and I'm not sure whether it was in the original poems or in us. It seems to me that there was a kind of alertness and motion of thought which we didn't capture, but I can't be sure."

Working on the Hindi translations, she had an insight into the nature of poetry that she wanted her classes to share. "That's when I first understood what poetry is, the purposefulness and the selection part, rather than the spontaneity. Translating another poet is a great exercise for students because they get the sense of having it all add up. My hunch is, though, that if I tried to do it earlier in the quarter it wouldn't work, so I haven't had the nerve to try. They are not aware enough of poetry at the beginning. It's a matter of knowing when it will work and when it will be useful." The quality of timing in teaching is elusive, puzzling, essential, she thinks. She says that in every quarter there is a point at which a class that seems scattered and random will suddenly and en masse "get good." "Every quarter, I'm afraid, I think it can't possibly happen; and every quarter it suddenly does. It's a great feeling of lightness then; a weight off your shoulders."

During the spring quarter of 1969, a major crisis occurred over the issue of a piece of land called People's Park. Students and Berkeley street people had taken over the unused land, which legally belonged to the University, and turned it into a small park with children's swings, flowers and a vegetable garden. Unexpectedly the University authorities tried to reclaim the land stating that it was "needed" for a soccer field. A fence was put up around the park which students attempted to tear down. Riots followed, police made hundreds of arrests and a young bystander was killed. The National Guard was called in. Berkeley was like a city under seige, and the University campus like a battleground, but Miss Miles calls this, and the time of the Cambodian crisis the following year, "the best and easiest years of teaching. I don't feel all this mea culpa thing. The students could have been handled by a sympathetic administration, and I feel the whole upset was for the good."

Students these days call her "Miss Miles," but in those years, she says a bit nostalgically, they called her "Jo." "Everybody was being free in the sixties. The great thing was that the students worked together. They had a sense of group--there was a magic about this. I had a classroom in the basement of Wheeler, and we were tear-gassed and had guns stuck at us, and I'm sure it took years off my life, but it brought out a wonderful esprit de corps, I remember I wanted to set up an extra class meeting at my house and I wanted them to vote on the day we should do it. And they said, 'Oh, Jo, don't hassle us with stuff like voting.' Someone suggested Friday afternoon and they all agreed instantly and walked out. It was like osmosis."

The class got together to publish a book of poems about People's Park to raise money for the bail fund. Everyone contributed a poem, and then gathered at Miss Miles' house to put the book together. "It's hard to collate and staple; I hadn't expected them all to come. But they did come with wine and cheese and I sent out for pizzas. By evening we finished and we had to get a cover and a title. Five titles were suggested, so I asked people to raise their hands and choose, and they said 'Never mind Jo, we'll think of something. Someone suggested Berkeley Street Poems and everybody immediately said 'fine' and that was it. Interesting phenomena."

The book sold well, over a thousand at a dollar a copy. The poems themselves are mostly long and intense and young, full of passionately felt outrage, clumsy and touching. Miss Miles' contribution is characteristically restrained, and sharp as a snakebite.

How to Win a Soccer Match

When the players get down close to the goal, the ghost goalie
 (He's a ghost goalie because there's no field there yet.
 And he's playing on it, active sportsman,
 Raises his rifle and sights along it;
 By the rules of the game he's the only one
 Who can use his hands.

She admits frankly that students in the Seventies are a disappointment to her because they lack that sense of mission and of camaraderie. "Now it's just like pulling teeth to get them to do something together. They straggle in and out and they're just not with it in a way I don't understand." When only fifty percent of students voted in the April City Council Elections this year, Miss Miles was shocked and dismayed as though they'd let her down in some stupid, careless and personal way.

It is not surprising that student apathy should find no apologist in Miss Miles. She is temperamentally an enthusiast with a matchless capacity for delight in ideas and things and people. Nearly all her friends will allude to this, though not all as bluntly as Thomas Parkinson who says simply, "She suffers fools gladly." He acknowledges that her extraordinary ability to find something to like in everything and everyone is a tremendous asset in teaching, but more of a liability in literary criticism. "The trouble with it is she doesn't make discriminations. Great poets, and some damn thing in the Oakland Tribune, she treats them all the same. She thinks everyone is doing something interesting. She treats literary figures like her students. She finds something to admire in the worst trash."

Another friend remembers a dinner party he gave for Josephine Miles and a faculty couple who proved to be excruciating bores. The couple left after what seemed to him the longest and most tedious evening he'd ever spent and he turned to Miss Miles to say as much. He was shocked to hear her praise them for this and that obscure virtue. It was, he says, "downright perverse."

As a counter balance to this near-Pollyannaism, there is a streak of malice in her nature. Leonard Nathan calls it "a glimpse of talon." One senses it gradually listening to her conversation, a vinegar tang to her speech, a small but devastating put-down in passing. Eager as she is to find hidden virtues in acquaintances and strangers, Miss Miles' close friends are apt to get an occasional decorous but well-aimed scratch.

On the Berkeley campus, problems of policy are most often delegated to the scores of faculty committees. The rewards of

committee work are long, unpaid hours of meetings, tedium, bureaucratic flak and the likelihood that whatever recommendations emerge from this painful process may well be rejected or ignored. To most professors with classes to teach, research to conduct, and lives of their own to lead, committee work is a frustrating, time-consuming nuisance. In the past fifteen years Josephine Miles has served on at least one, and often several major committees every year. She was chairman for four years of the Campus Committee on Prose Improvement. She has served on the prestigious Academic Senate committees on Research and on Privilege and Tenure. For three years she belonged to the Chancellor's committee on the Arts and two years ago she was a member of a most powerful and demanding committee, that to select the new Chancellor.

The truth is she loves committee work, considers it a joy and a challenge rather than an obligation. To less enthusiastic colleagues, she will explain, "There's nothing like a good committee, and the chance to hear all those fine minds at work." One she failed to convert, commented simply, "She's crazy."

She is a champion of causes, feisty and persistent to the point of being annoying. In the English Department, Thomas Parkinson says she's considered "an irritant and an adornment," but people listen to her because her approach is as gentle and reasonable as it is stubborn. Civilization is built on decorum and legality, rules and procedures. Jo is very sensitive to this. She has tremendous stamina. She's flexible but she never really gives up. It's people like her, who are potent in the business of the world."

William Fretter, former Dean of the College of Letters and Science and now chairman of the Physics Department, served with Miss Miles on the Committee in search of a Chancellor. "There was a warmth in the room when she came in. She provided an enormous amount of good sense, common sense and humor, and a very human view of people. She always made it perfectly clear that she wanted a human being and not an administrative automaton."

But Miss Miles admits that hers weren't the best choices for Chancellor. "The ones I wanted wouldn't have been any good. One's gone to an asylum with a nervous breakdown. I wanted sensitivity types, but they've been beaten down at other places." She feels the choice of Albert Bowker, formerly of the City University of New York, was a good compromise. "We all felt he had strength."

Working women have generally not fared well at the University of California. As administrative employees they have held low echelon positions, been poorer paid and up for fewer promotions than men with comparable skills and ambitions. As faculty members their security is precarious. Women account for only three percent of the tenured faculty at Berkeley. Changes are imminent however, as the University encounters increasing pressure for redress and reform from the HEW. Josephine Miles is a woman who has spent nearly forty successful years at Berkeley, been the first woman to get tenure in the English Department. She holds a position of relative power in the campus at large, and has received numerous honors culminating in the University Professorship she was awarded this year.

Although the recognition she has received as a woman scholar is uncommon and not reflective of the destinies of most women of her age and vocation, Miss Miles has been a keen observer of women in academia for a long time. Her view of the whole business is characteristically lacking in cant, unsensational, and not really the story one expects to hear.

When she attended Berkeley graduate school there were, she says, an equal number of men and women students in the English Department. At UCLA, three of the ^{members} ~~ten members~~ ^{single} of the English faculty were women, so she had no sense at all that women "didn't teach." When the English Department hired her in 1940, she was the only woman in the department, but there had been others in the past. As she remembers it, married professors with children were more of a threat to the Old Guard of the English Department than women scholars were. She says that at this time the notion of teaching as a bachelor profession, isolated, and ascetic, was still a common and cherished belief among many academics.

"In the forties, she says, there was an extremely powerful and active Women's Faculty Club." A group called "The Bluestockings" handled the question of women on the faculty independently, and succeeded in promoting women to a total of 16 percent of the tenured faculty, as compared to 3 percent today.

Five other women were hired by the English Department shortly after Miss Miles. These women soon left, but all she says for "perfectly friendly reasons," like job offers elsewhere or marriage. Miss Miles began writing letters all over the country in search of applicants to replace them, but it became apparent that there were

very few qualified women to be found. Miss Miles blames this on a general anti-intellectual trend among American women in the late forties and fifties. It seemed to her that after the war great numbers of women lost interest in scholarly careers and chose to stay home and keep house. The department did hire an early feminist from Radcliffe in the fifties who stayed only briefly. She was the sort Miss Miles reports, who would slap a man's face if he opened a door for her.

The next decade brought a great change. "The cold war created a new crop. The sociology of women changed. More women won fellowships than men when I served on the scholarship committee in the sixties. In the English Department every year for the last eight years we've gotten one woman who's stayed."

She believes that the Cal English Department has discriminated far less against women than other departments like History, Sociology and Psychology. She does recall suffering one episode of blatant sexism, but she tells the story with more amusement than indignation. In 1942, English Department meetings were held in the Men's Faculty Club, and as the then sole woman in the department, she simply did not attend. The meetings were, she says tactfully, "kind of smokers." The day of one such meeting, the new department chairman ran into Miss Miles in the department office and asked, then insisted that she attend the meeting and bring the minutes with her. That afternoon, minutes in hand, she started for the men's faculty club in the arms of her helper. It was quite a distance, so the helper decided to short cut by entering the back door. He and Mrs. Miles were greeted by a faculty member in his tee shirt who

nearly closed the door on them in his alarm. The department chairman was sent for, the whole place went into an uproar, while Miss Miles waited outside for what seemed an interminable time with the minutes. These were finally intercepted by the chairman and Miss Miles was sent all the way around the building to the front door where she was permitted entrance to a special public room. Outraged manhood thus soothed, the meeting began. She has never been exactly sure what decencies she transgressed by trying to come in the wrong way, but it seems "I would have had to walk by a place where men played pool in their underwear or something." She grins and shakes her head, "It was another world then, in terms of Emily Post, it really was."

Part of Miss Miles' success in a male-dominated institution may well have to do with the fact that she so obviously likes many of her male colleagues, admires their minds, and is indulgent about their foibles regarding women. She says that some years ago a Dean of Women told her, "The very fact that you are a woman sets the cause back fifty years because you don't pose the same problems another woman would." It was a cruel remark, and more cruel because half true, but Miss Miles simply adds that its a fact that she was not the threat that a pretty young woman might have been. She is inclined to think that her University Professorship was a result of University uneasiness over HEW. "They're under pressure to be fair and they don't want to be fair. There's a lot of tokenism like that and its dangerous." But considering the University Professorship a gesture of tokenism didn't stop her from accepting her eleventh hour nomination graciously, attending the dinner for other University Professors given in her honor, and enjoying herself immensely. Of course, she

explains, it was double tokenism in that they needed someone in Humanities to balance the bias in favor of science. The dinner took place the day after the announcement of the award so most of the people there didn't even know who Miss Miles was and nobody recognized her when she arrived. "They thought I was somebody's sister." Eventually, Harold Urey, a man in his eighties approached her and asked who she was. "I told him, and he asked what I did. I said I teach linguistics and write poetry, and he said 'Great! I'm going to get us both another drink.'"

Josephine Miles has a certain cool detachment about her own successes. And though she fully supports University women's attempts to secure equal status with men, here too she keeps an objective distance. It's clear that excellence in teaching and research is a standard she wouldn't compromise on behalf of her sex, and she does exhibit an occasional impatience with "the cause." She recalls the dinner meetings of the Woman's Faculty Club in the fifties. "The women talked about their research. Those were fascinating evenings. Now all they talk about is the rise of women," she says a bit pettishly.

In the coming collision between the University and HEW, she would rather act as mediator than advocate, and she feels she would be a good one. "Of course women have had a bad deal, but it take a while to sensitize people to a different kind of culture. It would help both sides to have a more historical perspective. They wouldn't be such adversaries if they'd be more historical."

Miss Miles has been involved in University conflicts for several decades now, but if you ask her about politics she will make a precise and rather pedantic distinction between this and what she

considers "real" politics. When she talks about politics, she says she means traditional neighborhood politics, campaign strategies and elections. She was political to a degree until the defeat of Stevenson in 1952. When the Berkeley campus first swung left in the thirties and many of her friends became Communists, Miss Miles went to Communist parties and picnics with no sense whatever of political commitment. Then in the early fifties friends organized a grass roots Democratic party in Berkeley which defeated the entrenched conservative Republicans on the city council and elected a school board that integrated the Berkeley schools years ahead of any district in the country. They were exciting times, she says. "There were terrible defeats and great unexpected victories. It was illuminating to see how resilient people were."

She has consistently supported student protests against repression from the earliest beginnings of the Free Speech Movement in 1964, but this, she says, is principle, not politics. Her explanation is reminiscent of her poem "How to Win a Soccer Match." It's a matter of psychological tyranny she says. "There's a kind of politics involved, but one in which all power is on one side and the side with principles is a helpless victim. She remains defiantly dissatisfied with the way the University is run. "I'd like to reform the whole administration. I hate the way all the pressures are robbing initiative from the faculty, shifting principles away from education and toward political and financial ones." This year she is a member of the Faculty Association, a committee created by the Academic Senate to negotiate directly with the Regents and the Legislature and attempt to secure autonomy and power for the faculty.

She has another cause, this one very much her own, which she has battled for singlehandedly for years now. She thinks that Berkeley artists, especially poets, need a meeting place where they can go to work, to hold readings, to talk and exchange ideas. She would like to see a kind of workshop established that would be open every day for people in need of stimulus and feedback or simply pleasant surroundings to write in. As one of Berkeley's best known poets, acquainted with poets all over the country, she is besieged by young poets who arrive in Berkeley feeling lonely and out of touch. They all ask her where they can find a group to read and discuss poetry with. According to Miss Miles, Berkeley is unique in having a large number of good poets and a singular inability to get it together poetically speaking. Groups with good intentions and remarkably short half lives spring up and disappear in a community that is too stubbornly individualistic to uphold even as harmless an institution as a poetry club. This poetic entropy is Miss Miles' despair.

Once she invited a large group of poets to her house to read to each other and get acquainted. Many more came than expected, and soon her tiny living room was filled with fifty voluble poets. Her intention was that the gathering would spontaneously generate smaller poetry reading groups that could meet on their own. Instead, the atmosphere rapidly became hostile and chaotic and the hoped for evening of artistic communication degenerated to a near brawl. The group met twice more at her home with less people but equally mistrustful vibrations and then Miss Miles washed her hands of the whole business.

She herself belongs to a poetry group which meets only once or twice a year with at least most of the same people each time. She nicknames it after the Guys and Dolls' crap game, "The World's Oldest Established Permanent Floating Poetry Club." It seems to hold together by the pure virtue of non-organization, a spirit which she finds quintessentially Berkeley.

Nevertheless, she has not abandoned her project for a community arts center through the auspices of the University, but here she has met with bureaucratic obstacles. Recently she attempted to secure a place in the new University Art Museum. This seemed feasible until the plan was axed by the controversial director of the museum, Peter Selz. Miss Miles claims that Selz opposed the project because it wasn't stylish enough for his stylish museum. Leonard Nathan says, "There's a terrier quality to Jo. When she wants something she holds on and doesn't give up." At present she is maneuvering to secure the Powerhouse for her poets. It's a small building on campus, surrounded by trees and guarded by stone lions, once an art museum and now being used by the Campus Police for bicycle registration. Miss Miles is once more optimistic, "Chancellor Bowker is backing this and we may just get it."

Josephine Miles' house on Virginia Street looks tranquil enough, but there is constant activity inside. A steady stream of people, friends, students, drivers, come and go during the day. A woman student rents a room there, and a housekeeper comes to clean and cook. One of the two television sets is usually on, blatting softly and continually although Miss Miles appears to take no notice. Her days are tightly scheduled. She is extended in so many directions,

counted on for so much and by so many that she is constantly at odds with time. Plainly she seeks out this bustling kind of existence and she thrives on it.

She is a gregarious woman with a great many friends and enough invitations to warrant a thick and frequently consulted engagement book. She has a core of intimates, many of whom she's known since her student days. Evenings she dines out often, is decidedly adventurous about restaurants, enjoys going to plays and concerts.

In summer she simplifies her life. She owns a small vacation house at Point Richmond where she stays alone with the help of a neighbor girl to run errands. Mostly she sits on her porch and looks at the view and absorbs the stillness around her. It's at Point Richmond, if anywhere, that she slows down. "I sit and watch the freighters go by on the bay and they go by very slowly, about one every two hours." She reads long books set in foreign places. "I don't like mysteries or puzzles or detective stories, just novels that ramble through scenery."

Travel is something she craves for herself, greedy for new sights and sounds and flavors. George Eliott and his wife have been on numerous short car trips with Miss Miles. He recalls one 3 day trip when Miss Miles was "enjoying everything and all the time. Finally I couldn't stand it any more. I got tired of reacting to every fence post we saw." Although her physical condition makes long distance traveling difficult, she's made a number of trips in the United States, usually to attend conferences at other universities. She comes back full of ideas and impressions, things to write about and things to tell. She has been to Vancouver and Death Valley,

Houston, New York and Washington and most recently to Colorado and New Mexico. She would like very much to see the South, preferably from the deck of a Delta Queen on its way down the Mississippi. Friends say that she conscientiously sends them postcards when she travels, written in tiny close script like engraving on jewelry.

Eight years ago she was invited for a short visit with some old friends who were spending a year in Aix-en-Provence. She was to go alone and the trip involved a change of planes without help, a prospect that frightened her. She's such a resourceful woman it's hard to imagine her at a loss and because she never complains about pain, it is easy to forget how fragile she is, how physically vulnerable. She confided once to a friend that the two things that she is afraid of are big dogs and high winds, things that could knock her down. Yet she wanted very much to go and when the airlines agreed she could, off she set for Marseilles. The trip lasted only two weeks, and she admits it was a bit crazy to travel so far for so short a stay, but it was worth it. Of all the places in the world she wanted most to see it was the South of France.

A new book of Miss Miles' poems called To All Appearances will be published next year, but probably as part of a volume of new and selected poetry, which disappoints her because she is partial to the title. In the last several years she has attracted more notice as a poet than ever before. For some reason her poetry is getting more representation in new anthologies, and this puzzles and amuses her. "Just when I'd acceded to the younger generation. It's an odd and mysterious twist." Still, it is unlikely the attention will turn her head since it took months to find a publisher for To All Appearances

which was rejected right and left for not being sufficiently avant-garde. The Norton Anthology, a standard and prestigious college textbook for English literature printed a number of Miss Miles' poems in its new edition. In commemoration of the event, a friend sent her a copy of World's review of the collection. The reviewer expressed delight that Norton had included two major and neglected American poets, Edgar Lee Masters and Josephine Miles. The neglected Miss Miles positively chortles, "How do you like that. Puts me right where I belong, in the obituary column."

One evening this April she gave a poetry reading in Cody's Bookstore in Berkeley. She gives readings infrequently, three or four times a year, and never charges a fee. This one was held in Cody's upstairs gallery and the room gradually filled with about forty people who chatted and moved around, waiting for her to start. She looked young and very cheerful in a bright violet blouse and a long peasantry skirt. She waited about ten minutes before beginning, sitting calmly and leafing through her book of poems. In public she has the special poise of someone who has learned to sit patiently without the option of timing her entrance, or getting up and mingling until time to start.

She began by announcing gently that a new young poet was giving a reading at the same time on campus and urged everyone to go hear him. "I don't know this young man's poetry, but he has a very handsome picture in the paper. The thing is, I didn't even know I was giving this reading until I read it in the paper yesterday so I had no time to protest or set up another time. So don't think I'd be hurt or anything." She paused, but no one left. "Well, I'll read for

twenty minutes and then have an intermission so you can leave if you want to."

She broke the poems up into loose groupings, beginning with fables, poetry about gods and animals. She read "Sheep," "Fish," and "God a man at Yale" and others in an easy conversational tone of voice. Occasionally, she would comment on the inspiration for the poems, or explain which pleased her and which still did not satisfy her. She read "Sisyphus," explaining that though Sisyphus had become a symbol of the existential dilemma, hers was an anti-existential interpretation.

He said a man's reach must exceed his grasp,
Or what is Hades for?

He said, it's not the goal that matter, but the process
Of reaching it, the breathing joy
Of endeavor, and the labor along the way.
This belief damned him, and damned, what's harder
The heavy stone.

During the second half of the program she read new poems and took requests. People called out lines. Few remembered titles and neither did Miss Miles. Someone asked for "Oedipus." "Really? now some people just hate that poem. It sets their teeth on edge."

The gang wanted to give Oedipus Rex a going away present
He has been a good hardworking father and king.
And besides it is the custom of this country.
To give gifts on departure.

But we didn't know what to give Oedipus, he had everything
Even in his loss he had more than average.
So we gave him a travelling case, fitted which we personally
Should have like to receive.

Reading, she paused slightly at significant lines. It was in no sense a performance, yet as William Fretter said about the committee

"there was a warmth in the room." Toward the end she read a poem called "Family."

When you swim in the surf off Seal Rocks, and your family
Sits in the sand
Eating potato salad, and the undertow
Comes, which takes you out, away, down
To loss of breath, loss of play and the power of play,
Hoiler say
Help,help,help. Hello, they will say,
Come back here for some potato salad.

It is then that a seventeen-year old cub
Cruising in a helicopter from Antigua
A jackstraw expert speaking only Swedish,
And remote from this area as a camel, says
Look down there, there is somebody drowning.
And it is you. You say yes, yes, yes,
And he throws you a line.
This is what is called the brotherhood of man.

There was silence and then laughter and loud applause. "My
god," someone muttered, "my god, she's good."



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