



A Spy in the House of Commerce

[Dana Gioia](#)

For seventeen years I worked in the business world while writing at night and on weekends. It was, especially at first, a life of considerable social and spiritual seclusion. The sense of isolation was heightened by the prevalent assumption then everywhere evident that all serious poets belonged in the university. For a young poet, however, loneliness is probably the necessary precondition to individuality. Writing by myself late at night with no professional pressures to publish, I found the time-even if it came only in tiny increments-to discover who I was as a poet. For nearly a decade I sent no poems to journals. I was concerned only with writing something that seemed good enough. My long hours in the office provided the community I didn't have in the arts. From my fellow workers, none of whom knew I was a poet, I also learned a great many things about the human needs and aspirations a poet must address.

Now working full-time as a writer, I miss the camaraderie of office life-despite its pressure and politics. Ironically, I also miss the secrecy of my former literary life. No more do I experience the guilty pleasures of being a spy in the house of commerce. I suspect, however, that I still write more for my old fellow workers, who will never read my poems, than for the literati. Or rather I write for an imaginary reader who combines the best features of both groups.

©Dana Gioia 2000. Used with permission of the author.

©2000 Frigate: The Transverse Review of Books www.frigatezine.com

All rights reserved on behalf of the authors.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on our site. Please email [<webmaster@frigatezine.com>](mailto:webmaster@frigatezine.com).

Back to [Frigatezine Home Page](#)