

POETS IN TRANSIT

Nattily dressed San Francisco poet Andrew Hoyem finished his half of the January 18th Caltech student assembly with a reading of his macabre and powerful poem, "The Litter," a recounting of his dream visit to the House of Death. For his performance he shed his customary outgoingness. There was quiet and respect in the student audience.

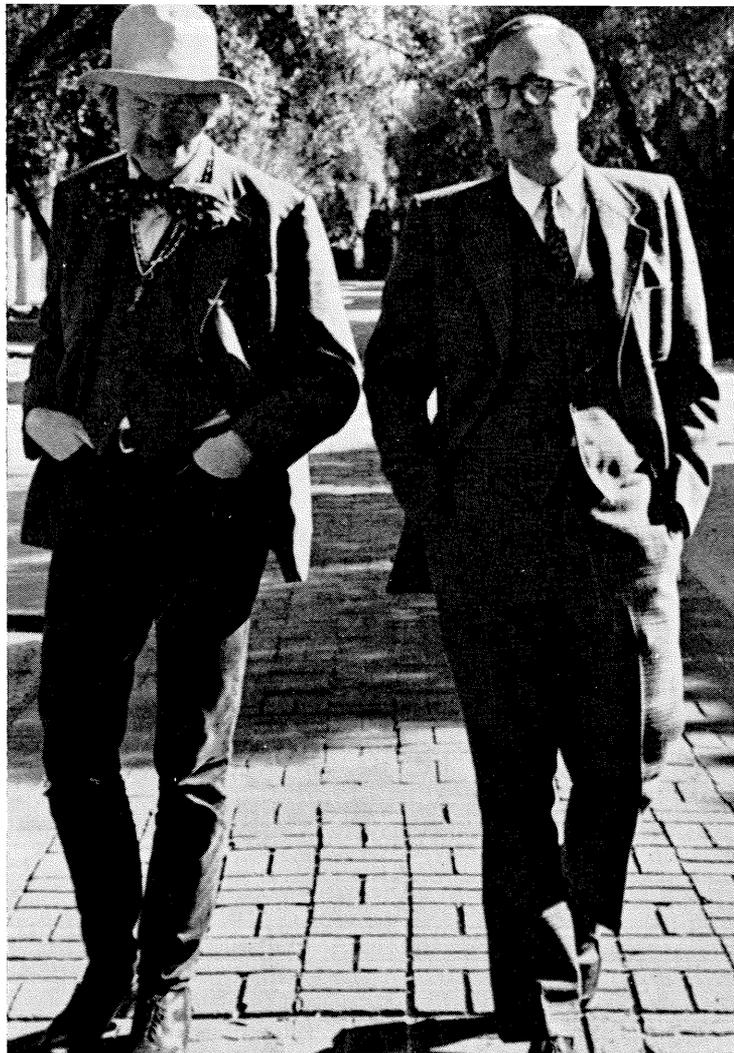
The second reader was ruddy-faced Richard Brautigan, wearing a floppy Stetson hat, an old vest, adorned from head to toe with two necklaces, a San Francisco dog tag, and Italian studded shoes. By the time he had read "My nose is growing old this year," a lament on his future prospects as a lover, he had found a habitation among Caltech students.

Andrew and Richard stayed on campus for ten days living in the guest suite at Ricketts house. At first it was sort of a mutual zoo, the poets peeking at the students from behind moats and bars—with neither group being sure which were the bipeds and which the quadrupeds. After the first shock, the students and poets tried to get used to each other.

When Richard walked by a stunned campus-tour-guide, the student was heard to exclaim, "Oh, he can't be a Tecker! We're more normal than *that!*"

A few students followed these pied pipers from the beginning; more were attracted as they stayed on. The poets visited the humanities division secretaries with schemes for the salvation of the Institute or themselves. They sought for girls and for classes with whom to share experiences and—ultimately—tried to find the tools of science and the scientists. At times they were awed and discomfited by teaching, science, and the power of technology.

But, by the end, a kind of symmetry was gained. At the last coffee hour some 50 students assembled



to hear the poets read. Richard and Andrew were happy; they had just met Richard Feynman and discussed his passion for beautiful formulae with him. And Andrew had met a lovely blonde girl. Richard, from behind his flaxen moustache, remarked sagely, "Don't wash that hand, Andrew; it has been shaken by a Nobel Prizewinner and a Girl."

John F. Crawford, Instructor in English

BRIC-A-BRAC

A prose poem written by Andrew Hoyem during his stay at Ricketts House.

This courtyard is paved with brick. Its bricks create a deceptive impression, that of a woven mat. Two bricks this way, two bricks that way weave over the ground. Imitation early California architecture rises on the periphery of this courtyard. Tropical plants grow parallel to minor columns in support of shade over walkways. One and only one shadow divides the courtyard into night and day. In its center sits an enormous empty urn of pink marble. At the bottom of this voluminous vase a small puddle of brackish water slowly evaporates. Over centuries, monks in legion tread these stones on the path to righteousness. Revolutionaries have been shot against these selfsame walls. Fatal balls are embedded within their two foot thicknesses. Spanish ladies have clattered over these cobbles, dancing in inmates' dreams. Odors of institutional food permeate these corridors.

Where once the mere suggestion of perfume enticed others around the bends of endless catacombs, now the scents of stifled desire and a faulty sewage system lurk like the devils of distraction. Purpose is written all over the place. Viva Villa was scrawled on an arch half a century past. Prisoners of their own volition reside behind barred windows. Students of science occupy these hallowed halls. They are in full possession of all their faculties. Hired hands are at their beck and call. A bullish buyer's market exists on the educational averages. Young men will vault the barricades swinging brickbats before this is over. You are the hope of the future. Times are changing. We have gained the hour. Stop the war. Please pass the ammunition. I want a second helping. Give us more astronomers. Give us more starlets. Thank you, Caltech. Thank you, Hollywood.