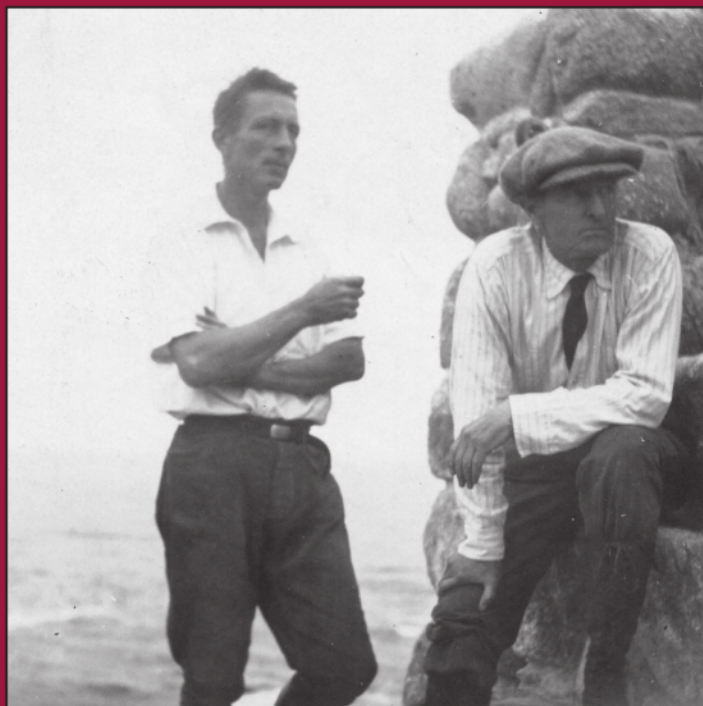


# JEFFERS STUDIES



A DOUBLE ISSUE INCLUDING A  
SPECIAL SECTION OF  
EARLY AND UNPUBLISHED WORK

A PUBLICATION OF  
THE ROBINSON JEFFERS ASSOCIATION

# JEFFERS STUDIES

VOLUME 12 NUMBERS 1 & 2 SPRING & FALL 2008

A DOUBLE ISSUE INCLUDING A SPECIAL SECTION  
OF EARLY AND UNPUBLISHED WORK

## CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

iii

### ARTICLES

KINDRED POETS OF CARMEL:  
THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC AFFINITIES  
OF GEORGE STERLING AND ROBINSON JEFFERS

JOHN CUSATIS

I

THE GHOST OF ROBINSON JEFFERS

TEMPLE CONE

13

JEFFERS'S ISOLATIONISM

ROBERT ZALLER

27

### SPECIAL SECTION OF EARLY AND UNPUBLISHED WORK

*THE COLLECTED EARLY VERSE OF ROBINSON JEFFERS:*  
A SUPPLEMENT

ROBERT KAFKA

43

HAUNTED COAST

DIRK AARDSMA, TRANSCRIBER AND EDITOR

57

### BOOK REVIEW

*THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS WITH  
SELECTED LETTERS OF UNA JEFFERS, VOLUME ONE, 1890-1930*

REVIEWED BY GERE S. DIZEREKA, M.D.

77

NEWS AND NOTES

93

CONTRIBUTORS

99

*Cover photo: Robinson Jeffers and George Sterling, c. 1926.  
Courtesy Jeffers Literary Properties.*

GEORGE HART

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This double issue of volume 12 of *Jeffers Studies* continues our commitment to present readers with original Jeffers material—photos, drafts, unpublished and obscure work, and so on—that will aid and enhance scholarship and interest readers in general. The special section in this volume contains two such items: a supplement to *The Collected Early Verse* and a transcription of an unpublished manuscript from Occidental College's Jeffers collection. Robert Kafka has unearthed eight poems from Jeffers's early years that have never before been collected. Four of the poems originally appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, and the other four were included in correspondence or uncatalogued archival collections. One manuscript was given to a one-time girlfriend, and we are happy to reproduce an image of it and a photo of the young lady, Vera Placida Gardner.

Also in this section is Dirk Aardsma's transcription of an abandoned narrative from the late 1920s. The beginning of the poem follows a pattern common in Jeffers's work from this time that continues in the 1930s—out on a walk among the coastal canyons, the poet meets a lonely inhabitant, an encounter from which a tale or lyrical insight emerges. In this case, the character's impulse to talk leads to a strange narrative of his failed marriage and his dreams of the coast being haunted by the inhabitants of a future city. The manuscript breaks off inconclusively, but it is an intriguing example of the sources of and inspirations for the stories in Jeffers's poems.

Of course, we are also committed to publishing the most current and interesting criticism on the poetry, and this volume includes three articles that address a diversity of issues in Jeffers's work. John Cusatis investigates the affinities between Jeffers and a fellow-writer, George Sterling, who preceded Jeffers as Carmel's resident poet. Temple Cone uses Jeffers's occasional self-representations as a ghost as an entry point

for a consideration of his ambivalent views of the human presence on his beloved Central California coast. Finally, Robert Zaller tackles the vexed issue of Jeffers's political allegiances, examining specifically his relation to isolationism in the years leading up to World War II. In these three articles, we find Jeffers treated in the context of literary history, environmental criticism, and politics—an excellent sampling of the ways in which his poetry can be read and interpreted.

Readers will also find an extensive review of the first volume of Stanford University Press's *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by James Karman, an updated bibliography of criticism on Jeffers from sources other than *Jeffers Studies*, and a number of News and Notes items, which, unfortunately, includes two obituaries for longtime Jeffers advocates, John Hicks and John Courtney. Their contributions to Jeffers criticism and the preservation of Tor House will long be appreciated, and they themselves will be missed.

# ARTICLES

JOHN CUSATIS

## KINDRED POETS OF CARMEL THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND AESTHETIC AFFINITIES OF GEORGE STERLING AND ROBINSON JEFFERS

Now with a sigh November comes to the brooding land.  
Yellowing now toward winter the willows of Carmel stand.

George Sterling, "Autumn in Carmel"

Who could have known he drew so near his November,

...

The Carmel woods are full of music to remember

Robinson Jeffers, "George Sterling"

In his essay "Themes in My Poems," Robinson Jeffers commented, "the simplest and commonest theme of my verse . . . is just the landscape of the Monterey coast-range."

I should say that this rocky coast is not only the scene of my narrative verse, but also the chief actor in it. These mountains rise sheer from the ocean; they are cut by deep gorges and are heavy with brush and forest. Remember this is Central, not Southern, California. There are no orange-groves here, and no oil-wells, and Los Angeles is far away. These mountains pasture a few cattle and many deer; hawk and vulture, eagle and heron, fly here, as well as the sea-birds and shore-birds; and there are clouds and sea-fog in summer, and fine storms in winter. (CP 4: 414)

Jeffers has referred to his settling near the Monterey coast mountains as one of two "accidents" that "changed and directed" his life (CP 4: 392). The other was meeting his wife, Una. Shortly after arriving in Carmel in 1914, Jeffers and Una stumbled upon a deserted grove while out walking. The vacated spot, they learned, had been the property of George Sterling, a poet seventeen years older than Jeffers, who, like Jeffers, was a native of the East whose arrival on the West coast was not the result of his own choosing, but his father's. Jeffers arrived at the age of sixteen,

still under the influence of his Presbyterian minister father; Sterling arrived at twenty after dropping out of a Catholic seminary.<sup>1</sup> Both lived in California for over a decade before discovering and settling in Carmel. Both reveled in periods of reckless philandering they had associated with being poets, Jeffers in Los Angeles and Sterling in San Francisco. And for both, the natural beauty of the region answered a desire for solitude and outdoor adventure, engendered in childhood.<sup>2</sup> During his nine-year stay in Carmel, Sterling published four books of poetry, earning a solid regional reputation and a respectable national one as well.<sup>3</sup>

But to this day, if he is remembered at all, he is best known for being “The King of Bohemia.” His mischievous antics and ability to secure a pretty woman and excellent prohibition liquor for the writers who visited San Francisco have become legendary, while his body of poetry, which includes well over 200 sonnets—many inspired by women, but many by the Monterey Coast—is largely forgotten. Sterling’s love of natural beauty was not, as with Jeffers, complemented by his love for *one* woman, but for scores of women. His home in Carmel was a paradise to him, and his enthusiasm upon arriving there prefigured that of Jeffers. He wrote to his mentor Ambrose Bierce:

The house is on a knoll at the edge of a large pine forest, half a mile from the town of Carmel. It affords a really magnificent view of the Carmel Valley and River, and of the wild and desolate mountains beyond them. I’m half a mile from the ocean (Carmel Bay) which is blue as a sapphire, and has usually a great surf; and I’m four miles from Monterey. Here a soft wind is always in the pines. It sounds like a distant surf, just as the surf sounds like a wind in pine trees. In Carmel, too, the air is always mild. . . . There are many beautiful things to see here, mostly appertaining to the reefs, cliffs, and ocean. (Walker 14–15)

Sterling told Bierce he looked forward to raising vegetables, Belgian hares, and enjoying the company of “just one girl,” his wife, Carrie (Walker 15). The fact that he supplemented his Carmel abode with an apartment in San Francisco, which he kept for his adulterous exploits, is emblematic of the division within him, which he himself recognized as preclusive to a more sound, prolific poetic output. By the time Jeffers reached Carmel, he had tempered any waywardness in his character, a fact aptly symbolized by the granite house and tower still standing in Carmel. Sterling, on the other hand, turned the artists’ colony he founded there into a haven for hedonistic revelry. As James Karman notes, “The empty grove he built and left behind, like the empty marriage and the empty home, served as one more symbol of the dissolution of his dreams” (25).

Yet comparing the lifestyles of these two poets clouds the truth regarding Sterling’s poetic achievement. If we can trust the judgment of

the title character of Jack London's autobiographical 1909 novel, *Martin Eden*, George Sterling's poetry "transcends genius." Sterling is the prototype for Martin Eden's hard-drinking, literary-minded friend, Russ Brissenden. When Brissenden shows Martin his poem, "Ephemera," London's fictitious title for Sterling's "A Testimony of the Suns," Martin considers it "perfect art"; he is "overwhelmed, crushed," commenting "when at last he was able to speak": "There is nothing like it in literature. . . . It's the poem of the century" (London 364–65).<sup>4</sup> Another friend and highly influential critic, Ambrose Bierce, told the world that "A Wine of Wizardry," Sterling's hallucinogenic tribute to the transcendent, if insatiable, character of the poetic imagination—particularly the wine-soaked imagination—was "proof that there is at least one poet in America" (Benediktsson 38). And perhaps the greatest testimony to Sterling's stature as a poet is the admiration bestowed on him by Jeffers. Sterling recognized the value of Jeffers's attention, noting in a monograph he wrote about the young poet, "He has a limited number of friends, for whom he is capable of disinterested affection, but he does not seek their companionship" (*Man and the Artist* 13).<sup>5</sup> Sterling was certainly an exception. In the nearly two and a half years that they knew one another, Sterling and Jeffers exchanged dozens of letters; and Sterling frequently visited Tor House and shared his explorer's familiarity with the coast—which would become known as Jeffers Country—with the poet and his family.

It was "A Wine of Wizardry" that first caught Jeffers's eye when it appeared in *Cosmopolitan* in 1909. In his first correspondence with Sterling in 1924, Jeffers wrote, "You have long been a fixed star in my sky . . . living about Carmel the past ten years I have felt myself . . . an intruder in your domain, but now the lord of the region has made me welcome" (*CL* 1: 464). It is not unlikely that Sterling had a significant influence on Jeffers's work. What is undeniable is the impact that settling in Carmel had on the development of both poets. While their temperaments might have differed, they shared strong philosophical and aesthetic affinities which the Monterey Coast nurtured. Their philosophy was modern, but their aesthetic code was older than the redwoods in the Santa Lucia Mountains. One can sum up the essence of their philosophical and aesthetic beliefs with two principles: Philosophically, they shared a materialistic worldview that rendered mankind insignificant and considered traditional anthropocentric values dangerous to the well-being of all creation; aesthetically, they believed that the purpose of poetry is to evoke beauty and, as a result, powerful emotions, and they felt the Modernist movement was doing away with that edict. Both poets applied these principles to their lives and writing in very different ways. While Sterling's wish to adhere to traditional poetic mores caused



him to cling to Victorian language and tight metrical forms, Jeffers's break from these devices was both liberating for him and praised by even his most non-conservative critics. In addition, while Sterling and Jeffers shared a cosmic perspective, Jeffers's response to the vastness of the universe was one of celebration and austerity; Sterling reacted with lamentation and hedonism. For Jeffers, a pantheist, poetry was akin to prayer, a means of affirming and praising. For Sterling, an atheist, poetry was akin to a drug, a diversion and an escape. Like opium in which he is said to have indulged, it produced the illusion of beneficence in a tragic world. This is not to say his poetry lacked the sincerity of Jeffers's work; far from it. But for him, beauty was not the hallmark of divinity in creation, as it was for Jeffers, it was a mask behind which the meaninglessness of creation hid. While Jeffers agreed with Plato that "beauty is the effulgence of truth" (CP 4: 373), Sterling understood beauty to be a soothing lie. He writes in the poem "Illusion," from the 1916 collection *The Caged Eagle*, "Bring on the lights, the music and the wine, / . . . / Let us forget all that we dread we are" (75). Sterling was the Dionysius to Jeffers's Apollo.

Sterling serves as a transitional figure between his mentor, Ambrose Bierce, and his sometime protégé, Jeffers. All three California poets viewed both modern man and the modern artist with cynicism for distancing himself from beauty. Sterling's cosmic perspective outgrew Bierce's more socially based view of mankind, but he clung to the rhetoric which Jeffers learned to abandon. In *Footloose in Arcadia*, Joseph Noel's memoir about his friendships with Bierce, London, and Sterling, he notes that during the months before Sterling's untimely death in 1926, "It was apparent to those concerned with such things that [Sterling] had chosen Robinson Jeffers for the mantle of Elijah which Bierce had entrusted to his keeping" (314).

Sterling's first book, *The Testimony of the Suns*, demonstrates precisely his position as a transitional figure between Bierce and Jeffers. The title poem is a metaphorical "testimony" to the cold indifference of the universe—still a modern idea in 1903—yet the poem is marked by archaic diction, and its 161 stanzas never stray from their strict adherence to Tennyson's *In Memoriam* stanza form. The narrator of the poem gazes at the night sky and studies the "syllables of fire," hoping to "read Orion's telic rune" (*Selected Poems* 228). But Orion reveals nothing but the impression that the cosmos is a meaningless battleground of infinite dimension, indifferent to "the dream of end and plan / Dear to the finity of man" (*Selected Poems* 208). Sterling writes,

O Space and Time and stars at strife,  
How dreadful your infinity

Shrined by your termless trinity,  
How strange, how terrible, is life! (*Selected Poems* 223)

The narrator hopes only “To know what Permanence abides / Beyond the veil the senses draw.” But he feels a bitter kinship with the inhabitants of “worlds to be,” who like the men from “worlds destroyed,” will vainly seek an answer to the mystery of creation in “the silence of the star,” only eventually to unite with the nebular dust they contemplate (*Selected Poems* 231–32). Aside from the aesthetic differences between this poem and Jeffers’s best work, the philosophy the poem embraces demonstrates Sterling’s utter hopelessness, not merely in man’s potential significance, but also in a divine plan. The poem is fraught with allusions to constellations, reinforcing Sterling’s notion that man imposes his own anthropomorphic patterns among the stars. Jeffers wrote to Sterling, “you use astronomy to some purpose” (*CL* 1: 467). Yet Jeffers’s “purpose” for using astronomy differs from Sterling’s. Both explore the expanses of space to demonstrate that the universe operates by fixed laws and that these laws are impersonal and even apply to mankind. Jeffers writes in an untitled poem from his final collection, *The Beginning and the End*, “There is nothing like astronomy to pull the stuff out of man, / His stupid dreams and red-rooster importance: let him count the star-swirls” (*CP* 3: 476). As Sterling does in “Testimony,” Jeffers views the cosmos as a battleground, the stars “Coining their very flesh into bullets,” but to him, the battle is “the stuff for an epic poem” (*CP* 3: 466). For him, man should not feel alienated by the apparent chaos of cosmic activity, because all creation is “part of God’s life” (*CP* 3: 434). Rather than, to paraphrase Stephen Crane, trying “to throw bricks at the temple” only to find “that there are no bricks and no temples” (Crane 377), Jeffers offers praise to the temples, exaltations. In “Explosion,” Jeffers writes, “We are born of explosion and homesick for it” (*CP* 3: 413). It is without irony that he writes, “No wonder we are fascinated with fire-works / And our huge bombs: it is a kind of homesickness perhaps for the howling fire-blast that we were born from” (*CP* 3: 471). Sterling utters the same sentiment in “Evening Star”:

So art thou light to that which only seems;  
So art thou symbol of another Setting  
To us, unfortunate and unforgetting,  
Homesick for that lost country of our dreams. (*Selected Poems* 97)

Jeffers refers to the universe as one beating heart, “pumping into our arteries [God’s] terrible life. He is beautiful beyond belief. / And we, God’s apes—or tragic children—share in the beauty. We see it above

our torment, that's what life's for" (CP 3: 413). Unlike the pre-Carmel Sterling, Jeffers sees evidence of "end and plan" (Sterling, *Selected Poems*, 208). As he notes in "De Rerum Virtute,": this "Galaxy, the firewheel / On which we are pinned, the whirlwind of stars in which our sun is one dust-grain, one electron, this giant atom of the universe / Is not blind force, but fulfils its life and intends its courses" (CP 3: 402).<sup>6</sup>

So while Sterling read in the seemingly meaningless "syllables of fire" a testament of despair, Jeffers read consolation. Jeffers told Sterling, "there is peace I think deeper than any terror in this thought of the end: *it is as it ought to be*. It's hard to express comprehensibly—existence would be rather a shallow affair without non-existence to back it" (CL 1: 467). Neither, however, deciphered justification for man's superiority to the rest of creation in the star swirls. In this respect, Jeffers was the less optimistic of the two, yet both poets carried on the misanthropic legacy of Bierce and a wariness of man's "progress." The newly invented airplane was an inauspicious symbol for both poets of the destructiveness inherent in man's technological advancements. Sterling foresees this tendency in his most anthologized verse, "The Black Vulture," written in 1911. As Jeffers would do later, Sterling uses the vulture as a symbol of both terror and integrity. From his symbolic height, the vigilant vulture assesses the potential perils of the world below, where the cold "sierras gleam like scattered foam." Sterling continues:

And least of all he holds the human swarm—  
 Unwitting now that envious men prepare  
 To make their dream and its fulfillment one,  
 When, poised above the caldrons of the storm,  
 Their hearts, contemptuous of death, shall dare  
 His roads between the thunder and the sun. (*Selected Poems* 159)

In "Diagram," Jeffers prophesies that "the age that began at Kittyhawk" will beget "monsters" (CP 3: 120). Refuting the legitimacy of any comparisons of Jeffers to Walt Whitman, Sterling noted that Jeffers lacked Whitman's "penurious egotism." Jeffers's "pace," he wrote, "is the pace of a Titan, but not a hobbled, stumbling one. And when we come to deeper, if no more important matters, he immensely exceeds the grey singer in scope and significance of vision. He deals with the cosmos, Whitman with the democracy of termites" (*The Man and the Artist* 4–5).

When Sterling was able to wrench himself free of the "human swarm," the majestic Carmel coast tempered his pessimism, as indicated in the title poem of his 1914 collection *Beyond the Breakers*. Written just prior to his move from Carmel, the poem depicts its arrogant narrator staring out into the "ocean's breast" from the Carmel beach, searching, as he

had in the night skies, for meaning amid “the smokeless dome of the world and a thousand leagues of the deep.” But instead of alienation, the narrator experiences a Jeffersonian union as he prepares to plunge himself into the breaking waves, exclaiming, “With the sea and wind I will mix my body and soul, / Where the breath of the planet drives and the herded billows roll” (*Selected Poems* 118). As the narrator swims, he detects that “companions, godlike, alert, unseen, / Swam under and at my sides, with sight unerring and keen” (121). The image recalls the “happy living things” that appear to Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner*; their ineffable beauty triggers “a spring of love” to “gush” from the Mariner’s heart, causing him to bless “them unaware” (*Collected Works* 16: 393). Sterling writes,

Mixing my voice with theirs and the sea-wind’s lordly song,—  
Feeling them stir about me, the swimmers happy and strong.

Felt I not with them, the invisible at mirth,  
The wind and wonder of life, the thrill and union of earth?—  
(*Selected Poems* 121)

The optimistic tone of “Beyond the Breakers” is a marked contrast to the stark tone of “Testimony of the Suns,” written prior to Sterling’s move to Carmel. And this tone would characterize the work that best illustrates his affinities to Jeffers, the verse drama *Lilith*, certainly his masterpiece. The hero of the drama, Tancred, is seduced by the sorceress Lilith, who causes him to desecrate his mother’s grave and murder his father, among other treacheries, in his desire for her. Tancred later recognizes all that he has betrayed in exchange for a fleeting, destructive pleasure. His renewed idealism and devotion to truth, however, lands him in prison. Lilith tries to convince him that principles such as truth and honor are illusions and that life’s value is measured in terms of pleasure and pain. Tancred ultimately refuses to believe this idea, insisting, “I will die truthful.” “Wilt thou bear the rack / For an illusion?” Lilith responds (102). “How very quickly thou art gone,” she continues, “[s]moke of the moth’s burnt wing!” Tancred replies, “Yet was it wing, / And better that than nothing.” In the face of execution he is told to denounce his idealism, but he finds value in the notion that “[t]he dust in Man hath lived and loved” (108). He is subsequently flayed, while two lovers in the distance drown out his cries with their own ecstatic moaning. The irony of the play’s resolution suggests the notion that it is man’s *own* self-centeredness, not the indifference of the universe, that is the real enemy of mankind, an idea Jeffers would certainly affirm. Before being executed, Tancred expresses his acceptance of death, noting that

it allows one to know life's value.<sup>7</sup> In a passage echoing Jeffers's sentiment, "who drinks the wine / Should take the dregs" (CP 3: 408), he explains to Lilith:

Witch, I am human, and will play my part  
 As man, not god nor phantom. I accept  
 The wine of this illusion, and am glad.  
 I drink its very lees of pain and death—  
 Pain, that I comprehend my brother's pain,  
 And death, that so I know the worth of life. (105)<sup>8</sup>

Jeffers found *Lilith* to be a "terrible and beautiful poem" (CL 1: 467). On the supremacy of beauty, the poets were in strong accord, agreeing with Bierce that beauty is the "first cause" of poetry. Bierce insisted that "it is the philosopher's trade to make us think, the poet's to make us feel" (qtd. in Benediktsson 67). Jeffers echoes this sentiment in "The Beauty of Things": "to feel / Greatly, and understand greatly, and express greatly, the natural / Beauty, is the sole business of poetry" (CP 3: 369). Again, comparing Jeffers to Whitman, Sterling remarked, "Whitman slips but infrequently into beauty: Jeffers' lines glow or blaze with a thousand manifestations of it—no facile nor superficial beauty, but one soaring far and high in imagination" (*The Man and the Artist* 4). Yet despite Sterling's contention, especially in his later poems, that beauty gives value to life, he still viewed beauty as illusive; imagination, he felt, merely distracts man from the reality of his insignificance. The title of his final collection *Sails and Mirage* metaphorically captures his view that beauty is a mirage, and that it is as transient as the sails of ancient ships. In the poem "Mirage" he implies that man's imagination is what makes beauty possible, as man represents "life at its highest," an idea antithetical to Jeffers's notion that "when the whole human race / Has been rubbed out," natural beauty will still exist. For Jeffers, like Emerson in "The Rhodora," "beauty is its own excuse for being." Jeffers insists that the beauty of "storms, moon, and ocean . . . has more meaning / Than the whole human race" (CP 3: 119). Both poets, however, felt that beauty itself had become endangered at the hands of the Modernist movement, which Jeffers felt required a poet's work to be "slight and fantastic, abstract, unreal, eccentric" (CP 4: 391). Sterling praised Jeffers for refusing to swap "emotion for sophistication" (*The Man and the Artist* 18). In a letter to Sterling, Jeffers defined the two most important aims of the poet: to write poetry that is rhythmical and that deals with permanent things. Each agreed that originality was the hallmark of a great poet, and each found that trait in the other, though not the experimental originality of the modernists, but rather that *voice*

which marked a poem as singularly belonging to one poet. "One could pick, unerringly, a poem by [Jeffers] from a stack of thousands of others," Sterling wrote (*The Man and the Artist* 3). Jeffers felt the same about Sterling's verse.

In accord with his worldview, Jeffers made a pact with himself that he would live his life out to its conclusion, taking the dregs with the wine, as he writes in "The Deer Lay Down Their Bones." Sterling made a different pact. He and Jack London swore "not to sit up with the corpse" (*Karman* 28). That is, if life became painful, they would end it by ingesting cyanide from a packet they each agreed to carry at all times. Sterling told Jeffers that despite rumors of London's death by natural causes, he had actually taken his own life. Sterling took *his* own life on 17 November 1926. Lying ill from too much bad prohibition liquor while he awaited a visit from his friend H. L. Mencken in the San Francisco Bohemian Club, Sterling ingested his cyanide. Joseph Noel writes that shortly before Sterling's death the poet remarked, "Jeffers will go far. . . . He does not waste his heart on life as I did. He sits in his ivory tower down at Carmel, keeping casual visitors away and living as austerely as a medieval monk. I never did that enough. I always loved life too well" (314–15). Just as Sterling had done for Bierce in 1910, Jeffers wrote a prose memorial for his friend that captures the difference between his and Sterling's outlook and subsequent fate: "God carries the load for a stoic, the impersonal power of nature must carry it for another, but the Epicurean must carry it for himself" (Walker 121). And just as Sterling included the poem "The Passing of Bierce" in his 1921 collection *Sails and Mirage*, "George Sterling's Death" appeared in Jeffers's 1928 volume *Cawdor*. Perhaps an even more fitting tribute is the poem Jeffers published in the November–December 1926 issue of the *San Francisco Review*: "George Sterling" uses Sterling's signature form, the sonnet, to capture the kinship between these uncommon, disparate personalities, summoned to "the pine-sweet valley of Carmel"<sup>9</sup> by a mutual reverence for beauty:

I did not meet him in the gleaming years  
 That made the great friendships and the earlier fame,  
 The carnival time when wine was common as tears,  
 The fabulous dawn was darkened before I came.  
 The Carmel woods because he had wandered there  
 Were yet misted with gold when he returned.  
 The iron season had come, the iron was gray in his hair,  
 Yet in his heart the child and the song burned.  
 Who could have known he drew so near his November,  
 The power and the song not wearying; and now he is gone.  
 The Carmel woods are full of music to remember,

And my ears of a sad music; and mine to go on  
 To not so shining and not so swift an end,  
 Never to find nor lose so generous a friend. (CP 1: 236)

## ENDNOTES

1. Sterling grew up in Sag Harbor, NY, and in 1890, with his father's encouragement, he moved to Oakland, CA, to work for his uncle, who had become a wealthy realtor. However, upon meeting the frontier poet Joaquin Miller—and a little later, Bierce—Sterling's interest in business began to diminish. Jeffers grew up outside of Pittsburgh, PA, and moved to Long Beach, CA, in 1903 with his parents and younger brother. He enrolled at Occidental College and graduated when he was eighteen.

2. Sterling spent much of his childhood among the woodlands, ponds, and bay that bordered Sag Harbor. Jeffers enjoyed much time alone amid the mountains and lakes of Switzerland, where he attended private school in his youth.

3. Sterling was one of the first poets to have his work appear in *Poetry* magazine, the avant-garde publication of the time, having published three poems in the first volume in 1912. In 1916, the editor of *Poetry*, Harriet Monroe, dealt his reputation a blow by denouncing his work for displaying "the worst excesses of the Tennysonian tradition" (Benediktsson 21). Sterling's poetry continued to appear, however, in popular and literary magazines throughout the country until his death. Among his greatest supporters was the esteemed critic H. L. Mencken, who frequently included Sterling's work in his magazine, *The American Mercury*.

4. In *Martin Eden*, Brissenden commits suicide and Martin Eden subsequently publishes his friend's poem "Ephemera" before taking his own life. In reality, Sterling killed himself ten years—nearly to the day—after London's alleged suicide.

5. Boni and Liveright, who published Jeffers's *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems* in 1925, commissioned Sterling to write the first monograph on Jeffers, which was published shortly before Sterling's death in 1926. In 1925, Jeffers's poem "Continent's End" provided the title for the Book Club of California's *Continent's End: An Anthology of Contemporary California Poets*, which Sterling co-edited. In appreciation, Jeffers sent Sterling and another of the editors, James Rorty, a copy of *Tamar and Other Poems*, his privately printed 1924 collection, which had sold fewer than fifty copies. Rorty and Sterling were largely responsible for bringing about the reprinting of the larger 1925 edition, and consequently, Jeffers's immediate national acclaim. See Karman 70–71.

6. Jeffers has cited Lucretius as a major influence, and the Roman poet's materialistic worldview is echoed in Jeffers's work. However, while Lucretius explains in *De Rerum Natura* his belief that the universe came into existence and developed purely by chance, Jeffers contests this idea in this tribute to Lucretius, "De Rerum Virtute."

7. As noted above, Jeffers later made this same concession in an early letter to Sterling, noting, "It's hard to express comprehensibly—existence would be rather a shallow affair without non-existence to back it" (CL 1: 467).

8. It is worth noting that this speech hearkens forward to the existentialists, who despite the lack of emphasis they placed on human nature, had much in common with Jeffers and Sterling's materialistic worldview and the consequent need to live one's present life on one's own terms.

9. From "Spring in Carmel" in *Sails and Mirage* (San Francisco: A. M. Robertson, 1921). This poem, as well as "Autumn in Carmel," expresses Sterling's longing to be back "[o]n the path that once led home" (Sterling, *Selected Poems*, 24).

#### WORKS CITED

- Benediktsson, Thomas E. *George Sterling*. Boston: Twayne, 1980.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. J. C. C. Mays. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.
- Crane, Stephen. *The Portable Stephen Crane*. Ed. Joseph Katz. New York: Penguin, 1969.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988–2001.
- . *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. James Karman. Vol. 1. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.
- Karman, James. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*. Brownsville: Story Line P, 1996.
- London, Jack. *Martin Eden*. New York: Penguin, 1993.
- Noel, Joseph. *Footloose in Arcadia: A Personal Record of Jack London, George Sterling, Ambrose Bierce*. New York: Carrick and Evans, 1940.
- Sterling, George. *The Caged Eagle and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Robertson, 1916.
- . *Lilith*. San Francisco: Robertson, 1919.
- . *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and the Artist*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926.
- . *Selected Poems*. New York: Holt, 1923.
- Walker, Franklin. *The Seacoast of Bohemia*. Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1973.





TEMPLE CONE

## THE GHOST OF ROBINSON JEFFERS

Many of Robinson Jeffers's lyric poems struggle to reconcile the presence of people amid the wild natural setting of the California coast, despite the history of human communities in that area. While Jeffers often portrays unpopulated natural scenes in these lyrics, or else excoriates human encroachment on such scenes, he also suggests that by building Tor House and Hawk Tower, dwellings closely tied to their landscape but not disruptive of it, he himself has become imbricated in the environment. Jeffers is not without reservation about the effect of his own presence, writing in "Margrave" that "I have humanized the ancient sea-sculptured cliff / And the ocean's wreckage of rock / Into a house and a tower" (*CP* 2: 167). He also links his stonework with his poetry, concluding that both labors are "Hastening the sure decay of granite with my hammer" (*CP* 2: 167). In spite of these reservations, Jeffers often seems to appeal to his ascetic and aesthetic life at Carmel Point as an apology for his presence there; to his earlier comments in "Margrave," he adds that "It is likely the enormous / Beauty of the world requires for completion our ghostly increment" (*CP* 2: 167).

A fundamental conflict about the effects of human presence in nature is manifest in Jeffers's ambivalence about rural manual labor and in his frequent self-representation as a ghost in his own poems. For Jeffers, rural manual labor affords a sure communion with nature, yet it is one that marks and alters the land with which one would commune. The resulting conflict between the desire to efface human presence from the natural environment and yet to preserve some aspect of identity through a close relationship with the land is embodied in Jeffers's lyrics by his self-representation as a ghost, one that haunts the coastline eons into an apocalyptic future in which humankind has disappeared and nature has been restored to a pristine state. Yet the impossibility of such an existential condition (Jeffers frequently speaks of the ghost in the sub-

junctive mood) underscores the impossibility of such a state of nature. Thus, the figure of Jeffers's ghost makes a case for the necessary acceptance of human presence, perhaps even prominence, in any environmental philosophy, while also indicating that such presence might be sustainable based on the commitment to place that Jeffers modeled in his own life and poems.

The importance of manual labor for Jeffers's environmental thought might best be glossed by a brief discussion of labor, nature, and the pastoral in the poetry of Wordsworth, since Jeffers seems at times a Wordsworthian poet in his own right, one who revises the pastoral not only by depicting people drawing their living from the land, but also by inserting himself into the poems as a laborer. A number of critics, including Jonathan Bate, Karl Kroeber, and James McKusick, have rejected New Historicist criticism of Wordsworth's natural world as a retreat from social ills, arguing instead that his work establishes an environmental lyric which addresses the very problems he was accused of avoiding. Writing against the Marxist critique of Wordsworth made by such scholars as Jerome McGann and Alan Liu, Bate observes that the Wordsworthian pastoral depicts "a *working* paradise" where "[w]eather, work, and plain language . . . ensure that this pastoral is no aristocratic fantasy" (22, 24). Bate further notes that "pastoral poetry as redefined by Wordsworth begets both reverence for nature and political emancipation" (25). He argues that the poet's awareness of the changing Lake Country landscape subsumes a critique of industrialized capitalism, given that Wordsworth reads detrimental patterns of change in society and labor through the physical interaction between humans and nature. More importantly, Bate claims that Wordsworth's pastorals promote the conservation of traditional land-management practices as a means of environmental, social, and economic stability and cohesiveness, an argument avoided by the Marxist tendency to treat differing types of labor uniformly (51–52, 56–57). Kroeber acknowledges the Romantic tendency towards idealism, but he also claims that the Romantics understood the impact of cultural presuppositions on the natural environment and possessed the materialist idealism necessary for establishing an ecological world view (*Ecological* 8–9). And in writing about Wordsworth's poem "The Tables Turned" (famous for the claim "We murder to dissect"), McKusick observes that Wordsworth's lyrics, for all their concentration on subjective experience, actually unsettle the anthropocentric worldview with their particular engagement with nature:

[For Wordsworth, the poem] proposes a new role for humankind among the speaking presences of the natural world. The place of poetry, and the task of the

poet, is thus inherently dialogical; the poet must seek to engage those inhuman voices in conversation, at some risk to his own sense of identity, self-confidence, and stylistic decorum. (*Green* 60–61)

A late poem, “The Old Stone-Mason,” expresses Jeffers’s faith in work as means of environmental connection. It begins as an old man’s meditation on the rocky seascape off Carmel: “Stones that rolled in the sea for a thousand years / Have climbed the cliff and stand stiff-ranked in the house-walls; / Hurricane may spit his lungs out they’ll not be moved” (CP 3: 372). Here, prosopopeia animates the stones, rendering their arrangement in a wall wholly natural, since they seem to be the agents of their own construction. Disgust with the modern world soon asserts itself, and the speaker claims, with some pride, his alienation from the general populace: “I have shared in my time the human illusions, the muddy foolishness / And craving passions, but something thirty years ago pulled me / Out of the tide-wash” (CP 3: 372). It is a separation reinforced by enjambment: “I must not even pretend / To be one of the people” (CP 3: 372).

John Elder offers a Freudian reading of Jeffers’s alienation from a decaying modern culture, claiming that it is at once “an impulse of health and self-preservation” and “a reinaugurated phase of production” of cultural values (209). Whether or not Jeffers’s vision ultimately negates or revises civilization as the source of value, it is important to note that the speaker in his poems often identifies his own community within the natural environment itself. Though the speaker might be solitary, this identification unexpectedly reveals a desire for human community, as shown in “The Old Stone-Mason” by Jeffers’s personification of “the huge waves” as “my drunken quarrymen / Climbing the cliff, hewing out more stones for me / To make my house. The old granite stones, those are my people” (CP 3: 372–73). Here the experience of work, undertaken as a means of establishing an ecological connection with the landscape, dovetails into a desire for community. The speaker attempts to reject that desire, but cannot, and his metaphors betray his loneliness.

The conflict over human presence is often evident when Jeffers attempts to integrate and subsume technology into the natural world. In “Phenomena,” for instance, Jeffers describes “The navy’s new-bought Zeppelin going by in the twilight, / Far out seaward; relative only to the evening star and the ocean / It slides into a cloud over Point Lobos” (CP 1: 118). Leo Marx terms this intrusion of a disruptive, “real world” presence into the pastoral ideal the *counterforce*. In traditional pastoral, it is the *Et in Arcadia ego*, the reminder of death in the midst of paradise. Its paradigm in American literature is “the machine in the garden,” a tech-

nological disruption of an otherwise harmonious natural scene (like the famous blowing of the train's steam whistle in the chapter "Sounds" of Thoreau's *Walden*). Marx claims that while the counterforce disrupts the pastoral ideal's location of perfection in the country as opposed to the city, the pastoral design actually accounts for the counterforce (24–32). As a check on the pastoral's idealization of the country, which risks slipping into primitivism, the counterforce recalls the pastoral's original goal of balancing nature and art. For Marx, the more the pastoral ironizes and distances itself from its ideal, and the less it stigmatizes the counterforce, the closer it comes to achieving balance.

Jeffers's poem "The Machine" opens with a paradigmatic intrusion, the arrival of a "little biplane":

The little biplane that has the river-meadow for landing-field  
 And carries passengers brief rides,  
 Buzzed overhead on the tender blue above the orange of sundown.  
 Below it five troubled night-herons  
 Turned short over the shore from its course, four east, one northward. (CP 1: 394)

The biplane's appearance on the scene is intensely disruptive, for the night-herons are not only disturbed, but scatter in different directions. However, rather than rejecting the intrusion of technology, the speaker incorporates it into the landscape:

I don't know why, but lately the forms of things appear to me with time  
 One of their visible dimensions.  
 The thread brightness of the bent moon appeared enormous, unnumbered  
 Ages of years; the night-herons  
 Their natural size, they have croaked over the shore in the hush at sundown  
 Much longer than human language  
 Has fumbled with the air: but the plane having no past but a certain future,  
 Insect in size as in form,  
 Was also accepted, all these forms of power placed without preference  
 In the grave arrangement of the evening. (CP 1: 394)

As Marx notes, technology threatens the pastoral with spatial instability: it allows the city to enter the country. Jeffers typically responds to such technological encroachment with what Kirk Glaser calls "the geologic sublime," an evocation of the terrifying awesomeness of nature which sets human history against a nearly infinite index of geological time and thereby counters the arrogance of humanism (140). In "The Machine," Jeffers assigns a dimension of time to each figure in the poem—moon, night-herons, biplane—and these temporal attributions determine their visual perspective, so that the older the figure, the

larger it appears. After the biplane is thus reduced, it is accepted into the landscape. Jeffers's use of a passive ("Was also accepted") displaces the agency of this acceptance, and seems to attribute it to the landscape itself. But the use of "arrangement" in the final line indicates that the incorporation is in fact a *poetic* act, suggesting the irreducibility of human presence.

This poetic imbrication of technology into the wild landscape acknowledges the implausibility of a "pristine" wilderness. More importantly, it achieves lyrically what Jeffers sought to accomplish personally—a knowledgeable connection to the environment that seeks to minimize resulting degradation. Jeffers himself worked with and learned from the local stonemasons who constructed Tor House, and later quarried and transported the stones with which he built Hawk Tower on his own. But he chose not to incorporate electricity into the design, thus prohibiting infrastructural development and the resulting spoilage; as Robert Brophy notes, Jeffers's poems provide evidence of a habitative, rather than desecrating, mindset with regard to dwelling (7–8). For Jeffers, manual labor authenticates environmental advocacy because of the proximity to nature it demands and achieves. The poems about work seek to express this connection poetically; the figure of the stonemason building a home from locally quarried rock corresponds to the Heideggerian notion of building a dwelling that links one and is linked to the earth, which is the ground of Being. But in "The Machine," Jeffers more or less removes the speaker as a presence from the poem, making language itself the principal agent. By accepting a degree of referentiality (the night-herons, the biplane), language can address the natural world without naiveté, assimilating a landscape altered by human presence (the biplane requiring a runway, the runway requiring access roads, etc.) while still achieving ecological connection.

Such a focus on manual labor as the means of making ecological connection emphasizes process as much as product. Jeffers writes not only about the stable, finished Tor House, but about its construction and its gradual weathering, and he attends to changes in the natural environment as well, writing in "To the Stone-Cutters" that "rock splits, records fall down, / The square-limbed Roman letters / Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain" (*CP* 1: 5). But Jeffers also identifies a perdurance beneath natural change in this poem:

For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave sun  
 Die blind and blacken to the heart:  
 Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained thoughts found  
 The honey of peace in old poems. (*CP* 1: 5)

Some changes to the environment can be accepted, while others are railed against. While it appears that the distinctions fall on either side of a natural/unnatural divide, it is difficult to determine what constitutes these two terms for Jeffers. The distinction does not fall into the simple organic/man-made binary, since the stone-cutters' work is accepted into the natural order, nor does it correspond to a purely anti-technological stance, since Jeffers has included such technologies as aviation in his landscape.

"The Purse-Seine" shows why Jeffers accepts some human-sponsored impacts and rejects others. Jeffers begins by describing sardine fishermen, whose work depends on and attends to natural processes (in this case, being able to follow the shoal's phosphorescent trails) in order to succeed: "Our sardine fishermen work at night in the dark of the moon; daylight or moonlight / They could not tell where to spread the net, unable to see the phosphorescence of the shoals of fish" (*CP* 2: 517). Their work suggests unity and wholeness and even a measure of sublimity that Jeffers typically identifies with the coastal California landscape:

They close the circle  
And purse the bottom of the net, then with great labor haul it in.

I cannot tell you  
How beautiful the scene is, and a little terrible, then, when the crowded fish  
Know they are caught, and wildly beat from one wall to the other of their closing  
destiny the phosphorescent  
Water to a pool of flame, each beautiful slender body sheeted with flame . . .  
(*CP* 2: 517)

Jeffers then compares the movement of the sardines' phosphorescence to the lights of Monterey, observed at a distance from a mountain-top. In the first half of the poem, the speaker focuses on and identifies with the fishermen and the hardy, physical work that situates them in the midst of the ocean. But in the second half, he identifies the city (and himself, by use of the first person plural) with the captured sardines, repeating a line he used to describe the seining: "I cannot tell you how beautiful the city appeared, and a little terrible" (*CP* 2: 517). The fishermen, therefore, prove to be compounds of advanced technology and the interdependence generated by mass population:

I thought, We have geared the machines and locked all together into  
interdependence; we have built the great cities; now  
There is no escape. We have gathered vast populations incapable of free  
survival, insulated

From the strong earth, each person in himself helpless, on all dependent. The  
 circle is closed, and the net  
 Is being hauled in. (CP 2: 518)

The dependence Jeffers rejects deserves analysis here. Such relations with nature as those exemplified by the fishermen or the stone-cutters (and, by association in Jeffers's poems, poets and philosophers) are of a healthy dependence. Reciprocal in nature, they acknowledge and subsume the environmental impacts of traditional labor; according to Leo Marx, this metaphor of reciprocity would situate Jeffers firmly in the pastoral tradition (23), his affirmative ecological regard for laborers and seasonal workers depends on their not being incorporated into a competitive free market economy. By contrast, those relations typified by the city are exchanges ("each person in himself helpless, on all dependent"), and this critique of exchange not only targets the free market system that apportions environmental damage as a cost, but also, as the last lines make clear, the narrative of modern progress itself:

These things are Progress;  
 Do you marvel our verse is troubled or frowning, while it keeps its reason? Or it  
 lets go, lets the mood flow  
 In the manner of the recent young men into mere hysteria, splintered gleams,  
 crackled laughter. But they are quite wrong.  
 There is no reason for amazement: surely one always knew that cultures decay,  
 and life's end is death. (CP 2: 518)

Jeffers's rejection of the unbalanced dependence ensured by modern "progress" pervades even the syntactic patterns of his work. In places Jeffers deploys semicolons and even comma splices to break down the formal connections of conjunctions, as in the opening lines of "The Purse-Seine." Such syntax is crucial for the rhythmic force of Jeffers's lines, for it eliminates the unstressed syllable a conjunction supplies (provided the following syllable isn't an article), thus creating a sprung rhythm that launches the cadence. Jeffers is not only rejecting formal stylistic conventions, but also the social links those conventions articulate. This defamiliarization within a representation of natural settings accords with Heidegger's valorization of the thingliness of a work of art, its irreducible strangeness that presents for contemplation the dwelling it evokes.

Throughout his career, Jeffers seems to distance himself from a participatory role in his lyric poems, assuming the perspective of a detached observer. In the earlier poems, this distancing helped show how language itself could establish ecological connections (as in "The Machine"). But in the poems from the 1930s onwards, the distancing functions not



as an abdication of authority, but as a mask for it. Because the poems about work in a natural setting often identify the speaker with Jeffers himself, they open the possibility of self-interrogation, and therefore offer the most environmentally compelling portrait of immersion in and connection to the natural world.

The valuing of labor perpetuates a myth of self-reliance that risks setting individual experience of the natural world over nature itself. Such poems as “To the Stone-Cutters,” “To the Rock That Will Be a Cornerstone of the House,” and “The Old Stone-Mason,” however else they might be read, praise the experience of work (stonework specifically) at least as much as the landscape from which the stone is drawn. Jeffers projects stoic virtues onto rock itself in such poems as “Rock and Hawk” and “The Beauty of Things.” Even in poems seemingly distant from the subject of stonemasonry, Jeffers deploys the language of the trade; “Shine, Republic,” for instance, urges America to “Be great, *carve deep* your heelmarks” (CP 2:417, emphasis added). At both a representational and a linguistic level, Jeffers’s lyric poems demonstrate his continuing struggle to mitigate the contagion of human presence, even his own.

Because he values wild nature, and any human activity in a natural setting can potentially have negative environmental ramifications, Jeffers often excludes people from his poems, or else excoriates their encroachment. However, his belief that certain types of labor can be environmentally sound and enforce ecological connection belies this exclusion. The conflict is manifest in a paradoxical interplay of staunch ecocentrism and desire for community, as “The Place for No Story” shows:

The coast hills at Sovranes Creek;  
 No trees, but dark scant pasture drawn thin  
 Over rock shaped like flame;  
 The old ocean at the land’s foot, the vast  
 Gray extension beyond the long white violence;  
 A herd of cows and the bull  
 Far distant, hardly apparent up the dark slope;  
 And the gray air haunted with hawks:  
 This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen. No imaginable  
 Human presence here could do anything  
 But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion. (CP 2: 157)

By immediately localizing the coastal setting with a place name, Jeffers affords it an identity. Distinct and individual, the setting resists the generalizing tendency of egocentric, epiphanic verse, and the setting shows a degree of independent activity based on the ambiguous word “hills,” which can function either as a noun (“coastal hills”) or as an intransi-

tive verb (“the coast does hill,” as in the act of rising in hills). In the following eight lines, Jeffers describes the scene in terms of absences (“No trees,” etc.), which might lead to our reading the final lines as a claim that there is no human presence here. However, the place name and the domestic cattle contradict such an assertion, as does the claim of “nobility,” an instance of the pathetic fallacy which, like the very existence of the poem, presupposes human consciousness. At first, the lines “No imaginable / Human presence here could do anything / But dilute” (CP 2: 157) suggest that Jeffers’s vision of nature is a *via negativa*, in which nature can be known by its lack of humans. Yet while the final lines might try to efface human intrusion, the linguistic act itself betrays this goal by transmitting human value; the self of the “self-watchful passion” proves to be Jeffers the poet. In an incisive study of Jeffers and modern ideas of wilderness, George Hart writes that the poem is “a denial of the social construction of the scene,” finding that “Jeffers is . . . left in the position of the wilderness essentialist who cannot admit that the ‘plot’ of land made into wilderness by the absence of human presence is in fact constructed by the wilderness plot” (18). Rather than valuing pure wilderness, concludes Hart, Jeffers’s poetry reverences nature by narrating human interactions with and within it. Yet because the scene so resembles a wilderness in the early negative sense of a place unfit for human habitation, we may also read Jeffers’s attribution of nobility as both a condemnation of anthropocentrism and an ecocentric celebration of an “impractical” ecosystem.

“The Place for No Story” cannot resolve its grounding paradox because ambivalence about human presence is as much a stance for Jeffers as revering and protecting natural environments. Jeffers’s struggle with the projection of human presence and value onto the non-human world is embodied in the figure of Jeffers as ghost, which appears throughout his work. Even in his early poems, Jeffers was looking ahead to the time after human history, as in “To the Stone-Cutters,” where he writes, “For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave sun / Die blind and blacken to the heart: / Yet stones have stood for a thousand years . . .” (CP 1: 5). But in poems from the late 1920s and early 1930s (in *The Women at Point Sur* and *Dear Judas*, particularly), Jeffers not only contemplates his own death, but begins depicting his own ghost. In “Post Mortem,” he writes about how unsatisfied desires will keep a spirit in the world:

[O]ne who has given

His heart to a cause or a country,

His ghost may spaniel it a while, disconsolate to watch it. I was wondering how long the spirit

That sheds this verse will remain  
 When the nostrils are nipped . . . (CP 1: 204)

But by the end of the poem, when he imagines himself as a ghost, it is not clear if the ghost has become integrated into the setting, or if he is cut off from the “country” to which he gave his heart:

Though one at the end of the age and far  
 off from this place  
 Should meet my presence in a poem,  
 The ghost would not care but be here, long sunset shadow in the seams of the  
 granite, and forgotten  
 The flesh, a spirit for the stone. (CP 1: 204)

The divergent readings hinge on the phrase “The ghost would not care but be here,” which appears to be missing an important auxiliary verb. If we read the phrase as “but would be here,” then the last lines read as a dismissal of the efficacy of the written text in favor of experience. But if we read the phrase “for anything but to be here,” then the ghost has failed to integrate with the natural setting, in spite of its desire. Such a reading suggests the failure of what Leonard Scigaj terms *référance*, or the referring of the reader’s perceptions beyond the printed page (38), as well as a wariness about text as entrapment. Moreover, the ghost’s failure to integrate with the setting signals a failure of transcendence or union through nature.

In “Tor House,” Jeffers resolves that divide between linguistic and physical (or geographical) presence. Looking to the distant future, when even the foundations of his home will have worn away, Jeffers claims that the reader will be able to find the original site by means of geographic details: “You will know it by the wild sea-fragrance of wind” (CP 1: 408). Such persistence of landscape in the most intangible manifestation (as fragrance) leads, in the final lines, to a claim about the poet’s own persistence: “My ghost you needn’t look for; it is probably / Here, but a dark one, deep in the granite, not dancing on wind / With the mad wings and the day moon” (CP 1: 408). Whereas “Post Mortem” makes an uncertain claim about the ghost’s connection to the landscape, its accessibility perhaps limited to the printed page and the reader’s mind, here Jeffers’s construction of a coastal dwelling has made him a constituent of the earth itself. The poem, instead of being the unresolved desire for such constitution, facilitates embodiment, because the reader is not only asked to find the headland of Carmel Point, but the weathered site of Tor House. As Heidegger claims in “Poetically Man Dwells,” “poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling” (215); the term refers to events that call attention to the fact of the earth and its habita-

tion by humans. Such events are characterized by a sense of alarm, threat, and endangerment. In "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger writes:

Perhaps this attempt to think about dwelling and building will bring out somewhat more clearly that building belongs to dwelling and how it receives its nature from dwelling. Enough will have been gained if dwelling and building have become *worthy of questioning* and thus have remained *worthy of thought*. (160)

The prior barrier Jeffers noticed has been overcome by a concentration on the capacity of the poem, through its strangeness as linguistic product and process, to recall the strangeness of physical dwelling. He symbolizes this success with the figure of the ghost who haunts the place and has become integrated with the coast.

But Jeffers's evocation of the ghost as a figure for integration results in a paradox, because the ghost also represents an ambivalent response to human presence in nature. Jeffers clearly desires incorporation into the land, but as we have seen, this desire conflicts with his knowledge of the degradation that results from domestic dwelling. As a result, Jeffers idealizes rather than realizes his incorporation, and the idealization he chooses is a ghost who haunts. "Haunting" often registers in Jeffers's poetry as groundedness within an environment, as well as a marker of the sublime. In "The Place for No Story," where "the gray air [is] haunted with hawks," the coastal hills possess a "lonely self-watchful passion" (CP 2: 157) that Jeffers values for its self-possession and resistance to imaginative control. By figuring himself as a means of sublime encounter (a ghost capable of arousing terror and awe), Jeffers links himself to the geologically sublime coastal landscape at Carmel Point, a link first established by his having altered the landscape through his stonemason's labors.

Jeffers's ghost functions as a trace of the Romantic egocentric impulse, a remainder and reminder of that which has been excluded. This trace marks Jeffers's desire to efface human presence from the natural environment, but it underscores a desire for unity with nature, since the self is in fact preserved "deep in the granite." In trying to efface this transcendental impulse, Jeffers historicizes the poems ecocentrically, attending to the material effects of natural processes, which are chaotic, temporal, and not susceptible to imaginative order. In "Tor House," Jeffers ironically muses on the ruin of his all-too-human dwelling. First, he speculates about how long his orchard will last, though he knows that natural disaster and human consumption will inevitably destroy it:

If you should look for this place after a handful of lifetimes:  
 Perhaps of my planted forest a few  
 May stand yet, dark-leaved Australians or the coast cypress, haggard  
 With storm-drift; but fire and the axe are devils.

Then he wonders about how long his stone-built dwelling can survive, and one can sense some hope that the artist will continue on his own creation: "Look for foundations of sea-worn granite, my fingers had the art / To make stone love stone, you will find some remnant." But he knows that even this construction will erode, and that only the land itself, unaltered by man, will endure:

But if you should look in your idleness after ten thousand years:  
 It is the granite knoll on the granite  
 And lava tongue in the midst of the bay, by the mouth of the Carmel  
 River-valley, these four will remain  
 In the change of names. (CP 1: 408)

However, Jeffers's own efforts at effacement turn against him. Much like "The Place for No Story," "Tor House" presumes to eliminate all marks of humanity over time, but its topological identification belies this annihilation, since Jeffers must assert the name of the *Carmel* River-valley to assure us of its continuation. As I noted earlier, many of his poems articulate a geologic sublime that sets human history against earth time, initially aiming to reduce the ego in the face of natural processes, but ultimately evoking an effectively atemporal infinity that obscures or avoids historical changes taking place in the environment. Jeffers's geologic sublime risks a dangerous nihilism, since the inevitable future reclamation of wildness might license detrimental environmental practices in the present. But Jeffers's motives for evoking the geologic sublime are related to his experience of the economic and environmental history of Monterey from 1914 to the 1950s, which saw a boom-to-bust cycle in the sardine industry that all but eradicated its fishery (McEvoy 50–54); therefore, such an outcome is drastically at odds with his underlying environmental ethics, and his language resists the impulse to purge the landscape of the human presence on which the preservation of the land depends.

The ghost of Robinson Jeffers in "Tor House" and other poems embodies a linguistic and philosophical paradox at odds with an ecological ideology that would deny or greatly minimize human contact with the wild. Jeffers's ghost proves the ineradicable trace of the human need to engage with nature, and his effort to achieve resolution in this poem and others indicates a desire for transcendence at odds with the chaotic materialism embodied by the Carmel Coast that Jeffers had

hoped, in "The Purse-Seine," would counter modern "progress." Yet Jeffers's poetry remains a vital expression of an ecological, if not ecocentric, sensibility, for while his poetry foregrounds the inevitable separation of humankind from nature, a separation evident even at the level of linguistic expression, it nevertheless asserts that healthful relations between humans and their natural environment might be possible in spite of or even because of our acknowledgment of the limits and mediating effects of language and our unavoidable place in nature.

#### WORKS CITED

- Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Imagination*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Brophy, Robert. "The Ecology of a Dwelling: A Note on Habitation vs. Desecration in the Building of Tor House." *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* 91 (1994): 7-8.
- Elder, John. *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1985.
- Glaser, Kirk. "Desire, Death, and Domesticity in Jeffers's Pastorals of Apocalypse." *Robinson Jeffers: Dimensions of a Poet*. Ed. Robert Brophy. NY: Fordham UP, 1995. 137-76.
- Hart, George. "Wilderness Plots: Jeffers and the 'Social Construction of Nature.'" *Jeffers Studies* 5.1 (2001): 12-19.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York: Perennial-Harper and Row, 1971.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988-2001.
- Kroeber, Karl. *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.
- Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000.
- McEvoy, Arthur F. *The Fisherman's Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- McKusick, James. *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology*. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.
- Scigaj, Leonard. *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Eco-poets*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1999.



ROBERT ZALLER

## JEFFERS'S ISOLATIONISM

The subject of Jeffers's isolationism—more broadly, his rejection of American empire, but, specifically, his opposition to America's participation in World War II—has been a vexed question even for his admirers, while for detractors it has provided a final excuse to dismiss him. Formerly sympathetic critics turned on him as well, perhaps most memorably Selden Rodman, who pictured Jeffers adding “more than his quota of hatred and violence to the hatred and violence abroad in the world, while he sits in the properly inhuman stone tower of his waiting exultantly for the Bomb.”<sup>1</sup> Leaving aside that very strange reading of the description of nuclear holocaust in “The Double Axe”—and Jeffers was in fact the first American poet to treat this subject—it might strike us as odd that a professed isolationist should be taxed with increasing the world's violence. When we note, too, that some in the literary establishment who condemned Jeffers's views and even accused him of fascist leanings were simultaneously working to secure the Bollingen Prize for Ezra Pound, the case becomes still more curious.

These are all good reasons for considering the case of Jeffers's isolationism, and why, almost alone among serious figures in the literary and intellectual world, he extended it into the postwar era. Had he parked his sentiments at the door after Pearl Harbor, as most others who opposed the war did, they would most likely have faded from view. What made them notorious was that he expressed them all the more vociferously when their day had seemingly passed, and a triumphalist mood prevailed.

There are two things to be observed about Jeffers's isolationism, preliminarily: first, that it grew out of the anti-imperialism he had expressed two decades earlier in “Shine, Perishing Republic” and other poems; and secondly, that isolationism was in fact the majority sentiment in the United States throughout the 1930s. Let us consider these questions in turn.



Jeffers had been obsessed by the Great War even as it proceeded, attempted to grapple with it in a mighty poetic torso, "The Alpine Christ," and tried, vainly, to enlist in the American Expeditionary Forces (Karman 38–40; Zaller 49–50). Afterwards, he joined in the general public disillusionment with the war. He also came to see the conflict as a turning-point in American history. It seemed to him that, with it, America had taken a fatal and irreversible step toward empire, the traditional road of disaster for great republics. This was the burden of "Shine, Perishing Republic," a poem written in 1923 or before (*CP* 5: 61):

While this America settles in the mould of its vulgarity, heavily thickening to empire,  
And protest, only a bubble in the molten mass, pops and sighs out, and the mass hardens,

I sadly smiling remember that the flower fades to make fruit, the fruit rots to make earth. (*CP* 1: 15)

There is no specific reference to the war in this passage, or, indeed, elsewhere in the poem. If we read it in conjunction with the elegy "Woodrow Wilson" (1924), however, the context becomes clear. Here, an unnamed interlocutor addresses Wilson, whose hopes for a new international order had of course been dashed at Versailles: "Victory you know requires / Force to sustain victory, the burden is never lightened, but final defeat / Buys peace: you have praised peace, peace without victory" (*CP* 1: 106). The speaker ironically notes that America's victory cannot stop or reverse historical process—Wilson's dream of "peace"—but only extends the regime of force, and enmeshes America in it. Wilson realizes that his best instincts were a delusion, perhaps imposed on him as fatality is imposed on all tragic actors by an unseen and uncomprehended force—the interlocutor calls it "the God of the stars" (*CP* 1: 107). Whatever the case, however, the results are apparent in "Shine, Perishing Republic." Empire, once a choice, has now become a destiny.<sup>2</sup>

Jeffers would alternate between perceiving America's course as settled—"The mountain ahead of the world is not forming but fixed," he would say in "Meditation on Saviors" (*CP* 1: 399)—and attempting to sound a prophetic alarm. These attitudes were not inconsistent; the duty of prophecy remained, whatever its efficacy. And—importantly—Jeffers was not alone. The mounting European crisis of the 1930s was perceived by many as a result of the Great War, and that in turn as a clash of empires. Similarly, the failure of parliamentary regimes in states

where they had emerged or been imposed after the war—none remained by 1939—was also seen as a consequence of specifically European conditions. America had met the challenge of the Great Depression without abandoning its constitutional form of government; other states, where the roots of democracy were shallow, had not. If Wilson's "world made safe for democracy" had failed the first time, at the greatest cost in American blood and treasure since the Civil War, it would certainly fail a second and much less propitious attempt.

This was a consensus view, broadly shared across the political spectrum. Even the fact that fascist states were not merely authoritarian but expansionist did not shake it. The mainstream *Christian Century* editorialized in 1935 that "Ninety-nine Americans out of a hundred would today regard as an imbecile anyone who might suggest that, in the event of another European war, the United States should again participate in it." This claim was supported by an American Institute of Public Opinion poll conducted in 1936 that placed anti-interventionist sentiment at 95% (Jonas 1). That sentiment, in turn, was reflected in the Neutrality Acts passed by Congress in 1935, 1936, and 1937, which forbade providing military assistance to belligerents.

As time went on and war came closer, interventionism did not become more popular, but it did come to seem more inevitable. At the same time, isolationism became more problematic. Should aggressor states be embargoed? Should lend-lease aid be provided to former allies, short of war? Could American democracy ultimately be protected if, in going it alone, America found itself alone? These questions divided the public. The case of the Spanish Civil War, and the promotion of popular front movements by Stalin, might have suggested that isolationism would lose whatever appeal it might have had for the American left, and become increasingly the province of the right. Such was not necessarily the case, however. Although a commission secretly empanelled by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1939 concluded that a fascist victory in Europe might cut American trade by a third, the liberal labor economist Stuart Chase could still write at the end of 1940 that America possessed "a workable pattern for community survival and well-being" regardless of any development overseas. At the same time, Oswald Garrison Villard, the former publisher of *The Nation*, was writing privately to Jeanette Rankin that war would mean "the destruction of everything we hold dear in American life and the loss of all our great gains under Roosevelt" (qtd. in Jonas). More broadly, the liberal editor Alfred M. Bingham questioned whether an unreconstructed capitalism could in any case defend itself against fascism. "Capitalist democracy," he wrote, "cannot be made the bulwark against Fascism. The only positive alternative to Fascism is a social democracy." The socialist paladin Norman Thomas,

too, was staunchly isolationist, and in writing to Roosevelt directly, he echoed Jeffers's sentiment in "Woodrow Wilson": in war, he told the President, "War itself is the only victor."<sup>3</sup>

Jeffers, then, was in good company in opposing the drift to war, and there was very little in his poetry of the 1930s and early 1940s that would have put him at odds with mainstream opinion on the subject. The first of his poems to engage the subject was "Rearmament," originally published in *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* and written about 1935:

These grand and fatal movements toward death: the grandeur of the mass  
 Makes pity a fool, the tearing pity  
 For the atoms of the mass, the persons, the victims, makes it seem monstrous  
 To admire the tragic beauty they build.  
 .....  
 I would burn my right hand in a slow fire  
 To change the future . . . I should do foolishly. The beauty of modern  
 Man is not in the persons but in the  
 Disastrous rhythm, the heavy and mobile masses, the dance of the  
 Dream-led masses down the dark mountain. (CP 2: 515)

There is nothing in this poem except the title that would necessarily signify a specific political climate or event; it might otherwise be read as a continuation of the prophetic style of address begun in "Woodrow Wilson" and "Shine, Perishing Republic," and continued in "Meditation on Saviors" and "The Broken Balance" (CP 1: 372-76). The title indeed fixes the poem, but seems only loosely associated with it; the "grand and fatal movements toward death" suggest a far wider order of things than Hitler's decision to reject the limits imposed on the German military by the Versailles Treaty. This is Jeffers in high prophetic mode, looking beyond the new world war only beginning to stir to the wars it would breed in turn, and to their as-yet unbegotten victims, the "Sad sons of the stormy fall" as Jeffers would call them in "Flight of Swans" (CP 2: 419).

From the first, then, Jeffers assumed that a new war and the wars it would generate were inevitable. In "Going to Horse Flats," a poem of the late 1930s, he restated the earlier injunction of "Meditation on Saviors": "It is certain the world cannot be stopped nor saved." "Going to Horse Flats" is, like "Woodrow Wilson," constructed as a dialogue in which the poet represents his own divided consciousness through personae. In the case of "Going to Horse Flats," the interlocutors are the poem's speaker and the elderly hermit he encounters along his way. The hermit begs the speaker to read a cast-off newspaper for him whose print he can no longer decipher, and is obliged with a dispatch from the front

lines of the civil war in Spain, widely understood of course as a dress rehearsal for the impending war between Hitler and Stalin. Let us examine the full context of the line just quoted. The poem's speaker asks:

Why did he want the news of the  
 world? He could do nothing  
 To help nor hinder. Nor you nor I can . . . for the world. It is certain the world  
 cannot be stopped nor saved.  
 It has changes to accomplish and must creep through agonies toward new  
 discovery. It must, and it ought: the awful necessity  
 Is also the sacrificial duty. Man's world is a tragic music and is not played for  
 man's happiness,  
 Its discords are not resolved but by other discords. (*CP* 2: 542-43)

Jeffers concludes by saying that man's only "salvation" lies in turning "from himself and man to love God." The hermit has turned from man only to be left with himself, and so to brood all the more deeply upon man, the fate that also befalls the hermit-heroes of "An Artist" and "A Redeemer" (*CP* 1: 390-92; 405-07). Jeffers does not suggest that loving God—a God who by his very indifference to humanity represents the only alternative to the hermit's anguished immersion in human suffering—will free one from fellow-feeling or social responsibility. "Pity," he says, can make such an individual "weep still, / Or pain convulse him"; but, he adds, "not to the center."

This was the balance Jeffers strove for in himself, but was compelled to admit he could not always find or securely hold. As preparations for war advanced, he observed grimly in "Hellenistics" that "Europe mixes her cups of death" (*CP* 2: 527). In "Contemplation of the Sword," noting with a shudder that his own sons were "now of the age / That war prefers," he confessed that he was "finding it hard / To praise [God] with a whole heart" (*CP* 2: 544-45). At the same time, not without irony, he noted his own increasing preoccupation with the news, indeed the most up-to-the-minute bulletin: "Night comes," he writes in "Watch the Lights Fade": "come into the house, / Try around the dial for a late news-cast" (*CP* 3: 10).

What Jeffers sought, and repeatedly berated himself for not being able to achieve, was a posture of calm in the gathering storm. This was what he meant in "The Great Sunset" by saying, "To be truth-bound, the neutral / Detested by all the dreaming factions, is my errand here" (*CP* 2: 535). The suggestion offered is that he is alone in his perception of reality, an idea stated even more directly in "Thebaid": "I the last living man / That sees the real earth and skies, / Actual life and real death" (*CP* 2: 533). As we have observed, Jeffers was so far from being alone in his isolationism that his views were in fact those of the major-

ity of Americans.<sup>4</sup> Nor was he genuinely neutral; he averred that he would “fight [fascism] in this country” if it came (*SL* 267),<sup>5</sup> and when the European war broke out, he spoke in praise of “England’s great fight” (“I Shall Laugh Purely,” *CP* 3: 30). In this he was not alone either, of course, for isolationism did not mean indifference or lack of preference, and isolationists came in all packages—pro-German, pro-Allied, pro-Soviet; what united them was only the common ground of rejecting American military intervention.

How, then, shall we take Jeffers’s self-presentation as the “only” neutral, “Detested by all the dreaming factions”? I think we must consider once again the prophetic mode in which he chose increasingly to address his readers. Jeffers foresees in “The Great Sunset” that the coming war will draw everyone in, which is to say that everyone will sooner or later buy the illusion that engagement is indispensable and that victory for one’s chosen side will somehow yield a result preferable to victory for the other side. Let it be emphasized again that Jeffers did not mean that there was no distinction between the Allied and the fascist side, nor an absence of reason for preferring the political and social arrangements of one to the other. What he was saying was that war would produce only losers, and that war itself would be the only beneficiary. This was the “truth” that “bound” Jeffers, but to which he believed that few if any could ultimately cleave. When war was a remote prospect, isolationism was an easy, reflexive response; as it grew closer, more would choose sides; when it came in earnest, all would rationalize their choice. Only one isolationist would assuredly remain—not necessarily one unengaged, but one undeceived. In “The Great Sunset,” Jeffers served notice that that man would be himself.

Jeffers was not a pacifist; he certainly believed in individual and collective self-defense.<sup>6</sup> Nor was his view of war as such purely negative. Violence was the world’s law, endemic in man, the spur of evolution, the condition of natural process: the “sire,” as he put it in “The Bloody Sire,” “of all the world’s values” (*CP* 3: 25).<sup>7</sup> In an age of decline, however, such as Jeffers believed the West to have entered (“Prescription of Painful Ends,” *CP* 3: 14), war could only speed up degenerative processes. This was fatal, unavoidable—his isolationism was predicated on it—but to perceive this, clearly and steadfastly, was precisely to understand why it was necessary to stand as far as possible above the fray.

Jeffers sought to explain this in his 1941 Library of Congress lecture, “The Poet in a Democracy” (*CP* 4: 399–406). The most precious of human values, he asserted, was freedom, and the form of government most congenial to it was democracy. America had inherited both from Europe, and its role in the coming years would be to preserve them in a dark time:

Europe will be physically and morally exhausted after this second world war; and perhaps it will be our final destiny to carry the heritage of European culture, and what we have added to it, across a time of twilight to a new age; as Byzantium carried the culture of Greece and Rome across the dark centuries, from that age to this one. Therefore we must guard what we have, for it is precious; and if we feel ourselves forced to intervene in foreign conflicts, we must consult the interests of our own people first; and our generosity second,—we have always been generous; and ideology last. But sentimentality, never. We can still afford the material risks of sentimentality, but not the disillusion that follows it. (CP 4: 401–02)

Jeffers delivered this lecture in February 1941, with Pearl Harbor less than a year away. His rhetorical presumption is that America will avoid the second World War, at least as its scope then appeared, but that it will have future wars to contend with, not all of which it will necessarily be able to avoid. In making its choices, it should consider its prudential interest first. With some reluctance, Jeffers conceded that “generosity” (a national weakness) and “ideology” (a further delusional temptation) would probably play some role in these choices. Jeffers does not define “sentimentality,” but I think we can parse it out. Generosity and ideology do not preclude prudential interest, and might even be a convenient veil for it; but sentimentality is detached from it, an indulgence in irresponsibility. That, he suggests, is fatal.

Sentimentality, played on by a loved but conniving leader, was just what Jeffers feared for the immediate future. Pearl Harbor bore out these fears. What had been a tragedy for Europe would now be a calamity for America. In “Pearl Harbor,” Jeffers considered what the implications of the war would be for a young polity whose constitution was, in effect, its culture: “America has neither race nor religion nor its own language: nation or nothing.” There was no doubt in his mind that America would prevail militarily—“my money on amazed Gulliver / And his horse-pistols,” he said<sup>8</sup>—but the price would be incalculably high. With the responsibility of empire thrust upon it, America would remain culturally stunted, its worst characteristics brought to the fore and its one redeeming quality—its democratic ethos—lost in the burden of ruling others. There was no help for it, though; defeat was not a preferable alternative. The inconsolable prophet would now play the patriot: “As for me,” he wrote, “what can I do but fly the national flag from the top of the tower[?]” (CP 3: 115–16).<sup>9</sup>

Jeffers could do little during the war years but brood at his desk. The work he wrote remained in the drawer, perhaps by deliberate decision. When *The Double Axe and Other Poems* appeared in 1948, ten poems from the originally submitted manuscript were excised, apparently at Jeffers’s own initiative although certainly after in-house editorial con-

sternation at Random House, and the book came, notoriously, with a publisher's disclaimer.<sup>10</sup> The flag above Tor House, however ambiguous its signification, was a reality, too; Jeffers had a son, Garth, in the European Theater. Isolationism was a dead cause politically, and anti-war poems, even had they found a publisher, would have been unseemly. Silence was the only option—a silence that deepened Jeffers's penchant for self-dialogue, but gave it a far sharper edge.<sup>11</sup>

The war brought Woodrow Wilson back to mind, and in "Wilson in Hell" the disillusioned idealist is represented as bitterly confronting Roosevelt: "You have too much murder on your hands. I will not / Speak of the lies and connivings" (CP 3: 117). When one recalls that Jeffers titled a late poem "To Kill in War Is Not Murder" (CP 3: 463), it is clear that he regarded the newly declared war as not only unnecessary but fundamentally illegitimate, "provoked" as he put it in "Pearl Harbor." "Wilson in Hell" was one of the so-called suppressed poems in the *Double Axe* manuscript, and it is all the more shocking to reflect that it represents Roosevelt as dead at a time—1942—when he was actually leading the country and directing the war.<sup>12</sup> (To "compass" the sovereign's death by speech or writing was, in English medieval law, a treason punishable by death.<sup>13</sup>) This was not incompatible with wishing for victory, at the least as a cessation of arms, and Jeffers contrasted his own principled but patriotic opposition to the war with that of the pro-fascist Pound, whose treason trial he regarded as an absurdity: "I have a bat in my tower / That knows more about treason, and about her country" ("War-Guilt Trials," CP 3: 202).

For the rest, he followed the war's progress with a combination of anguish and disgust. In "Ink-Sack," he likened the ubiquitous wartime propaganda to "floods of excrement" (CP 3: 126), a price too high to pay for victory. These lies compounded the ones by which the country had been "tricked" into war to begin with, and were a daily reminder of them (cf. "An Ordinary News-Caster," CP 3: 127). At other times, he tried to distance himself in the manner of "The Bloody Sire" by seeing the war as a grand natural phenomenon: "admire the vast battle. Observe and marvel. Give it the emotion / That you give to a landscape" ("Invasion," CP 3: 132). The squalor and the horror too often obtruded, however, and the sense that prophecy was futile: "It is a foolish business to see the future and screech at it" ("So Many Blood-Lakes," CP 3: 133). The prophet deserved derision—"laugh at me. I agree with you"—Jeffers said (CP 3: 133); at the same time, he could not escape responsibility and guilt for the failure of his message. In "The Blood-Guilt," another internal dialogue, he bitterly judged himself:

If you had not been beaten

beforehand, hopelessly fatalist,  
 You might have spoken louder and perhaps been heard, and prevented  
 something.

*I? Have you never heard  
 That who'd lead must not see?*

You saw it, you despaired of preventing it, you  
 share the blood-guilt.

Yes. (CP 3: 128)

In this responsory, Jeffers draws the line again between prophetic speech and efficacious action first laid down in "Meditation on Saviors." The prophet could see the futility and consequence of war, but not prevent it; the leader could bring the war about, but not avoid it. The prophet told the truth in vain; the leader told lies, also in vain. They shared the "blood-guilt." Wilson might find himself in "hell" with Roosevelt; but so did Robinson Jeffers.

At the end of the war, Jeffers stubbornly praised those few nations that had stood aloof from it—"free Ireland, horse-breeding, swan-haunted, / And high Switzerland, armed home of pure snows, and Sweden, / High in the north, in the twice-hostile sea"; these, he said, held all that was left of "the honor of Europe" (CP 3: 136). Jeffers had his own debt of honor to pay, which was to publish the poems—all "suppressed" for the duration—in which he had chronicled his own response to the war, and predicted its likely aftermath. To these were added the two halves of the title poem of his new volume, the first of which, "The Love and the Hate," is still the bitterest antiwar poem ever written by an American, and the second, "The Inhumanist," a prophecy of nuclear holocaust to come. Even though Jeffers, probably gauging the limits of what he could get into print, deleted as we have seen ten of the most provocative poems from the manuscript, he knew that the publication of *The Double Axe* would indeed fulfill the prophecy he had made while still part of a majority: "To be truth-bound, the neutral / Detested by all the dreaming factions, is my errand here."

With *The Double Axe*, Jeffers might feel he had, indeed, paid his "birth-dues" (CP 1: 371), but, looking back a few years later on the decade and a half of poetic energy consumed by the war, he summarized its hard lessons for a last time:

The best is, in war or faction or ordinary vindictive life, not to take sides.  
 Leave it for children, and the emotional rabble of the streets, to back their  
 horse or support a brawler.



But if you are forced into it: remember that good and evil are as common as air,  
and like air shared  
By the panting belligerents; the moral indignation that hoarsens orators is  
mostly a fool.

Hold your nose and compromise; keep a cold mind. Fight if needs must; hate  
no one. Do as God does,  
Or the tragic poets: they crush their man without hating him, their Lear or  
Hitler, and often save without love.

As for these quarrels, they are like the moon, recurrent and fantastic. They  
have their beauty but night's is better.  
It is better to be silent than make a noise. It is better to strike dead than strike  
often. It is better not to strike. ("Time of Disturbance," *CP* 3: 365)<sup>14</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. *Saturday Review of Literature*, July 31, 1948, quoted in Vardamis 113.

2. Russell Baker gives a sense of the continuing popular debate over Wilson's career, a debate that extended well into the 1930s: "One of my childhood memories, from Depression days, is of lying in bed at the edge of sleep and hearing the murmur of people, grown-ups, talking, talking, talking into the night. . . . They must have joked because there was a lot of quiet laughter, but they talked about serious matters too. Woodrow Wilson was discussed a lot. They wondered whether Wilson had been 'an idealist.' Was that why he has failed? And had he been gulled by the English, and hadn't the United States been tricked into pulling Europe's chestnuts out of the fire?" ("Talking It Up," *The New York Review of Books*, May 11, 2006, qtd. in Jacoby 268–69.)

3. Jacoby 83, 81, 267. For a general view of isolationist sentiment in the first half of the twentieth century, see Powaski. Isolationism had a natural home in the United States Senate, where the Versailles Treaty, and with it the League of Nations, had been rejected; see Guinsberg. The distinguished historian Charles A. Beard launched a bitter critique of Roosevelt's conduct in the run-up to Pearl Harbor in *President Roosevelt and the Coming of War, 1941*; for a general account of Roosevelt's foreign policy, see Dallek. More narrowly focused on the pre-war period is Basil Rauch's *Roosevelt from Munich*. Isolationism had a residual career in the Senate after World War II, but its influence waned as Americans accepted postwar responsibility for the stability of the international system, or, as Jeffers put it in "Historical Choice," "the corrupting burden and curse of victory" (*CP* 3: 122). For a general analysis, see Foster.

4. Jeffers himself was a member of the anti-interventionist America First Committee, an organization 800,000 strong that included some of the country's most prominent writers and intellectuals, including E. E. Cummings and Sinclair Lewis. The Committee dissolved itself on December 11, 1941, four days after Pearl Harbor. The most complete study of its activities is Kauffman. Norman Thomas was a sympathizer although not a member, and the young John F. Kennedy sent it

a contribution. Gore Vidal, who wrote the preface to Kauffman's book, joined the Committee as a fifteen-year-old student at Phillips Exeter Academy. I owe this reference to Peter Quigley.

5. Jeffers was writing in response to an inquiry from the League of American Writers on responses and attitudes toward the Spanish Civil War.

6. See the address to the "future children" in "Hellenistics": "you will guard your own heads, you will have proud eyes. / You will stand among the spears when you meet; life will be lovely and terrible again, great and in earnest" (CP 2: 528). For Jeffers, self-defense was humanly normative, and indeed the best preventative for mass violence: "I will have no lawyers nor constables: / Each man guard his own goods: there will be man-slaughter, / But no more wars, no more mass-sacrifice" ("What's the best life for a man?" CP 3: 424).

7. See Jeffers's comment on this poem: "The war came [to Europe]; here is a poem that tried to meet it with a kind of desperate optimism." That war was the sire of new "values," he added, was something "I believe . . . faithfully, but it will be a long time"—i.e., a time of barbarism and decline—"before the new values can be realized." This is a tragic appreciation of the role of war in the culture cycle, but hardly, as a superficial reading of the poem might suggest, a valorization of it. ("Themes in My Poems," CP 4: 407–16, at 409.)

8. See Jeffers's comment at the war's end in 1945: "I have abhorred the wars and despised the liars, laughed at the frightened / And forecast victory; never one moment's doubt" ("We Are Those People," CP 3: 201).

9. Jeffers did not mean this only symbolically; he did fly a flag from Hawk Tower for the duration (SL 298).

10. James Shebl, who first published the deleted poems, claimed that Random House was responsible for their omission, but the evidence does not support this, as Scott noted (12–13). On the textual issues of the manuscript, see Hunt and CP 5: 690–801. Liveright republished *The Double Axe* in 1977 with what it described as "eleven suppressed poems" as well as both versions of Jeffers's own preface to the volume (the eleventh poem being "Tragedy Has Obligations," which was not included in the original manuscript). The editors, William Everson and Bill Hotchkiss, describe the deletion of ten poems as having been "apparently at the urging (insistence?) of the editors" at Random House (Jeffers, *The Double Axe* 153–54). But neither Saxe Commins nor Bennett Cerf, who commented on the poems at Random House and questioned a number of individual passages, actually called for the removal of any poem in its entirety. Whether Jeffers would have deleted the poems in the absence of the publisher's response cannot be established with any certainty, but the decisions appear to have been his. (Commins, in an internal memorandum, characterized Jeffers as "an out-and-out champion of isolationism," apparently as damning a characterization as he could make [CP 5: 691].) A full study of this episode still awaits.

11. There were prudential as well as personal reasons for Jeffers to have kept his silence. Isolationist sentiment was monitored during the war; see Charles.

12. Cf. "Fantasy" (dated June, 1941) in which Jeffers imagines the "great day" on which "the boys will hang / Hitler and Roosevelt in one tree, / Painlessly, in effigy, / To take their rank in history" (CP 3: 109). One wonders whether there might not have been a brief pause in Jeffers's mind between the first two lines of this

passage and the next two. "Painlessly" was an insertion in the manuscript. The figure of Guy Fawkes, who attempted to blow up the houses of England's Parliament in 1605 and was traditionally hung in effigy on Guy Fawkes Day (November 5), appears in the poem, and Tim Hunt notes a rejected title for the poem was "Gunpowder Plotters," the name popularly given to Fawkes and his fellow conspirators (CP 5: 690). If we take that thought a little further, Jeffers is suggesting that Roosevelt's policies were directly subverting American democracy (and that Roosevelt's own "fantasy" might well have been to rid himself of isolationist opposition in the Senate). The German Reichstag was, of course, destroyed by fire in February 1933, a month after Hitler assumed power, and it was later dissolved by him after surrendering its powers.

13. The relevant statute for this crime is 25 Edw. III st. 5, c. 2 (1352).

14. This poem appears to have been the earliest of the group of seven published in *Poetry* (January, 1951), and later as part of *Hungerfield*. It also marks the last of Jeffers's many references to Hitler, which include the poems specifically devoted to him, "The Day Is a Poem" (1939), "The Bowl of Blood" (1940), and "Tragedy Has Obligations" (1943). It is clear that Jeffers regarded him as a tragic if ruinous figure, even after the disclosure of the death camps and the testimony at Nuremberg (Jeffers takes due note of the former in "The King of Beasts" [CP 3: 138], linking them to the Russian gulags, and his manuscripts contain notations for "Belsen" and "Buchenwald"). As Hunt notes, at one point Jeffers substituted "Oedipus" for "Hitler" as a mate to Lear on the manuscript of "Time of Disturbance," but he restored the original (CP 5: 118, 813). Whether Jeffers's views evolved further we do not know, but it should be borne in mind that the concept of the Holocaust as a distinct and unique historical event developed only slowly in the first two decades after the war, and that, for Jeffers, particular atrocities took their place in the general, subsuming atrocity of the war itself.

#### WORKS CITED

- Beard, Charles A. *President Roosevelt and the Coming of War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1948.
- Charles, Douglas M. J. *Edgar Hoover and the Anti-Interventionists: FBI Political Surveillance and the Rise of the Domestic Security State*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2007.
- Dallek, Robert. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.
- Foster, H. Schuyler. *Activism Replaces Isolationism: U.S. Public Attitudes, 1940-1975*. Washington, DC: Foxhall P, 1983.
- Guinsberg, Thomas N. *The Pursuit of Isolationism in the U.S. Senate from Versailles to Pearl Harbor*. New York: Garland, 1982.
- Hunt, Tim. "Double the Axe, Double the Fun: Is There a Final Version of Jeffers' 'The Double Axe.'" *TEXT* 7 (1995): 435-57.
- Jacoby, Susan. *The Age of American Unreason*. New York: Pantheon, 2008.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988-2001.

- . *The Double Axe and Other Poems*. New York: Liveright, 1977.
- . *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, 1897–1962*. Ed. Ann N. Ridgeway. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1968.
- Jonas, Manfred. *Isolationism in America, 1935–1941*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1969.
- Karman, James. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*. Rev. ed. Brownsville: Story Line P, 1995.
- Kauffman, Bill. *America First! Its History, Culture, and Politics*. Amherst: Prometheus, 1995.
- Powaski, Donald E. *Toward an Entangling Alliance: Isolationism and Interventionism in Europe, 1901–1950*. New York: Greenwood P, 1991.
- Rauch, Basil. *Roosevelt from Munich: The Creation of a Foreign Policy*. 1967. Rpt. New York: Da Capo, 1975.
- Scott, Robert Ian, ed. "What Odd Expedients" and Other Poems by Robinson Jeffers. Hamden: Archon, 1981.
- Shebl, James. *In This Wild Water: The Suppressed Poems of Robinson Jeffers*. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie P, 1977.
- Vardamis, Alex A. *The Critical Reputation of Robinson Jeffers: A Bibliographical Study*. Hamden: Archon, 1972.
- Zaller, Robert. *The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.



SPECIAL SECTION OF  
EARLY AND UNPUBLISHED WORK



ROBERT KAFKA

*THE COLLECTED EARLY VERSE  
OF ROBINSON JEFFERS:*  
A SUPPLEMENT

When *The Collected Early Verse of Robinson Jeffers, 1903–April 1914* was published in 1997 as a special issue of *Jeffers Studies* (Vol. 1, No. 3), it was the editor's intention that the collection contain all of the surviving verses from the period except those collected by Jeffers himself in *Flagons and Apples* (1912) and *Californians* (1916), which were otherwise available (albeit in expensive reprint editions), and are now included in volume 4 of Tim Hunt's edition of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. As the purpose of the collection was to chronicle the development of Jeffers's poetic talent during that period, no selection was attempted. Both the promising and admirable, as well as the immature or execrable, were included—and there are numerous representatives of the entire spectrum. The timing seemed appropriate; the editor had searched over a period of twenty-five years, in archives, newspapers, magazines, and college publications, and it was thought unlikely that any further examples of Jeffers's juvenilia would turn up. (*Juvenilia* is a term that seems *a propos* in view of the quality of his later output, despite the fact that Jeffers was twenty-seven when the last of these verses was written.)

But in the few years following the publication of *The Collected Early Verse*, eight additional poems have happily surfaced from three different sources, and some of them are of uncommon interest. All are brought forth here with the expectation, though not the hope, that they will complete the folio of juvenilia. Four appear for the first time since their original publication one hundred years ago; the other four were unpublished by Jeffers.

The discovery of the four published poems had to await the digitizing of the historical backfile of *The Los Angeles Times*. This project was completed a few years ago by ProQuest, a reinvention of the former Bell & Howell corporation. Access to the historical files of *The Los Angeles*



*Times* and other newspapers is granted to associates of institutional subscribers and includes a search function, which revealed these verses.

The discovery of the unpublished verses was more fortuitous. Three of them come from an uncatalogued collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin. In the mid-1990s, Lee Jeffers, the poet's daughter-in-law, was given a box of materials from Deedee Busch, Melba Bennett's daughter, which was eventually acquired by the University of Texas to augment its already rich collection of Jeffers manuscripts and Jeffersiana. This accession includes, among many other items, letters to Mrs. Bennett from relations of the Jeffers family concerning her biography, and a few letters and a document that would have been appropriately included in the collection of love letters of Robinson and Una published in 1987, *Where Shall I Take You To*—now included, along with "Catiline," below, in the superseding first volume of the *Collected Letters* edited by James Karman for Stanford University Press.

The circumstances that revealed the last unpublished poem, on the death of Swinburne on April 10, 1909, are explained in the notes following the text of the poems.

"Swinburne" and the poems from the Melba Bennett accession at the University of Texas, with the exception of "Catiline," appear with the permission of Jeffers Literary Properties. "Catiline" is reprinted from *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers*, ed. James Karman, copyright © 2009 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University. All rights reserved. Used with permission of Stanford University Press, <[www.sup.org](http://www.sup.org)>.

### The Rastoropny

Silent, where darkling headlands loom,  
    Silent across the bay,  
With lean long hull that sought the gloom,  
    We sped her on her way:  
Silent, and dared the lurking doom  
    That hungered for a prey.

Vainly with sudden shafts of flame  
    Their eager searchlights shift,  
Questioning, for e'en now we came  
    As blown fog-eddies drift,  
And dared the guns that wait to aim  
    If but the storm should lift.

Then out along the open sea  
    Like a lean hound she sped:  
We heard the hoarse waves furiously  
    Hammer her plates ahead,  
And heard the hissing storm blown free  
    Against her as we fled.

We gained the port when dawn was low,  
    And met the rising sun:  
We moored her there and sunk her, so  
    To rest, her duty done:  
She should not run to serve our foe  
    As she for us had run.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

*The Los Angeles Daily Times*, November 22, 1904, p. A1.

### Vacation Time

Arise, it is time to be away. Forget  
The unresting toil that irks you, and the fret.  
God's glad outdoors is calling; do not stay  
When Nature beckons; up and come away.

Have you forgotten how the mountains seem  
When dawn glows slowly upward like a dream  
Over their summits? Do you not remember  
The comfortable campfire's ruddy ember,  
The whispering pine-trees and their sleeping song,  
The quiet stars that watch you all night long?  
The winding, windy trail, the mountains tall  
With their mysterious canons, and the fall  
Of water bright—can you not hear them call?  
Would not the sea be cool for you today?

The kindly, turbulent ocean with its spray,  
Curled waves, and then smooth swells to please a swimmer—  
Can you not see the ripples beck and glimmer?

Forget the irksome toil, the fretting labor.  
Come live awhile with Nature for your neighbor.  
She makes a pleasant neighbor for a man,  
A goodly neighbor, if one only can  
Humor her right, and get in her good graces,  
And walk with her in distant, quiet places,  
Afar from business talk and city faces.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

*The Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1905, sec. II, p. 4.

### The End of Vacation

From cool seashore and mountain side,  
    From lake and wooded glen,  
The children of the summertide  
    Draw cityward again.

Sunburnt they come, and free from care,  
    From sea and hills and plains,  
Within their lungs the outdoor air,  
    Fresh life within their veins.

And yonder canon trail afar  
    'Twixt peak and precipice,  
Yon lone lake, lovely as a star,  
    Set round with hills and trees,

Yon trout stream leaf-o'erhung and cool,  
    Yon sea, one great blue gem—  
All year the office, street and school  
    Shall draw fresh life from them.

And wandering country winds shall cheer  
    The crowded ways of town,  
Till city toil's pale face next year  
    Again burns healthy brown.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

*The Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 22, 1905, sec II, p. 4.

### Norway and Sweden

Lands of the North, beneath your cooler skies  
 Does anger work so hotly in the blood,  
 And stir men up so soon to such a mood  
 As can be calmed alone by battle cries  
 And thundering crash of ranged artilleries?  
 What cause is there of war between you? Could  
 Ye brothers not find out some way less crude  
 For settling all the difference that lies  
 'Twixt one and other? Ye have seen of late  
 How cruel battle is, how brutal war.  
 War has just ceased—stir not war up once more.  
 Take thought and counsel wisely. Tempt not fate.  
 Stain not your peaceful valley lands with hate,  
 Nor foul your flowing waters with shed gore.

ROBINSON JEFFERS

*The Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 23, 1905, p. II 4.

### Algernon Charles Swinburne—1909

O fallen out of the light, O passed to the gray quiet shade,  
 Thou who wast light and wast might, singer of songs unafraid!  
 Passionate voice of the dawn, who wakedst the peoples asleep—  
 O best and latest and gone!—do we not well to weep?  
 Ah for the songs of thy singing were the terror and tides of the sea,  
 Were the rhythmical violent ringing of powers and of passions set free!  
 O fallen in no new fashion, we that bring for our grief  
 [The] purple petals of passion, the laurel's aeonian leaf,  
 [W]e that wreath blossoms of death to set on thy sleep-fallen head,  
 Of our tears we plait thee thy wreath, O last great singer—dead!

*[Special Collections, California State University Long Beach Library]*

Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1909  
O fallen out of the light, O passed to that gray quiet  
shade,  
Thou who wast light & lusty night, singer  
songs unpaid!  
Passionate voice of the dawn, who waked the  
peoples asleep—  
O lost, and latest and gone!— do we now  
well to weep?  
The for the songs of thy singing were the power  
and tide of the sea,  
Were the mythical voices ringing of powers  
and of passions in free!  
O fallen in no new fashion, so that bring  
for our grief  
purple petals of passion, the laurel's  
acorn leaf,  
that  
the wreath of blossoms of death to set on thy  
sleep-fallen head,  
Of our tears we plant thee, thy wreath, O  
lost great singer—dead!  
By Robinson Jeffers  
circa 1909

Manuscript of "Charles Algernon Swinburne—1909,"  
the earliest surviving poetic manuscript by Robinson Jeffers.  
Special Collections, Library of  
California State University Long Beach.



Vera Placida Gardner, c. 1909, to whom Jeffers gave the manuscript of "Swinburne." Photo courtesy of Ms. Gardner's granddaughter Laura Nisita.

[Untitled]

The day your lips caught at my soul,  
Mona, the day of days I knew  
Nothing was precious in the whole  
Of the wide earth to me but you—  
That day I felt the chain go round  
My heart, a searing chain of steel,  
And writhed against the branding wound,  
And felt the hell that captives feel.  
I—I to be your slave, to bow  
An humbled neck of servitude!  
. . . Well, I am free of you. And now  
Your bitter tears are salt, but *mine* are blood.

[Melba Bennett Accession at the University of Texas, Humanities Research  
Center, Austin, Texas.]



**Catiline**

*Quo usque tandem abutere*

In the old close temple on the Palatine  
 Among the senators he seeks his place  
 With casual and accustomed carelessness,  
 Like one who takes his due, and makes no sign.  
 Ominous and composed and saturnine,  
 Pale with debauchery, sunken in disgrace,  
 Friendless,—he hears with unaverted face  
 How Cicero thunders doom on Catiline.

And he, the accused, the abhorred, with hardly a frown  
 Lets the orator's sonorous torrent rage  
 Far overhead; and holds his pleasant thought:—  
 How nicely a knife might slit the consular throat  
 Just underneath that jutting cartilage  
 Which the open Roman vowels work up and down.

*[Melba Bennett Accession at the University of Texas, Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.]*

**[Untitled]**

These poor memorials of my greatest love  
 Take, for I know no greater love than this.  
 Forgive me for the things I did amiss,  
 And for the sorrow I taught you knowledge of.

*[Melba Bennett Accession at the University of Texas, Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas.]*

## NOTES

## The Rastoropny

On November 22, 1904, Dr. Jeffers and his wife sat down (we may assume) to breakfast in their rented home in Long Beach with the morning edition of *The Los Angeles Daily Times*. Perhaps their son Robinson, who was lodging near Occidental College in Highland Park, had alerted them to the news. Unfolding the paper, they would have seen their son's heroic depiction of the fate of *The Rastoropny*, a Russian naval destroyer, on the first page of the second section of this major metropolitan newspaper.

The poem concerns an incident in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, which had firmly caught the imagination of the seventeen-year-old Jeffers. During his first year at Occidental College, he wrote two prose columns on the war in *The Occidental*, the campus literary magazine.<sup>1</sup> An interesting aspect of his reporting is the racial stereotyping that the conflict is cast in. It is easy to excuse this by noting that the papers of the day were full of this sort of reportage, and much worse, and the young man was merely mirroring his own journalistic environment. Still, it is disconcerting to read his judgment that

the Russians are a persevering race, noted for that persistence which has already drawn victory for them from the jaws of defeat, and . . . their enemy, though enthusiastic and hardy and intelligent, possesses none too much of that dogged tenacity which characterizes the nations of the north, the Slavs and the Teutons.

How amused, we imagine, Jeffers would have been to be reminded of that characterization forty years later.

And Jeffers counted one more virtue in the Japanese at the time. A few letters from George Evans, a cousin who had spent the summer of 1912 with Robinson in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, survive in the Jeffers Collection at the University of Texas. Evans had evidently visited the Jeffers family earlier when Robinson was enrolled at Occidental College in 1903–1905, and, as suggested below, had joined Robinson as a classmate. In fact no record of Evan's enrollment at Occidental survives, nor is he present in the annual yearbooks, so perhaps he attended under a status that did not require matriculation. In later years he became a minister. In what is probably his last letter to Jeffers, filled with Christian sentiment, Evans spoke of an incident in the spring of 1905. His recollection is doubly surprising: first for the minor drama of Robinson's classroom contribution, remembered after

fifty-six years; but more especially for the revelation that Jeffers's father, Rev. William Hamilton Jeffers, had taught a course at Occidental:

I recall how much clearer a picture I got of the Reformation which your dear father taught us in our senior year in College, and I verily feel it was a great help in my seminary course later on—yes down to the present. I recall your father once asked our class, what was an outstanding characteristic of the Japanese people & I wasn't just able to say offhand—but you spoke up quickly and decisively and said: "Patriotism!" and I said to myself—"You're right!" and you were I believe! It was at the time of the Japanese Russian War you recall.<sup>2</sup>

In mid-November of 1904 the *Rastoropny* was scuttled by its crew in the Chinese harbor of Chefoo (now known as Yantai). The crew was carrying urgent dispatches from Gen. Stoessel in besieged Port Arthur to the Czar, and the contest was not going very well for the Russians at this juncture. The destroyer had been scuttled to ensure that the Japanese navy, which had furiously pursued the destroyer on its dash from Port Arthur to Chefoo, would not commandeer it at anchor there.

The poem Jeffers wrote on this occasion is intriguing—not for its content, but for the circumstances of its publication. An account of this minor incident appeared in *The Los Angeles Daily Times* (the morning edition at the time included the word "Daily" in its title) on November 19, 1904, three days before Jeffers's heroic poem was published. The unsigned column is wholly sympathetic to the Russian side, and is written in an overwrought and quaintly breathless style. An excerpt:

There were submarine mines to be avoided. Just one twist too many of that Muscovite wrist at the wheel and then good-by to ship and crew, hopes, dispatches and all. Just the miscalculation of a foot in the steersman's course and the *Rastoropny* would head for the stars instead of Chefoo. But on she went, slowly, breathlessly, feeling her way like a panther in the dark . . .

That the seventeen-year-old Jeffers read this column is almost certain. The poem he wrote on it, probably the same day, November 19th, echoes several of the details the hyperventilating columnist had included. Even some of the lexical choices are the same. And it was published just three days later, enough time for it to have been composed, sent, accepted, and printed.

### Norway and Sweden

The two countries had been united for ninety years following the Napoleonic Wars. But in 1905, Norway, having long chafed at the

union, succeeded in dissolving it. Subsequently, the Swedes, in the summer of 1905, made belligerent threats. The belligerency eventually subsided; Jeffers's stiff sonnet was written at the height of the tension.

Here we can see the effect of the liberal tide of the day which swept the youthful Jeffers up—the Norman Angellism, as it was later to be called. Jeffers depicts the apparent preposterousness of the conflict, and a faith in a rational solution. But it is also remarkable that Jeffers phrases the issue again in apparent racial terms, questioning how the antagonists could act in so hot-blooded a fashion, given their northern locus—a boyish notion that he very soon outgrew.

### Swinburne

In 2005, Ms. Nancy Anson, a granddaughter of Vera Placida Gardner, presented the editor with a scan of a manuscript that had been given to her grandmother by Robinson Jeffers while she was a student at the University of Southern California. Her sister, Ms. Laura Nisita, also recalls seeing (c. 1980) a letter from Jeffers to her grandmother, which she asked her mother about. Her mother confirmed that Jeffers and her mother, Ms. Gardner, had been romantically involved while at USC. But the letter has not shown up, and is feared lost.

There is no doubt that the manuscript is genuine. It does present some chirographic anomalies, but this is not unexpected in what is the earliest known poetic manuscript by Jeffers. Burnt holes from cinders of hand-rolled (presumably Bull Durham) cigarettes are in evidence.

The manuscript was subsequently acquired by the Special Collections Department of the Library of California State University Long Beach.

### [Untitled] “The day your lips caught at my soul”

A trifle written on the verso of an envelope sent by Una Kuster to Robinson Jeffers on her return from Europe, postmarked Omaha, Sept. 12, 1912, and re-postmarked Sept. 13, 1912 on the verso.

The poem seems to have been written under poor conditions, perhaps in a dim saloon; the chirography is unusually unyielding.

“Mona” might bear some relation to the protagonist of a lyrical novel Jeffers began in December 1912, “Man-Maker.” He wrote to Una on December 8, “I’ve already chosen a most thrilling theme, and a catchy title, and an adorable heroine; who, as I told you, is to be a libel on yourself. —Her name is Mona McLeod” (CL 1: 312).

## Catiline

The manuscript is held in the Melba Bennett Accession at the University of Texas, Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas. Fair copy on recto; first draft on verso.

At bottom of fair copy, in small hand: "There never was a sonnet, or anything else so short, cost me so much trouble, sweetheart, as this. For proof, see the reverse. I worked a couple of imbecile hours on the thing. Love my sweet."

On the verso at the bottom, Jeffers has written "This was a big one." Karman renders this as "This is a big one" (*CL* 1: 330). But the sentence is written in ink, unlike the rest of the holograph, which is in Jeffers's customary pencil scrawl. I suspect it was meant for Melba Bennett, who was organizing Jeffers's papers toward the end of his life. He made notations on other manuscripts for her, but if my reading is correct, this is an unexampled instance of retrospective self-assessment in Jeffers's manuscripts. No doubt he took no more than an autobiographical interest in it. Elsewhere he remarked, "I was still adolescent at twenty-five"<sup>3</sup>—the age at which the sonnet was written.

The poem is a sonnet on a classical subject, Catiline, the Roman conspirator. The primary source for the story of Catiline is in Sallust, but Jeffers could equally well have had the story from Plutarch's "Life of Cicero." Plutarch was the source for his sonnets a few years later on Alexander and Alcibiades.

Jeffers had enclosed the poem, with evident pride, in a letter of December 15, 1912—a week before the publication of his first volume, *Flagons and Apples* (*CP* 1: 328–30). At this time, Jeffers was already planning another volume titled *Songs and Heroes*, which never saw publication. In his letter to Una, Jeffers wrote, "[I'm] writing a sonnet about Catiline . . . to go into *Heroes*. Seems to me he'll make a good shocking kind of one" (*CL* 1: 330).

The dramatic context is this: Lucius Catiline had been a praetor, therefore ranking lower than a consul in ancient Rome, and lost an election for the consulship to Cicero. The next year he tried again, and some claimed that he began to offer blatant bribes, which Cicero met with a new law against bribery demanding a penalty of exile. Catiline understood this law to be aimed at him, and so he plotted to murder Cicero and some other senators before an election could be held. But Cicero got wind of the plot and told the senate of it, which postponed the election by one day. The following day, Cicero charged Catiline with the plot, and the senate passed a decree that "consuls take care that the Republic come to no harm." This invested the consuls with absolute authority until any danger had passed. Catiline was not ex-

pected to attend the senate session in the Temple of Jupiter on the Palatine Hill—but he did. As Cicero lambasted him, nearby senators moved away from Catiline, leaving him sitting alone.

The Latin epigraph, the opening sentence of Cicero's first oration against Catiline, translates as "How much longer, O Catiline, will you continue to abuse our patience?"

**[Untitled] "These poor memorials of my greatest love"**

This poem, apparently written to Una in reference to Jeffers's role in the break-up of her marriage to Teddie Kuster, was probably written in late 1912 or 1913.

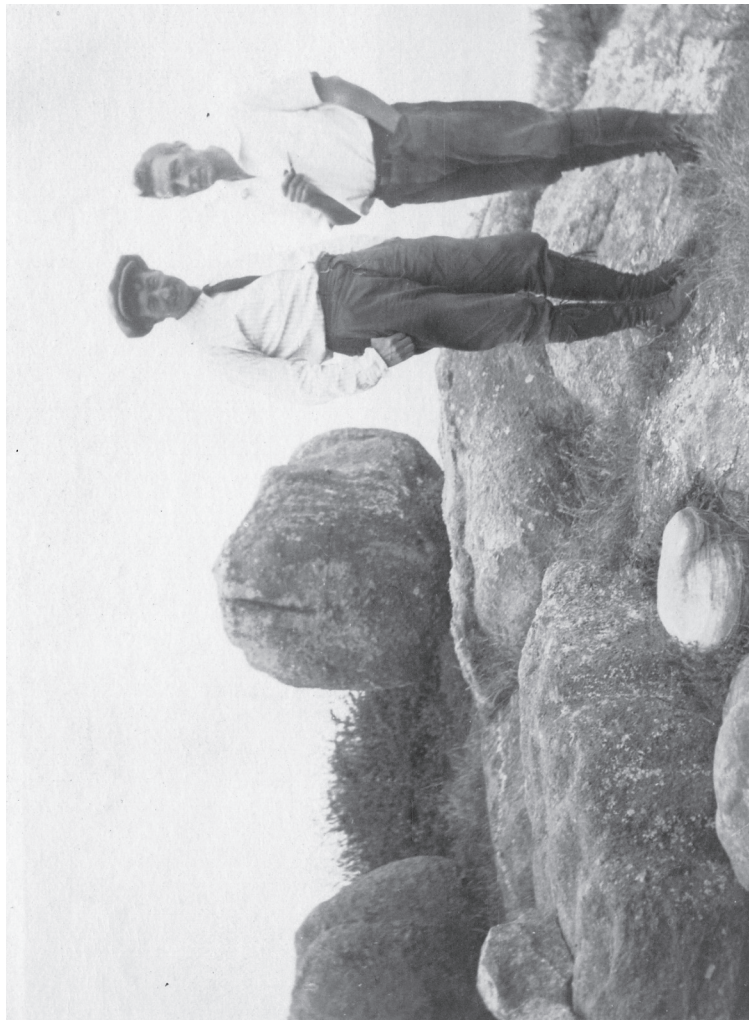
ENDNOTES

1. Rpt. in *Jeffers Studies* 4.1 (Winter 2000), 12–13.
2. Evans on WHJ. Punctuation has been somewhat amended. The spring 1905 course taught by Dr. Jeffers was History 16, The Protestant Reformation. Robinson Jeffers received 3 units and a grade of 90 for his work. George Evans's letter is dated Aug. 24, 1961, and is catalogued in the Jeffers Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.
3. "Remembered Verses," in Sidney S. Alberts, *A Bibliography of Robinson Jeffers*, New York: Random House, 1933, xv.

WORKS CITED

- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. James Karman. Vol. 1. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988–2001.





George Sterling and  
Robinson Jeffers,  
c. 1926.  
Courtesy Jeffers  
Literary Properties.  
(See p. 1.)





DIRK AARDSMA, TRANSCRIBER AND EDITOR

## HAUNTED COAST

### INTRODUCTION

The “Haunted Coast” manuscript was included in the papers that Melba Berry Bennett acquired from Robinson Jeffers and deposited at Occidental College. It is an unfinished twenty-page handwritten manuscript. Unlike the manuscripts for the poems Jeffers completed, this manuscript does not show much reworking or revision. There is one major excision, but the rest of the work flows with very few changes to the lines. Significant changes are detailed in footnotes; endnotes, indicated in the text by a dagger next to the page number (in brackets), include material found on the verso of that page.

Tim Hunt suggests that Jeffers worked on this project between *Dear Judas* and *The Loving Shepherdess* in late 1928 (CP 5: 83–85). The first page of the manuscript was written on the back of a letter dated November 10, 1928, from the San Francisco branch of The White House advertising their Christmas Sale of Handkerchiefs. It is addressed to Dear Madam and promises that “With Christmas but a few short weeks away, the far-sighted shopper will avail herself of the savings offered now and fill her handkerchief needs at this time. The attached samples give you an idea of the qualities you will receive.” The manuscript’s twenty-fifth page is written on the back of an advertisement for *The Power of Thought* by J. Mullooney M.D. While the flier is not dated, the advertised book was published in 1928.

There is a cover page in Melba Berry Bennett’s hand that reads:

“HAUNTED COAST” year?  
unfinished narrative

Story of man who marries prostitute—  
takes her to farm to live. She has

premature ?? baby (not his, though  
 he tries to believe it is). Gracie  
 takes cowboy—seeks abortion  
 in S.F. Ends with Oakwith  
 returning to farm with baby  
 (Martie) after putting Gracie  
 on train.

Some excellent lines but needs  
 R.J.'s red pencil! Not sure it shouldn't  
 be kept.

MB  
 20 pages

There is no way to know what Jeffers had planned for the narrative, but the poem begins with the narrator happening upon Oakwith, who had fallen on hard times. Oakwith is alone, and the narrator does not mention seeing a child or any evidence of a child at Oakwith's cabin. At a second meeting, Oakwith recounts his story up to the return with his child from the train station.

On the first page of the manuscript, Jeffers notes underneath the title "Haunted Coast" an alternate title "The Future City." Oakwith describes in some detail his interactions with future people in a future city. Whether this future city and its inhabitants were a dream or reality he doesn't know, but it is part of the story he tells.

The manuscript provides a glimpse into an unshaped compositional space. It is a rough outline of an idea that never grew beyond these twenty pages. The equivocation of Melba Berry Bennett's construction seems appropriate to the text: "Not sure it shouldn't be kept."

#### WORK CITED

Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988–2001.

## HAUNTED COAST

A sort of road went up the canyon, two fading shallow ruts, I  
 hardly thought they'd been used † [1] 1  
 Since the old days of logging and tan-bark cartage. I found  
 in the deep glen at the head of the gorge,  
 Between a tiny cabin and a tipsy shed, a man trying to repair  
 a motor-truck. His face  
 Was mournful and smudged with grease; there were many  
 bee-hives beyond him, and the solemn redwoods towered  
 all about him.  
 I stopped, and he said wearily, "Oh: come on if you like." He  
 leaned the idle wheel on its axle, 5  
 And spoke of his field on the far hill. I said, "Have you lived  
 here long?" "No. A few years," he answered  
 Sighing, and he said the bees had made no honey this year;  
 there was no juice in the flowers this year,  
 "Unless I feed them they'll starve." "With sugar-syrup?" He  
 nodded: "They're starving now. You came up by  
 Swainson's? [10]  
 The coast stage left me a sack of sugar, it's lying in the barn  
 at Swainson's. I've never been down to fetch it.  
 I'd more than half a ton of honey last year." "Next year for  
 luck," I told him, "you'd better go down 10  
 And fetch the sugar." "Oh God," he said, twisting his face  
 - - - then sullenly: "I can't go on three wheels,  
 Can I?" - "What's wrong with the truck?" "Nothing: there  
 seemed to be some grit in the bearings. I guess it's all  
 right,"  
 He said jealously, then I went on. A thin gray cat had crept  
 from the fern to rub its flanks

---

Leaf 1: centered in lower half of the page: 'Haunted Coast / The Future City // The next page should be (2), but is paged (10), and the others correspondingly. Deduct 8 from later paginations. / unfinished'.

Leaf 1: deleted the following lines written vertically in lower half of the page along the left margin: "Why do you live up here, why don't you go down too?" / "Oh God" he said, [] and then, "The truck's broken, / I can't on these wheels [] twisting his face . . . and then, "The truck's broken. I can't on these wheels." / Why don't you feed them? / The truck's out of order, the differential is grinding'.

Against my leggings, and followed when I went on. It  
 seemed, except its master, the only sentient  
 Creature in that silent place; I thought the man would be  
 lonely without it. I threatened it and tossed a twig, 15  
 It darted aside and still followed, but when I threw a dry  
 stick it crouched on the bare ground  
 At the base of a tree, and followed me with craving eyes and  
 such a voice moaning among the redwoods  
 I'd never imagined a cat's throat able to make, though  
 they are powerful.

I was in the canyon again  
 A month later, this time on horseback. At passing  
 Swainson's I thought of the man in the glen above, 20  
 The square brown face; lank hair and dismayed eyes. They  
 told me his name was Oakwith; he had lived alone there  
 Since his wife left him. They spoke of a sack of sugar that lay  
 in the barn. "What, hasn't he fetched it? His hives  
 Have probably starved, but I'll take it to him." I rode up  
 canyon wretchedly pillion to a sack of sugar † [11]  
 And dropped it at Oakwith's door. There seemed to be no  
 one about, not even the cat, but after I'd passed  
 I heard the fellow calling and running behind me. He stood  
 by the stirrup and wrung his hands, saying "Thank-you," 25  
 Three or four times. A big-boned man, lean as a rock, a  
 brown-skinned square-jawed face with deep eyes,  
 Black hair and whitish-blue eyes, it was strange to see them  
 winking on tears. "I couldn't go after it," he said.  
 "Why not? Won't the truck run?" "Oh, yes; and I've been by  
 there," he said, "but when I drove back I was drunk;  
 It was midnight; whenever I go to Monterey I get drunk. I  
 feel so badly, away from this place.

---

Line 14: 'the only living [then 'moving']'.

Line 18: 'As I had never imagined a cat's throat able to make, though [then 'cat's throat could, though']'.

Line 21: 'eyes. His name, Carson, they said [then 'His name, they said, was Carson']'.

Line 22: 'sack of sugar they were keeping for him. "What, hasn't he fetche come for the sugar?"'.

Line 24: 'dropped it at Carson's door.'; 'the cat, but after I had passed the place [then 'when I had passed on,']'.

This place is safe, but the coast's" - - - I can't remember the  
 form of words that he used, but it meant fated: - - - - 30  
 "Stop a few minutes," he said, "in this safe place, I'm always  
 lonesome." At length out of pure pity  
 I stopped and listened, I sat on a stone by the cabin door.  
 Indeed his face was hollow with solitude;  
 And he was one of the souls that hunger for self-expression  
 - - - - for the confessional. The somewhat feminine  
 Tone of his nature, contending with virile shame and  
 sensitiveness, so thoroughly obscured his thoughts,  
 The words, if I could remember and quote them, would  
 keep no meaning. They made a clear enough story for one 35  
 Who watched his face and gesture, and who knew the  
 country.

He pointed at one of the

great redwoods; it grew [12]  
 From the green cliff of the gorge; the others tower straight  
 from buttressed bases, but this one in its first century  
 Was tilted, the creek mining the bank below it, so that some  
 forty feet of the base of the trunk  
 Hung horizontal high over the gorge floor, then very slowly 40  
 Curving went upward and found vertical at last; the heavy  
 erect column of the standing tree,  
 A man's height thick and high as the hill, was based as if in  
 blank air above the ripple of the creek,  
 And Oakwith said, "The roots in the rock bear that. They've  
 never slept, hundreds of years, strain, aching

---

Line 32: 'I entered the [then 'I stood by the'; then 'I stopped and listened,'] sitting on a stone by the cabin door, for I saw that his eyes were black [then 'face was bleak'] with loneliness'.

Line 35: 'That if I could quote his words [then 'That his words would have no']; 'would convey nothing'.

Line 38: 'the others towered straight from wide-buttressed bases, but this one had slipped in its youth'.

Line 39: 'The creek perhaps mining [then 'The creek no doubt mining'; then 'Had slipped, the creek mining']; 'some thirty feet of the base of the trunk [then 'some thirty feet of the trunk base']'.

Line 43: 'They've never slept, hundreds of years. / Strain. [then 'slept, many centuries, strain, strain, / Strain.'],'.

Strain. Our time is so but few feel it. The tree of the world  
 has twisted over, and what we must bear's  
 All at a skew." - - - He groaned and laughed and said, "Those  
 city women are awful, the colored-pretty 45  
 Faces look all alike, they're worse than the men. That's why I  
 can't go down to the shore: the ghosts  
 Of people not born yet, in a city not built yet." He trembled.  
 "It hasn't changed yet, at Swainson's?"

- - - He'd strayed in youth  
 Through many unadventurous occupations; been  
 stage-driver and carpenter's helper, nurse in a hospital  
 For several years, then a long illness had changed his life. It  
 made him, he said, a lover of all people, 50  
 He remembered moving along the sidewalk, dizzy with  
 convalescence, thinking how lovely they were,  
 All that went by; and that himself would die soon but that  
 was nothing, for this would go on forever,  
 Becoming more beautiful every century, as the mind of man,  
 more and more ably, took charge of the earth; [13]  
 He said he had never before understood joy.

In the flush of that 55  
 He'd suddenly married, a black-eyed waitress out of a little  
 restaurant. The gay, unhappy and slovenly  
 Girl was not formed for marriage; she stayed the night with a  
 lover the second month, Oakwith forgave her,  
 And twice and again. "She always came home and cried she  
 really loved me. And I knew she never got drunk.  
 It was all right; I believe in freedom. But then," he said  
 acutely, "it was clear that Gracie did not  
 Believe in freedom, and to keep doing what she thought was  
 wrong was wrecking her nature." Also, half-consciously, 60  
 He wished a child of his own, a breathing communion  
 Between his blood and the broad life-stream he had learned  
 to love; he couldn't express it but one perceived it.  
 He formed his plans, and taking Gracie by surprise a  
 repentant morning, "I took her away from the dance-halls,

---

Line 61: 'child of his own, a visible breathing communion [then 'own, a breathing visible communion']'.

We came down here for a new start." Oakwith was  
 country-bred; it must have been hard for Gracie,  
 But she'd been brave. She worked, he said like a strong man  
 and a woman too, until he observed 65  
 The thickening lines of pregnancy; she'd never told him.  
 She said it had not begun until the next month  
 After they left the city; if that was true her time came  
 prematurely, and Oakwith now [14]  
 Believed she'd lied, to give him assurance of fatherhood.  
 "She needn't have lied,  
 When I saw the child I knew it was mine," he said so loudly  
 that you knew he still doubted, and the doubt  
 Had been most painful. When she began to groan, eight  
 weeks too early, he flung a mattress and blanket 70  
 Into the truck, but she was able to sit by his side until they  
 reached the Monterey hospital.  
 Oakwith drove home alone after the baby was born; the pigs  
 and poultry had to be cared for.  
 Dark-clouded night, he feared the coyotes  
 Had come for the geese, he'd not had time to remember to  
 shut them up, yet he was forced to drive slowly  
 Being half in a dream with aching weariness, worn out by  
 Gracie's cries and animal patience, and dizzy 75  
 With thinking that even if the child were not of his blood,  
 yet he should love it, and worried by the engine misfiring,  
 So that he'd wake to wonder at the road, the lightless waves  
 roaring below; it lies like a thread  
 Along the spurs of the coast-range over the ocean. He saw in  
 the sheaf of rays of the car's head-lights  
 A little man in the midst of the road was bobbing a red  
 lantern, a night-hawk when he came nearer  
 Flew upward, the red lantern its eye; a coon's green-burning  
 eyes peered from a bush by the roadside; 80  
 The sky had no stars but the lower mountain was quick with  
 colored ones. A little later along the coast mountains  
 He saw the Point Sur Lighthouse wink from its rock, a  
 constant point of light strung with slow flashes [15]

---

Line 77: 'it is laid like a thread [then 'it lies threadlike']'.

Line 78: 'He saw in the car's lights [then 'in the sheaf of the headlight beams'; then 'in the sheaf of the headlight rays of the car's lights']'.



Tormenting his eyes. Now the thin road slid straightly  
 downward two cliff-edge miles to his own canyon-mouth,  
 And all the way he should have seen the Sur light, but  
 something blocked it. He seems to have felt, rather  
 Than seen at first, the high metal masts and visionary  
 buildings, until a polished glass-looking wall 85  
 Reflected his own lights against him, he locked his wheels  
 and stopped, in the dazzle of his own lights  
 Unable to see; trembling with frightened amazement so that  
 he muttered to himself or the motor "Easy - - -  
 Easy - - - Oh easy - - -" it was dreadful that the engine  
 stopped, it seemed to shut off escape. He stumbled from  
 the seat  
 And went faintly to feel at the wall.

The night sky had cleared 90

When he waked - - - came to himself - - - the stars were  
 blazing, changing for dawn. He had walked among radiant  
 faces  
 In shame, like one ashamed in a dream of nakedness among  
 clothed people pretending not to regard him,  
 Yet slyly smiling. They had smiled and told him - - - he  
 remembered not what. What made him ashamed, their  
 white security,  
 Himself always in fear of need and disease; their whole  
 business apparently was graceful pleasure,  
 Himself coarsened with toil. He understood they were the  
 children of the future. Numbed and groaning [16] 95  
 With the cold before dawn he saw in the crystal darkness the  
 hills like sphinx-paws  
 On either side of the path, going up to the mountain ahead.  
 He walked until he had wetted his feet  
 In the first ford, before he thought of the car and set back to  
 find it. "Oh but why," he thought, "fool,  
 Did I forget to tell them I belong among them? I have served  
 the life-force and I have gotten a child

---

Line 85: 'buildings, his car with the engine misfiring hit then a polished'.

Line 87: 'Utterly amazed. [then 'Lost and'; then 'Unable to drive;'] trembling with terrified amazement, so that he muttered to himself "Easy - - - [then 'Easy - - - easy - - -']'.

And I have had faith, I knew we'd grow to this freedom, this  
 beauty." A vague whiteness of dawn at length 100  
 Was whispering down the trough of the canyon, the western  
 sky in the fork of the hills ahead graying,  
 One great star hung there growing pale, then Oakwith  
 thought he remembered that in one passage of the night  
 they'd come  
 Where naked sky and a few stars were seen through a slit  
 between the buildings, then the happy people  
 Had shivered and dulled; "The stars are out of our power."  
 "I hate the darkness," one said, "come on;" they had  
 entered  
 Another of the courts of miraculous light then. - - - But all  
 his dream was confused. - - - The dwarfish redwood  
 thickets 105  
 Shaped and compacted by the sea-wind in the mouth of the  
 gorge became distinct with increase of light  
 And Oakwith's mind turned from his vision to think of  
 Gracie, the big dark eyes in the thin face,  
 Her tired sweet looks, and that she had borne a baby. He  
 passed Swainson's in the smells of dawn, and the sea  
 Shone beyond like a silver plate. The car was a mile north  
 on the coast-road, Oakwith hardly  
 Could walk that mile, half unconscious with weariness. 110

Twice again he drove back  
 after night fell [17]  
 From visiting his wife, the fortnight she lay at the hospital,  
 but saw no vision. Business of harried poultry,  
 The pigs to feed, tinkering the car, and the long drives to  
 Monterey, filled up his mind.  
 But after he'd brought Gracie and the baby home, and life  
 began to settle in its changes, Oakwith  
 Found time, for now she was mostly in-doors, not working  
 beside him, to form day-dreams about the future 115  
 He half believed he had seen. In the evenings he resumed an  
 old habit of reading; popular descriptions  
 Of science and new invention attracted him. Also he  
 enjoyed [planning] a water-wheel in the creek,  
 Should run a dynamo and feed the cabin with light and  
 power; but there was no money to buy materials.  
 He tried at times to interest Gracie in his thoughts, [it was]  
 impossible.

She'd grown bitter and shrewish; she hated to see him at  
 rest; she felt herself bound by the baby 120  
 And thought her days of happiness were finished forever.  
 Oakwith would stand humbly and gaze at the child  
 While Gracie made her complaint: great solemn eyes, dark  
 brown ones (Oakwith's were whitish blue, but that  
 Proved nothing: the child had its mother's eyes) in a face no  
 bigger than a green apple: sad, sad, old face,  
 As if it had known life from beforehand to be a sacrifice to  
 the beauty that's coming - - - perhaps  
 In ten thousand years! 125  
 "I'll teach him," Oakwith dreamed, "when he grows bigger,  
 that it is nobler to serve life than be served,  
 And we all are brothers, helping each other up to that  
 beauty. The eyes of our minds may behold it." But always [18]  
 Gracie's complaints and coldness rubbed on his thought,  
 until it became like sweet bread chewed and not  
 swallowed  
 Bitter on the tongue.

She was washing diapers at  
 night; he attempting to help 130  
 Lifted a kettle of water from the stove, the handle was hot,  
 he stumbled on sticks of firewood and the kettle  
 Fell crashing; it covered the floor with water and wakened  
 the baby. Gracie screamed, the child wailed, poor Oakwith  
 Stood like a sleepwalker wakened, blank with dismay, trying  
 to recall how the thing had happened. She suddenly  
 Ceased scolding and wept; then Oakwith labored hard to  
 console her. "I'm sorry, Oh I am sorry, Gracie.  
 Go and lie down on the bed: I'll mop the floor, I'll finish the  
 washing - - -" He folded his arm around her 135  
 To lead her, she dragged her free hand's nails in his cheek.  
 She seemed to herself a trapped creature, betrayed  
 To endless labor, cut off from all joy. Then Oakwith seeing  
 he could not comfort his wife went in

---

Line 123: 'in a face littler than Oakwith's fist / Must you also be sacrificed to build the beauty that's coming?'

Line 133: 'Stood blank, with dismay, trying to recall what he [then 'trying to remember how the thing had happened. The dust / From his shoes muddied the pool on the floor, and Gracie shouted']'.

To quiet the child, but Gracie followed and cried that he  
 must not dare to touch him, "he's not your baby.  
 If you were a man you'd not pretend that he is. Oh I thank  
 God you've got no share in him." Oakwith  
 Lifted the baby in his arms and Gracie began screaming that  
 he meant to hurt it, the hysterical voice 140  
 Rang madly through the little cabin, into the night of the  
 redwoods. Then Oakwith laid down the child  
 And went out-doors. He stood in the dark and listened; her  
 cries were instantly quiet and soon the gray [19]  
 Wail of the babe was fed with quietness. He heard the creek  
 singing to its rocks and stones, and the air  
 On the far ocean hum in the tops of the trees. A half hour  
 later Gracie came to the door  
 And called his name; after she'd called three times he  
 answered. She had turned sweet, she said "Forgive me 145  
 For telling you a lie in anger, I was so tired. Martie's your boy,  
 you've reason to know it I think.  
 Come in, dear, now." But meanwhile his own slow wrath  
 more like disgust had grown up, he said in the dark  
 "You bitch. God, I don't mean it, Gracie. No. It's all right,"  
 and turned and went quickly away. She heard him  
 Opening the shed, and felt that he meant to sleep on the  
 seat of the truck.

He rested a while and woke, 150  
 Too angry to go in-doors and too cold to sleep,  
 And when he had walked some distance down the canyon in  
 the dark of the redwoods, and had crossed the first ford  
 By the stepping-stones, he saw in a clearing up the creek-bed  
 the bright-horned waning moon had come up  
 Above the hills and made the night gray. The creek winds  
 back and forth over the path and it makes  
 Ten fords in five miles, the water ran low and moonlight  
 picked out the boulders to step on. He went down briskly 155  
 As far as the gate in Swainson's fence, slowly beyond it.  
 Sometime the city of light would cover  
 All this base ground. He came to the clear beyond the last  
 ford. The towers and people's palaces of light

---

Lines 150-151: 'He slept for awhile and awoke, [then 'He slept a little and woke,']  
 / His anger had died of cold but dawn was approaching;'.

Would rise where now low thickets of redwood, that the  
 houseless winds have hewn and moulded to the shapes of  
 the hills. [20]

He stood in Swainson's field on the broad-arrow-shape  
 foreland, the night sea faintly shining beyond  
 The flat cliff-heads, the moon and a few stars among the  
 bands of the cloud. "They shall enjoy 160

Life without labor, love without disgust, love without  
 bondage, childbirth without pain, service without  
 A servant, the cunning machines preventing all needs;  
 knowledge without sorrow; bright freedom: where a man  
 flies to

There is his home, all the planet is one hive; and every  
 person being clean, well-born and beautiful  
 Has friends and lovers wherever he goes. We struggle and die  
 in the dark that they may live in the light.

If I could live among you one hour, and taste the beauty with  
 my eyes!" The vague anguish of a feeling 165

More like religion moved him nearly to tears, without  
 considering he knelt on the bare foreland  
 And made a prayer - - - to the future - - - to future man - - -  
 rather to his own emotion: "Oh give me the vision  
 I enjoyed as if by accident before. I need it, I need it now."  
 Nothing was given him, of course.

He knelt in the empty night and got up with shame. It was  
 dawning when he returned past Swainson's. His tired  
 Life trembled in him, as the whitening sky 170

Trembled beyond the trees and the hill. He thought that he  
 had not talent enough to serve the future  
 A larger way than by feeding the child's body and teaching  
 its mind

As much freedom as he knew. The beauty of dawn, when he  
 was younger, had always brought him a pang  
 Of exaltation, no matter how weary he was, but now he  
 watched the light atremble to increase [21]

And burning bars of red on deep pale green translucencies  
 over the dark billow of the hill 175

With only the thought that he must be patient, and his eyes  
 were tired, and his legs. He was late home, and Gracie

---

Line 158: 'Where now the low [then 'Would stand where now low'] thickets of redwood, that bitter winds have burnt and moulded'.

Was angry again, she allowed a grudging peace at noon, by  
 night she was fond and full of pity, but Oakwith  
 Was too exhausted now to be glad.

Winter came on, the roofs  
 leaked badly, the creek flooded,  
 And nothing ever dried between rains, under the immense  
 overshadowing trees, but fortunately 180  
 The child remained well; there was a gap, too, between the  
 wood and the hill through which the sun in clear weather  
 Poured on the cabin door for two hours each day. A man  
 from Swainson's often rode by, for now  
 New grass was growing, they had shifted the cattle to  
 another range. He grew quite friendly; they had been at  
 first  
 Hostile enough; but now he would stop and talk. Whenever  
 he talked with Oakwith Gracie would come  
 And sit on the door-step, and bare the shining moon of her  
 breast to suckle the baby. She opened her clothes 185  
 Widely, and would smile at the young man; but Oakwith  
 understood that this was her nature, he had neither  
 Surprise nor anger; some twinges of shame, she looked he  
 thought like a sloven. He was glad the young man came by;  
 A common cowboy, no mind, but Oakwith was starved for  
 friendship. He lent him some books and papers, which  
 Taylor † [22]  
 Perhaps not read, but arranged in return for Oakwith  
 The hire of a team and loans of a plow and harrow to plant  
 the forty acres he had on the hill, 190  
 He hoped to raise corn there, to feed the pigs. Much of his  
 time this winter was given to fencing the field,

---

Line 187: 'Surprised nor angry; he was rather only a little ashamed, he thought she looked he thought like a sloven. He was glad the young man came by; / Though a thoughtless fellow, only a cowboy in mind, [then 'Although in mind no more than a cowboy,; then 'No more than the mind of a common cowboy,; then 'Though mentally no more than a common cowboy,; then 'He had no mind, a common cowboy,'] but Oakwith was starved for friendship'.

Line 191: 'given to fencing the hill, / While he worked there [then 'Field on the hill'; then 'He felled a canyon redwood'; then 'He felled one of the smaller canyon redwoods to make the fence-posts']'.

He felled one of the canyon redwoods and split it for the  
 fence posts; while he was planting the posts and stretching  
 The wire, he loved to let free his eyes  
 Like flyaway birds down the curved air of the slope, over the  
 greening spurs of the mountain and specks  
 Of cattle on the banks of the steep folds, the gullies  
 blackened with oak, to the jagged shore, but all these 195  
 Were but half seen; the imagined glory of the future city, its  
 high extensions on the spurs of the hill,  
 The festival-days of the happy people possessed him. They  
 had freed themselves from the earth, they made their  
 nourishment  
 Like plants out of pure air and sunlight, with water and salts  
 from the endless ocean drawn through deep stills,  
 No stint forever of the innocent meat and bread that cost  
 neither man's labor nor a beast's death,  
 Not a furrow in the earth. Their power shone from the sun  
 to the engines; and over the great towers 200  
 The metal wings of their perfect freedom came flashing and  
 returned, from Asia, from Europe, from the ocean islands,  
 The travelers of joy, wherever a man desired to be he was  
 there; multitude, like spirals of smoke,  
 Going up from the great-arched mouths of the  
 landing-stages. † [23]

His present work grew  
 joyless, for imagination  
 Had sucked its marrow, yet instinctively he carried on  
 toward an end. An evening returning home 205  
 After a shower he found in the twilight under the trees the  
 marks of a horse tethered a long time  
 To a young alder's trunk on the left of the path. He stood  
 and looked down, then scraped the hoof-marks out  
 With the soles of his boots, and shuffled the dung into the  
 fernbrake. He entered the lamplit cabin, hoping  
 That Gracie'd tell him who'd been to see them. She had  
 nothing to say, she came and kissed him with shining eyes,

---

Line 195: 'the hollows blackened with oak, down to the jagged shore's [that] all this / White fringe of surf and the [stirred] [main] of the ocean firmament of water'.

Line 207: 'path. He intended to ask who came to see them, but Gracie [then 'path. He stood looking down, then']'.

A delicate unaccustomed flush on her cheeks; he must come  
 look at Martie, who'd learned to laugh 210  
 That very day. Her eyes were so guileless, and she was so  
 happy at having him home, and the baby laughed,  
 Bright and well-mothered: he knew there was not a reason  
 for asking questions.

The questions recurred to

his mind [24]  
 When he was away. Returning earlier next evening  
 He looked and found new marks by the tree. He entered the  
 cabin and hoarsely: "Who's been to see you?" "Why, no  
 one," 215  
 She answered with clear and most honest eyes. "Who ever  
 comes up here?" "I thought maybe Tom Taylor'd brought  
 back  
 The book I lent him." "No, dear. No one was here." He  
 thought "I have no jealousy: the weakness of brutes  
 And starving minds. Besides, she is telling the truth. She  
 always confesses with tears if she does wrong."  
 When they were undressing she came half naked and kissed  
 him suddenly. "You don't love me since the baby's come.  
 Why do you almost never any more - - -" Later in the night  
 he dreamed her embraces again, and then dreamed 220  
 That several people came weeping from a high palace down  
 on the shore beyond Swainson's. They accused him  
 angrily,

---

Line 210: 'cheeks; and he must listen to the baby lisp its first word [then 'must look at Martie, who had learned']'.

Line 212: questions. The marks he had seen in the twilight / Were old ones, or perhaps [then 'maybe'] a hunter had tethered [then 'had tied'] his horse there. He asked her, later in the evening, she laughed and answered [then 'He asked her, later in the evening, who been to see them;'], / "No one, of course. / She answered in thoughtless innocence "Why, no one. Who ever comes?" She was undressing for bed and she sighed / "I'm lonely sometimes. You're working too hard, Martin" "I thought maybe Tom Taylor'd brought back / The book he borrowed." "No," she answered, "he was not here." / "Why do you never [then 'almost never'] any more - - - ?" / Aren't we lovers anymore / When they were [then 'she was'] undressing she came half naked and kissed him suddenly. "You don't love me since you [then 'we'] got the baby. / Why do you almost never any more - - -".



“You want to betray our secret? You want to ruin us?” “What  
 secret?” Their talk trailed into gibberish. The dream  
 Troubled him next day; he felt as if he were guilty of  
 something. He returned from the hill later than usual  
 Although he’d hardly been working toward the end of the  
 day, but with idle pleasureless  
 Eyes watched the conflagrations of winter sundown, color  
 after color, the climbing fire-ships of cloud, 225  
 The amber and the crimson and the heavy purple.

Two months after this time  
 he waked in the night and Gracie † [25]  
 Was troubled; he heard a whimper and could feel her  
 sobbing. Nothing was the matter, she said. She woke next  
 day  
 And said that her time had twice gone by. “Oh Martin, I  
 can’t and I won’t bear it. I’ve worked so hard,  
 I thought I could rest a little this year, for Martie’s 230  
 Less bothersome now. I can’t go through it again. Oh God,  
 Martin I can’t go through it again.”  
 He felt himself sickening with anger, she looked sluttish with  
 the blubbered face; he left the cabin  
 And walked on the path under the great still trees. After a  
 time he heard the creek tinkling  
 And saw at his feet the little purple flowers of the redwood  
 sorrel. Then he went into the cabin  
 To comfort his wife. His reasonless anger made him  
 ashamed, he’d stood near striking her. “Listen, Gracie. 235  
 It’ll be easier; we’re settled now. We ought to have two  
 babies, by having them early you know

---

Line 223: ‘guilty of something. He worked at home all day, though the fence / Around the field on the hill was not finished.’

Line 226: ‘The rose and [then ‘And the rose and’] the crimson and the heavy purple. His work on the fence was nearly finished; an hour to-morrow / Morning, he told Gracie, would stretch the last wire. She felt that he spoke to warn her.’

Line 229: ‘time had twice gone by, she was pregnant again. “Oh Martin, I can’t’.

Line 235: ‘his wife. He was ashamed of his anger [then ‘His reasonless anger shamed him’], he’d been near striking her. But now she was making plans. / She didn’t think the doctor in Monterey could help them’.

We'll have a chance to see them grown up and thriving.  
 After this we'll be careful." Her tears had ceased;  
 She answered as if she had failed to hear him, "I don't dare  
 ask the doctor in Monterey, and beside,  
 He'd charge too much; in San Francisco I'd manage." The  
 dreadful anger came back into Oakwith's mind,  
 He trembled and sighed "Who is its father?" "Oh Martin!"  
 she answered weeping. "I know Tom Taylor's been around  
 here." 240  
 "That dirty cowboy?" she said, "Oh Martin. Oh God." He  
 shook her by the arms. "If it's mine I'll see that it lives.  
 I'll have no tricks - - -" Her head jerked backward into her  
 shoulders, the ash-colored face twitching, and her throat  
 began to be swollen, two thick blue veins; but little Martie  
 in the crib screamed first, watching his mother. [26]  
 Oakwith said nothing more for that time, he labored to  
 quiet his household.

In the black of evening he  
 walked 245  
 On the path under the heavy redwoods again. He heard the  
 creek tinkle, and smelled the deep wood,  
 And saw one star. "Out of this hell.  
 We work here in hell in order that at last our children may  
 enter into heaven. That is good. I am willing.  
 No more poverty, no jealousy then. Few children, welcomed  
 with joy. Fresh lives bonded to happiness.  
 I will not think of myself and Gracie but as part of the race 250  
 Laboring through hell to rise up in heaven."

He attempted next day to  
 reason calmly with Gracie. "We mustn't  
 Live for ourselves. We're bits of humanity, Gracie. We have  
 to live for the whole body of humanity.  
 Think though what strain, and perils it has climbed up  
 From the first cell, through the lives of beasts and apes and  
 savages, millions of years. It has only begun, 255  
 None of us can imagine the beauty that's coming. We can't  
 help much, we can carry on our blood

---

Line 237: 'grown up and prospering. After this we'll be careful, Gracie.' She had  
 stopped crying.'

Into the future. One of our children's children might help.  
 The only duty of people like us,  
 Who have no talents, is to carry on our blood. It gives us  
 other chances in future lives  
 To further the great progress of the world." He followed  
 Gracie about the room as she worked, saying  
 "I'd never ask for more than two children. We'll not have  
 more." She flung the broom on the floor and answered: 260  
 "You beast. You're not the one to bleed and be torn. It's not  
 you that'll rub your fingers to the bone  
 Scrubbing soiled rags. Oh Christ I have suffered so much. I  
 have worked so hard. And now you want it to begin  
 All over again. I'd kill myself sooner." He went outdoors;  
 there was plenty to do out-doors. Toward evening  
 He thought that he had no right to force her to have a baby  
 against her will; that would be slavery. [27]  
 Free motherhood or else none: We've Martie at least. 265

A few days later they drove

to Monterey,  
 All three, and Gracie got on the train. She leaned from the  
 car-window and waved her hand; wet eyes,  
 Hiding their joy. Oakwith had Martie in his arms, waved  
 Martie's in answer. The train drew past and unveiled  
 The great blue crescent of the bay, the wharves and the  
 moored boats, and Gavilan mountains. Oakwith turned  
 homeward,  
 Feeling the child on the seat beside him but conscious of  
 little else external to himself; in his mind 270  
 Lay the main scene; he was lonely – longing for Gracie,  
 And guilty-hearted to think of her errand, and bitter to  
 think of her haunting again with those bad friends  
 She went to be helped by.

He bundled the baby in the  
 robe, but when they approached the Carmel bridge he  
 stopped

---

Line 257: 'One of our children might help greatly. The'.

Line 265: 'at least. He wished she'd go to the doctor in Monterey / Instead of God knows who in the city.'

Beside the willows on the north bank; sunset streamed up  
 the hollow river already, reflected 275  
 Up the gravel-banks between the borders of wood. "You like  
 the ride, Martie? I'm lonely too.  
 But mamma'll be home in a little while. Be brave," he said,  
 pouring the milk in the bottle, "brave Martie.  
 Help father, big man." The baby gazed in his face, but then  
 the dark eyes wandered to the sky and the willows,  
 The little features wrinkled in a sort of terror and it wailed  
 aloud. As if – he thought – it believed  
 Its mother had turned away and would never come home.  
 He took it in his arms and hushed it and held the bottle. 280  
 He was superstitious about the child, he felt such  
 helplessness toward it. He imagined that it foresaw,  
 When it wailed without cause, miseries to happen.  
 Defending himself against an accuser, and speaking aloud [28]  
 To arouse Martie, "We have to control," he said, "the  
 brainless fertility of life. That's our mind's function;  
 As I built a dyke of stones to protect the cabin  
 When the creek ran high." Martie had drunk the milk and  
 was half asleep, his father made him a guarded 285  
 Bed in the truck behind the seat, in the folded rug, between  
 a sack of flour and a sack  
 Of new potatoes, his little pillow at his head. He was happy  
 and cosy there when the engine started,  
 It lulled him quiet. Oakwith drove on and crossed the bridge,  
 and saw far over the artichoke fields  
 The big surf on the river-mouth sand-beach flinging spouts  
 of cold foam against the crimson of sundown.  
 He passed Point Lobos; before he reached Mal Paso the  
 color had died. The sheaves of the headlight rays, 290  
 And the night-bird flitting up with the light in its head  
 Reminded him of another dark drive alone. He'd left her a  
 mother of life then, but now she'd gone  
 To be mother of death.

## ENDNOTES

Verso leaf I. A letter from "The White House, Raphael Weill & Co., Inc., San Francisco, dated November Tenth, 1928" addressed to "Dear Madam:" regarding the annual "Christmas sale of Handkerchiefs" to be held the week of November 19–24, 1928.

Verso leaf II. 'No. He drove by here the other night, coming from Monterey, but he was too drunk to remember it.'

Verso leaf 22. 'III / Visitors came, not often; from Monterey, / Artist or writer, or some old tired companion / Of Cawdor's, down the black self-concentrated / And brooding coast under the ocean-ward hills / Notched like a gunstock tally with chiseled canyons / To the ocean: [L-----es] Canyon'.

Verso leaf 23. 'Santa Cruz mountains – white iris flowers in spring, well she remembered, at the rush of the redwoods [then 'the redwood rush'] – the country / Orchards and farms, the history the sounds of little people living normally - - - It was not sweet / To think of those [then 'of all those'] innumerable people, a few [then 'surely a few'] were enough - - - the ant hill furrow of the earth / Answering the ant hill [skies] - - - Beyond and beyond, like a wisp of shining fleece the long-shore fog bank / Covered her father's house and the small memories of home.'

Verso leaf 25. A full-page advertisement from *Home Magazine* for the book: *The power of thought; a series of simple, plain and practical lessons on the power of thought, or right thinking, the object being to show you how to acquire control of your hidden mental energies, so as to do the thing you want to do, be the person you want to be, and get the thing you want to get.* By J. Mullowney, M.D. There is no date on the advertisement, but the book was published in 1928.

# BOOK REVIEW

*The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers, Volume One, 1890–1930.* Edited by James Karman. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

A REVIEW WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS  
ON 1912, A YEAR OF TRANSITION,  
BY GERE S. diZEREGA, M.D.

The publication by Stanford University Press of the *Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers, Volume One, 1890–1930*, provides a foundational collection of documents for Jeffers studies. This edition, containing letters written by Robinson and Una Jeffers between 1890 and 1930, is the first of three planned volumes; volumes two and three will contain letters written between 1931 and 1939 and between 1940 and 1962, respectively.

On March 17, 1939, after reviewing Edith Greenan's memoir *Of Una Jeffers*, Una wrote to Greenan, "I have just finished reading your ms. and a flood of memories sweeps over me. . . . I had been saving these treasures for a later, quieter time. You've made me pause and look at some of them now, my 'invisible landscapes' . . . [A] place lived in year after year: the seasons revolve, sunshine and darkness cover it in turn, snow and rain fall upon the ever-changing human figures, until, at last, on that one field landscapes lie in layers like heaped-up leaves" (135). Karman goes on to say, "What Una says about memories—the way they fall like leaves from lived experience year after year yet never lose vitality on the ground of being—can be said about letters. . . . [L]etters themselves contain an indelible record of experience, a record that spans a lifetime—in this case, a lifetime shared by two people." And so Karman has gathered the letters of Jeffers and the selected letters of Una that "make visible the physical and psychological landscapes through which each once moved" (135). Karman evokes this theme at the beginning of volume one with a quote from *The Iliad*, Book VI:

Very like leaves  
 upon this earth are the generations of men—  
 old leaves, cast on the ground by wind, young leaves  
 the greening forest bears when spring comes in.  
 So mortals pass; one generation flowers  
 even as another dies away.

The success of Karman's efforts in collecting and editing is evidenced by the insight, heretofore not possible, that the volume provides into the lives of Jeffers and Una, especially in the early years of their relationship. Although the *Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, 1897–1962*, edited by Ann Ridgeway, was ground-breaking at the time, the present volume sheds new light on the events which germinated the life-long love of Jeffers and Una, including the dissolution of Una's marriage to Teddie Kuster, and the beginning of Jeffers's art, which, during its principal years of creation and publication in the 1920s, changed the direction of American letters. Readers of Karman's volume will relive these events in Jeffers's and Una's own voices.

As Karman notes in the explanation of his methodology, the preparation of the letters required "four major steps: collection, selection, transcription, and annotation" (135). By "letters" he means a variety of source documents, including autograph letters, letter fragments, notes, postcards, picture postcards, telegrams, and typed letters (draft, final, or copy). There have been other publications of letters penned by Jeffers and Una, most notably Ridgeway's *Selected Letters*, which contained approximately 413 letters by Jeffers and a few by Una. There are other notable forerunners, including the 64 letters of Una to Hazel Pinkham published in the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* as "Una Jeffers, Correspondent: Letters to Hazel Pinkham, 1912–1920," and 57 letters of Jeffers to Una written between 1910 and 1913 collected in *Where Shall I Take You To*, *The Love Letters of Una and Robinson Jeffers*, both edited by Rob Kafka.

Although Karman's *Collected Letters* does not contain correspondence of the Jefferses with their twin sons, Garth and Donnan, when they were in college, or Una's letters to Frieda Lawrence, or letters retained by dealers of rare books, it does contain approximately 1,000 letters by Jeffers and 2,000 by Una. Karman tells us that Una's letters in these volumes are, in general, limited to those "to, for, or about Jeffers; about their life together; or about herself," most of which are now available for the first time (138). They are accompanied by extensive footnotes that contain scholarly insight, criticism, and a variety of secondary sources for further study. Through this syllabus of the Jefferses' life and times, the reader becomes familiar with their voices and thought. Volume one is generously illustrated with 43 photographs, more than one-third of

which are shown for the first time (Rob Kafka, personal communication), including portraits of Jeffers, Una, their surviving children, and other family members, as well as images of the construction of Tor House and their first family trip abroad.

This review will primarily focus on the previously unpublished material, including the letters from Una to her then-husband Teddie Kuster, written in 1912 during her European trip demanded by Kuster in an ill-fated attempt to make her forget Jeffers, with whom she had been having an affair during the preceding two to three years. Although many of the remaining letters of volume one are available elsewhere, Karman's footnotes expand the reader's comprehension of those letters by introducing the people they met, worked with, and loved, the local events involving their family and residence, as well as concurrent events of the world around them. In so doing, Karman provides the reader with a comprehensive picture of their lives. In many places throughout this volume, the reader often becomes absorbed more in the detailed and informative footnotes than the letters themselves.

There are many reasons why someone not familiar with Jeffers should read this book. The footnotes portray the development of modernism in American letters as seen through the eyes of many of its creators during a time of vibrant change (1890–1930). The letters portray the evolution of sexual mores in America at the turn of the last century, when sexual attitudes evolved from Victorian to modern, and they reveal the impact this social shift had on those who held onto nineteenth-century standards. The tale of the Kuster marriage, told in Una's own voice, may become a classic case for gender studies. Karman's integration of these events into his Introduction, "The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers," constitutes the most recent and complete biography of Jeffers that we have. For those regular readers of *Jeffers Studies*, this volume also expands the source document base for Jeffers criticism by providing more than 60 new letters written by Jeffers or Una. Those from 1912 tell the previously untold story of Una's turning away from her husband after a decade of marriage to recast her life with Jeffers. The reader gets to know Una through her own voice and sees the early seeds of her thought that germinate in Jeffers's work. Finally, *The Collected Letters's* prodigious index is an essential tool for scholars, providing ready access to the time, places, and people that played such a large part in Jeffers's creative process. Once complete, *The Collected Letters* will be as compellingly indispensable as Tim Hunt's five-volume *Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*.



## METHODOLOGY

In spite of the condition of many letters, some original, some photocopies, many with blemishes or faint images, words in margins or entirely missing, Karman's transcription of these documents, as presented in this volume, provides remarkable clarity in content and style. The challenges of transcription can be appreciated when one considers the idiosyncratic punctuation of both Jeffers and Una, or the importance of a period, comma, or apostrophe, often difficult to discern, in the handwritten documents that constitute *The Collected Letters*, many of which are sixty to ninety years old. Karman's methodology derives, by his own statement, from standards set forth by the Association for Documentary Editing, the Society for Textual Scholarship, and the MLA (140). The letters can be read as they were written. As Karman states, "Much of the enjoyment of reading these letters comes from the experience of hearing the living voice and seeing the moving hand behind them" (140).

Source nomenclature identifies the document as an autograph letter, letter fragment, note, postcard, picture postcard, telegram, or typed letter (draft, final, or copy). In addition, the location of each letter is designated by its collector, institutional or private, as well as its previous appearances, printed or on the World Wide Web. Sequential numeration of the letters would have eased future referencing. Following each letter, Karman provides an annotation which includes the type of letter (for example handwritten or typed), the location, the number of pages, the letterhead, and often the postmark. Thereafter, the context and the people directly discussed or referenced in the letter are identified in footnotes. The "notes are explanatory rather than interpretive and concentrate on people, places, literary works, historical events, and major issues." This "information brings an individual's life into sharper focus and helps us better understand the shocks and sympathies Robinson and Una experienced through contact with friends, family, and the world." Karman generally succeeds in "identify[ing] every person whose name appears in this edition" (146). I found frequent and timely use of Wikipedia a welcome adjunct. With such additional information, Karman's work provides an introduction to the unfolding of modernism and its challenges in the United States between 1915 and 1930. The development of American arts and letters during this period, as well as the Jefferses' collective and individual views, emerges as an engaging story line often tangential to that of the letters themselves.

## THE LIFE AND WORK OF ROBINSON JEFFERS: AN INTRODUCTION

In the initial 146 pages of this 997-page volume, Karman weaves the framework of Jeffers's and Una's lives, separately and together, with those of the literary and cultural people and events they experienced. Karman's prior editing of the *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers* (1990) and *Of Una Jeffers: A Memoir*, by Edith Greenan (1988), as well as writing *Robinson Jeffers, Poet of California* (1995), provides a background for his retelling of Jeffers's story from birth in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on January 10, 1887, into a family overshadowed by the Greek classicism of his Presbyterian father, Dr. William Hamilton Jeffers, to his death on January 20, 1962 in Tor House. Karman's thorough yet elegant style transports the reader to that time of cultural transition following the turn of the century, through the tumult of World War I and into the 1920s, that Dionysian decade fueled by prohibition during which modernism flourished in literature, music, theater, and visual art.

Karman's historical contextualization of the 1920s puts Jeffers's contributions into perspective with the publication in 1924 at his own expense of *Tamar and Other Poems*. The "Introduction" develops Jeffers's relationship with Boni and Liveright and publication of *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* in 1925. The central themes of Jeffers's work are introduced by the principal publications of the 1920s as guideposts. Karman provides the reader with well-reasoned analysis of the story lines of Jeffers's major narrative poems and shares his insight of the interrelationships of the characters and their actions in those poems. The Greek themes of violence and incest as well as Jeffers's distillation of inhumanism and pantheism are integrated by Karman to provide the reader with necessary background for the letters that follow.

The years chronicled by volume one of *The Collected Letters* are brought to a close with the publication of *The Women at Point Sur* (1927), *Cawdor* (1928), and *Dear Judas* (1929). Karman offers glimpses into the controversy that followed publication of *Point Sur* by summarizing the interlocking relationships of the proto-gnostic Barclay, his family, and those in the house overlooking the lighthouse at Point Sur. The incessant building and partial release of tension recounted in *Point Sur*, Jeffers's narrative over 138 pages, is summarized by Karman in two pages, in which he contrasts Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, whose namesake novel was published in the same year, with Barclay to provide the reader with another dimension of America's response to the horrors of World War I. The influence of Carmel and the California coast on Jeffers's art is highlighted by the construction of Tor House and subsequently Hawk Tower during this period to support the literal and metaphorical role of granite. Following the creative "*anni mirabili*" (27) of

modernism (1921–1925), the volume concludes with the Jefferses' first trip together to the British Isles (Ireland, Scotland, England).

### THE LETTERS

The letters contained in this volume include those Una wrote “about the life she created with Jeffers. . . . [which] provide essential information” and insight into their day-to-day existence, their sons, Haig and other pets, business relationships, dreams both during the day and at night, and those fulfilled in their travel. “These, written to family and friends, are more intimate and unguarded than letters sent to students and scholars.” Una’s letters often support Jeffers’s assertion that “she was in many ways a mediator between me and the world.” Regarding their more interpersonal life, “Jeffers’ behavior, work habits, and moods; marriage strains; visitors and guests, travel to the British Isles and Taos; books read; political convictions; . . . relationships with others; . . . these letters provide a comprehensive portrait of the life Robinson and Una shared” as summarized by Karman (138–39). They confirm, Karman quotes Jeffers, that Una “never saw any of my poems until they were finished and typed. . . . yet by her presence and conversation she has co-authored every one of them.” The reader of these letters gains “access to the passions and torments, interest, prejudices, and convictions that define her as an individual.” As a result, those familiar with Jeffers’s poetry and prose revisit their creation with a fuller appreciation of Una’s role. Karman concludes that Jeffers, himself, “cannot be understood apart from Una” (139).

Karman utilizes the initial letters and postcards (1890–1907) from Jeffers or Una to their respective family members to familiarize the reader with the Jeffers and Call families through a series of footnotes: where they lived, what they paid for housing, what they ate, and the extent of their education. Karman provides the reader an opportunity to “meet” and “develop a relationship” with Jeffers and Una before they themselves meet. At the age of 18, Una secretly married Teddie on May 31, 1902, and then again April 25, 1903, in a church with family present in Mason, Michigan, where Una’s family lived.

The first letter from Jeffers to Una is dated sometime in 1910, with a following letter of August 10, 1910; the first from Una to Jeffers, September 14, 1910. In these letters, they explicitly and enthusiastically profess their love for one another.

The development of their relationship is related by Una in letters to Jeffers: “things seemed so very intricate, so hopelessly complicated—oh—sweetheart, if we work and hope and be good children! is it possible—can happiness wait us?” (August 10, 1910); “I didnt mean to cry

today—I meant to show you how brave I could be, —but not to see your dear eyes—not to feel your lips against my throat— —the intolerable pain I am to feel through endless months, came over me like a flood” (September 14, 1910); “I have a mad passion for you [and Beauty]. . . . I am yours and I shall walk softly all my days until we can take each other’s hands and fare forth for those wild red vivid joys we two must know together. . . . I must train my good young body to be supple and strong and enduring—fit mate for you dearest” (September 15, 1910). They were together on September 16, 1910. Then, in a letter dated September 19, 1910, Una writes to Jeffers: “I cannot cease to send incessant thanks to providence—or what you will—for sending me this good sweet love—this so marvelous passion!— thanks too, that we had the courage to open our arms—and seize our joy.” That the love story of Jeffers and Una is available only from letters written by Una is likely due to Kuster’s confiscation in 1912 of whatever letters Jeffers sent her during these early days of their life-long love affair (169–71).

#### 1912: A TRANSITION YEAR

The first letter in this volume from Una to Hazel Pinkham, her closest friend at the time, is dated April 1912. Una provides some details of her pending Kuster-required trip to Europe planned for April 30, 1912. Una tells Hazel that “Im sending Teddie today a little etching . . . it is myself—as I know myself when I am in what I tell Teddie is a flighting mood” (177, 184). The first available letter Una writes Kuster from Europe is the nineteenth letter of the trip (May 24, 1912). Throughout this 1,300-word letter describing sights and experiences of European travel, Una provides her husband the promise of their life together upon her return. Six and a half months later, one month after she returned to the United States, Una was engaged to Jeffers. The intervening events, documented by the unbroken series of letters by Una to Kuster, tell a compelling story not previously available.

Her letter of June 5, 1912 (number 26) complains, “It is a week this morning since I had a letter from you, I hope to find one waiting me at Cork” (202). Two weeks later, in letter 33, she tells Kuster that she is planning to end her trip prematurely and return, where and when, she is not certain. That seems to be up to Kuster. However, she closes this letter: “don’t you spose you could find it in your heart to write little more *oftener*? If you could know how I need your help!—” (223). Then, in the middle of a 1,800-word letter (number 35, written June 22, 1912), after declaring that she is returning and listing various options for further education and employment, describing challenges her parents and family in Michigan created for her professional advancement due to her

gender, the consequences she faced when her mother learned of her secret marriage to Kuster in 1902, after their family marriage in Mason, Michigan, in 1903, she pleads with Kuster “to let me be with you” so he will realize “how hard I am striving to be the kind of girl you want, by seeing I am not a *monster*” and that his “future is too big to be wrecked by a merely physical act {of another}” (226). This letter abruptly ends: “Teddie, when did I ever say, as you quoted in your letter, that I ‘wanted Teddie to pay too?’” Una added eight Xs (presumably kisses) at the bottom of the previous page.

The vocabulary and sentence structure of Una’s language abruptly shifts in her letter to Kuster dated July 9, 1912, signaling an irreversible change. Since it is the touchstone of their relationship and a letter to which Karman provides Kuster’s response in a series of footnotes, it deserves close attention. It is a vivid and impassioned description and defense of Una’s sexual awakening. She writes, “When you married me I was absolutely and utterly unsophisticated. In all matters of sex . . . I was as innocent as an infant. *You* awakened desire in me and *you* left that desire unsatisfied.” She describes the experience of suppressing her feelings and the growing resentment toward Kuster, and continues: “I *knew* it was normal, my passion—I knew it was right it should be satisfied and I felt I was being cheated. . . . I came to feel you were not my equal sexually and when later we discussed it and you laid the blame on the condoms I felt you were making the excuse that came *easiest* {most} easily to your mind” (237–38).

Una also describes her investigations into sexuality: “After a few years I began to read and *know*. At last during the preceding few years I have known enough about the physiology and psychology of sex to see the rights of my case. Where I had felt vaguely cheated, {or sometimes that I was a monster of abnormality}, I now knew definitely, and grew to know {also} I was under, rather than oversexed” (239). “Therefore,” she continues, “it seemed to me merely a nice and fitting thing when Fate gave into my hands a man much more than equal to any demands or desires I could ever make or feel” (239). Una ends this 1,700-word letter, which is exclusively about her marriage and respective sexuality, “I am not willing to be mauled around just because I ought to be ‘down’ U. K.” (240).

Kuster’s response to this letter is presented by Karman in the 24 footnotes that follow this letter. The reader is encouraged to read a passage from Una’s letter and then consider Kuster’s specific response to that passage contained in a footnote before going back to read the next passage in Una’s letter, and so on. In this way Karman creates a dialogue between the couple which contrasts Kuster’s Victorian attitude toward sex as a physiologic function generally limited to procreation with Una’s

perception of sexuality as a central component of human being. As these young people with all good intentions attempted to unite their lives with a lasting love, they found their relationship, and as a result their marriage, a tragic victim of differences in their views of sexuality during the period of shifting social norms that occurred in America during the first decade of the twentieth century.

Karman allows Kuster's voice to emerge via footnotes from Teddie's 17-page letter dated July 25, 1912, responding to Una's. For example, his rebuttal to her charge that condoms became an excuse for his avoidance of sex: "In your thought that I was making the excuse that came most easily to my mind when I laid the blame on the 'condoms', you are again frightfully unfair. It is true, of course, that in later years you had come to lose your sexual attraction for me to the extent that the condoms no longer played such an important role. The accursed things had done their work" (241). He continues, "your continued insistence on the use of these devices [condoms] year after year . . . to produce indefinitely a condition of wholly unnecessary voluntary sterility . . . your incessant reading of contemporaneous erotic literature and the gradually increasing 'advancedness' on your views on questions of the moral, the immoral, and the 'unmoral'—all these things, among others, not only made you less loveable to me, in general, but rapidly made you less and less a 'womanly woman', sexually speaking, in my eyes" (242).

Una continued her accusations to Teddie in "an addenda" to her letter of July 9, 1912, dated July 11, 1912, where she discusses use of condoms in prostitution, suggests that Teddie is mistaken to consider "that using the condoms is a kind of masturbation," recalls her multiple requests that he consult a physician to "find some anaphrodisiac," and condemns the alternative of "the use of douches by women afterwards. I can't think of anything more uncomfortable than when one is at the height of this affair . . . just in the fair way to reach an orgasm—to bound out and take a douche," and recommends that, as she believes there are no specialists in Los Angeles, that for another opinion Teddie speak with a "woman doctor" who, although having no "technical knowledge" on the matter of "sex psychology of women," would at least have her own experiences to draw upon. Una contends that "the ordinary man being still in the last-century frame of mind thinks he still has the only right to an enjoyment of the sexual act. His wife at the most is a useful aid or instrument, —a submissive gift of god for his pleasure." As regards Teddie's reference to Una's "plunges into erotic literature," she writes: "Dont, please be a person from Terre Haute [from where Teddie's family had come]. You cant by any dislike of yours for sex, push it from its central place in literature. . . . It is the moving force, the basic

force . . .” She concludes that through her relationship with Jeffers she has learned that there is nothing “abnormal about me . . . and find myself even a person of *not* hyper-desire” (246–48).

On August 6, 1912, Teddie sent a letter to Una confirming that “I *have* met a young girl whose unconscious influence on the situation, not as an individual, but as representing a compelling idea, is difficult to estimate. . . . I am not so shabby as to be trying to deal out ‘poetic justice’ to you; also be assured that I don’t intend to permit my love of purity of body and soul to rush me into the first pair of unsullied white arms that I may see” (265). Within a year, Teddie married this “young girl,” Edith Emmons. In Una’s letter to Teddie dated August 18, 1912, she exclaims “—so now I know!!” referring to Teddie’s letter of July 25 and follow-up letter of August 6 where he tells her of their divorce proceedings: “On July 31st the interlocutory decree was formally entered.” Further, he encloses clippings from the local newspapers. The *Los Angeles Times* article contained a photograph of Una with a caption that described her as the “Wife of Attorney Edward G. Kuster and one of the best-known members of the city’s circles of culture, who was yesterday made the defendant in a divorce action avowedly the result of her alleged advanced ideas of social obligation.” An accompanying story entitled “Ideas of Mysticism Lead to Divorce” cited “Una’s interest in the works of George Moore, Ibsen, Tolstoy, and others, all of whom helped justify her ‘discontent with modern conditions, particularly with reference to the domestic relations, especially with reference to the law of the husband’” (267). With this knowledge, Una states in her letter to Teddie of August 18, 1912, “I did not agree that there could be no happiness in store for us together—but I shall plead with you no more” (266). The shifting attitudes of American culture at the birth of the twentieth century are vividly portrayed by this exchange of letters between Teddie and Una. Trapped in an ambiguous sexuality clothed in a “last-century frame of mind,” Teddie’s inability to recognize or respond to his wife’s rapidly evolving notions of gender equality in the workplace and bedroom produced tragic consequences for their marriage.

Una’s return to the United States is documented in her letters of October, 1912; she eventually arrived in San Francisco in November, taking residence in the St. Francis Hotel where she met with Kuster and later Jeffers. *The Collected Letter’s* initial communication between Jeffers and Una after her return is her September 22, 1912 letter followed by her October letter with plans for arrival in San Francisco and the Kuster meeting. Jeffers’s initial correspondence to her is dated November 5, 1912, and follows up with a telegram a week later announcing his plans to arrive in San Francisco. On November 21, 1912, Jeffers writes to Una, “Our three days in San Francisco were perfect—perfect as you are”

(290), and he playfully continues, "I'm going to try to do better than I have, and become a mate fit for you. . . . I won't always be humble. But sometimes haughty and fierce—beware!—you don't know what an ogre I'll turn out when once married. . . . It feels funny, and—nice, to be writing a letter to one's fiancée" (291).

The rapid progression of their relationship is summarized in Una's letter to Hazel Pinkham on November 19, 1912:

Robin has been here and I *do* love him quite as madly as I ever fancied at my *maddest*. Happily he loves me too and wishes to marry me! . . . I think I'll develop a splendid character if I marry him—the noble capable type—or perish. . . . Hazel dear—do *you* feel I am corrupt? Teddie doesn't and Robin doesn't and I cant feel a bit that I am.

Please dont. (288)

Legal dissolution of the marriage occurred on August 1, 1913. Jeffers and Una married the next day as did Kuster and Edith Emmons, whose seven-year marriage remained childless.

Jeffers's typical understatement of his writing and publishing accomplishments is first expressed in a letter to Una dated November 5, 1912, when he states, "I am having a book of verse brought, out, under John S. McGroarty's supervision, by the Grafton Pub. Co., who publish the West Coast Magazine. McGroarty (of the Mission Play, etc.) is become a good friend of mine, and praises my production in an exaggerated and satisfactory manner" (284). *Flagons and Apples*, Jeffers's first book, published at his own expense, containing 33 poems, was released December 4, 1912. Many references to the book and its reception are contained in Jeffers's letters, and we get a glimpse into his early ideas about and ambitions for his writing. In a letter to Una dated December 8, 1912, he states "I'm mailing you to-day, sweetheart, the Times book-number; which contains, on page 17, the maiden review of my verses—written [under Willard Wright's by-line] by myself" (311). Later the same day, he writes, "I think perhaps I'll write some verse; or else start the novel I spoke about in San. F." In his proposed plot, the heroine, based on Una, "falls in love several times; and makes each of her victims amount to something worthwhile"—an extraordinary story line for a fiancé to use in his first novel about his beloved (312). He goes on to say in a letter the following day (December 9, 1912) that he completed the first three chapters that night and states "Now that I'm—quasi—married, it seems very evident to me that parents ought to have the right of life and death over their children" (evidently in response to a letter from Una, which is not available, referencing the Cain and Abel theme). He goes on to say, "I told my mother this morning, that my future wife—you—is to be named *Judas*—because she shall have charge of the money-bag" (314).



Jeffers's subsequent lifestyle is intimated in these early letters. On December 3, 1912, he wrote Una, "Wright [Willard H. Wright, literary critic for *The Los Angeles Times*] is very insistent with me to go east with him when he goes, and promises me all kinds of fine positions in N. Y. journalism. Which is all very well; but as soon as he is done reviewing my book I shall tell him that I'd rather play with trees than with magazines" (300). The back-and-forth of Jeffers and Una is documented in alternating series of letters over the time of their courting and marriage. Although the content is often typical of young adults, their views of the future they anticipate sharing together are distinctly atypical. Their respective studies of forestry at the University of Washington and work towards a teaching certificate at the University of California at Berkeley, the shared avant-garde views on literature, philosophy, music, and theater, as well as impressions of the people they encountered, are developed in footnotes, the lengths of which sometimes exceed that of the referenced letters.

#### FOOTNOTES

Through prodigious use of footnotes, Karman elucidates major influences on Jeffers's creative process: the people who influenced the Jefferses, the life they and their twin sons lived on the Carmel coast absent electricity or a nearby food market, and the interplay of Jeffers's classical European education with the horror of World War I. The index, containing over 850 personal names, is a literary Who's Who of 1910–1930, and a guide to the rapid development in American letters of this period—all presented in exhaustive footnotes.

Karman's integrative use of footnotes to enhance the reader's understanding and appreciation of the letters is typified by a footnote to a letter written by Jeffers to Una, December 10, 1912, in which Jeffers quotes a few lines from an unidentified poem. Karman identifies the author as Yeats, and provides the entire poem for context. A following passing reference by Jeffers to Dierdre is glossed, with the addition of two references for the reader's further study. A second example of the value of Karman's footnotes is found in relation to Jeffers's comment, "I'll have them print Heroes—or Songs and Heroes—whatever it's to be"—the importance of which Karman provides in the last footnote to this letter: "*Songs and Heroes* was the working title for a collection of poems Jeffers planned to publish after *Flagons and Apples*. He eventually abandoned the project; however, an edition containing thirty-three poems from this period eventually appeared as *Songs and Heroes*, ed. Robert J. Brophy (Los Angeles: Arundel, 1988)" (317).

The general content of these letters, written over an extended period of physical separation, are, as Una states, “psychological” in nature, filled with literary references (including Greek, Roman, German, French, Swedish, Russian, and British authors—but comparatively few from the U.S.). For example, Jeffers in a letter dated December 14, 1912 writes, “But the Greek lyrists are the *thing*. Archilochus—Sappho—Alcaeus—so the good pedants have handed us down just a few miserable patches of their old magnificence” (326–27). In each case, Karman provides the reader with sufficient description of the referenced author, often the very work referenced in the letter, and the relevance of that work to allow fuller appreciation of the letter. In addition, the reader often finds Karman’s footnotes sufficiently interesting in themselves to initiate a new search for literature previously unknown or underappreciated—as such, these footnotes function as a book “within a book.” Karman’s scholarship of literary sources discussed in letters by both Jeffers and Una would make a useful reading list for studies of modernism.

An uncommon instance where footnotes might have been welcome but were not available occurs in a letter from Jeffers to Una dated December 16, 1912: “Do you remember—even less that a year ago—on Mt Lowe—*when you proposed to me (N. B.)*—how hopeless I was?” (333). The reader is intrigued by the language and Jeffers’s assertion that it was Una who proposed.

The important contribution to Jeffers studies that Karman makes via his footnotes can be appreciated by comparing the letters which tell of the milestones in the Jefferses’ lives that occur in volume one with those previously available in *The Selected Letters*. The marriage of Una and Robin occurred August 2, 1913 in Tacoma. That event and their plans thereafter are described in a letter by Jeffers to Melissa Nash, who kept his room at Hermosa Beach and became a “second mother” to him during this period. In *The Collected Letters*, Nash and the basis of her relationship with Jeffers is described in a footnote; in *The Selected Letters* there is no additional information. Letters regarding Una’s initial pregnancy which prevented their settling in Europe, the loss of their one-day-old child, their subsequent move to La Jolla and continued visitations by Teddie and his new wife, Edith, are all footnoted in Karman; these letters are not available in Ridgeway. Similarly, Una’s letter of March 1914, which mentions “Mrs. Lummis,” whose husband built the Lummis House in Pasadena that Jeffers possibly visited and might have inspired Tor House, is provided in Karman’s notes, but is absent in *The Selected Letters*. The Jefferses moved to Carmel in 1914, a collection of 500 inhabitants two years before it was incorporated into a village. Una’s letters of late 1914 and 1915, detailing her initial experiences and privations in Carmel, are brought to life by Karman’s footnotes, which

introduce many of the early occupants of Carmel and life in the isolated artists' community by the sea. A letter from Jeffers to Dr. Lyman Stookey dated January 18, 1917 is provided in both collections. In a footnote Karman makes clear the importance of Lyman Stookey and Jeffers's relationship with his brother, Byron; in the *Selected* we are left guessing. Jeffers's first mention of the publication of *Californians* occurs on January 19, 1917, and later correspondence in March of 1917 is followed by footnotes developing the importance of Jeffers's second book and Jeffers's early literary activities in context; all absent from the earlier collection.

In Jeffers's first letter to Una after their settling in a small cottage in Carmel, written on June 26, 1917, he describes locations on the Big Sur Coast that later become settings for his lyrical and narrative poems, as well as many of the characters he meets who later provide components of personality and experience for his narratives. In over a page and a half of footnotes, Karman provides extensive background for this 1,800-word letter, including its origin from Pfeiffer's Ranch Resort and the background of many of the people and locations mentioned; all of this is missing in *Selected Letters*. The same can be said for another letter of Jeffers to Una written on another trip in the Sur country August 17, 1917, as well as Una's letter to Hazel Pinkham of November, 1917.

We learn of Jeffers's brother, Hamilton, and of Teddie's continued difficulties resulting in his suspension from law practice in footnotes to Una's letter to Hazel of January 10, 1919. Teddie's divorce from Edith in March 1920, his subsequent purchase of property close to the Jefferses in Carmel, where he built a house, and his marriage to Ruth McDowell, April 21, 1922, are all described in a footnote to Una's letter to Hazel of May 1922. A letter that appears both in *Collected Letters* (July 13, 1924) and *Selected Letters* (Sunday, 1924) from Jeffers to George Sterling is followed by three footnotes in Ridgeway's volume that document secondary sources of information; Karman's ten footnotes provide explanations and insights relative to the letter. The remaining letters of the later 1920s, when Jeffers's principal published work was created, published, honored, questioned, and criticized, contain Jeffers's responses to those events, often written by Una, as well as Una's own story of her family as told most often to Hazel Pinkham. It is Una's letters that move this volume forward more as a novel of its own, all underpinned by Karman's footnotes which clarify the events and personalities of the time combined with the distraction of fame, growth of their children, and challenges resulting from marriage strains. Karman becomes a second narrator, using footnotes as a method to integrate these many forces into the story of Jeffers's art.

The expansion of new information available to Jeffers studies can be appreciated by consideration of the new letters of Jeffers in *The Collected*

Letters that were not available in *Selected Letters*. For example, from the beginning of the 1920s to the time Jeffers's family departed for the British Isles, Ridgeway provides 146 of Jeffers's letters; Karman makes available more than 60 additional letters, most followed by intriguing footnotes. These include Jeffers's letters to Donald Friede, a principal of his publisher, Boni and Liveright, written April 24, 1926, where *Point Alma Venus* is initially mentioned; May 18, 1926, where *Tower Beyond Tragedy* is discussed together with *Moby Dick*. Of particular interest are the eight letters by Jeffers to Edgar Lee Masters, who provides the following copy for the front jacket of *Point Sur*, as stated in Karman's footnote: "I think *The Women at Point Sur* is the greatest poem produced in America in many years. It has the intensity of Sophocles in it; the crash and thunder of the Pacific . . ." (683). Other interesting bits of information and details appear throughout the volume. For example, in a letter accompanying return of the roughly 175 pages of proofs for *Point Sur* to Liveright dated May 11, 1927, Jeffers explains that "There was almost nothing for me to correct except the three passages to which you called my attention" (669); a letter of July 3, 1927 contains the first appearance of a brief lyric poem titled "Grass on the Cliff," which later became section VII of "The Broken Balance"; and a 13-page letter dated 1928 (768–80) contains a series of answers to general interrogatives. This last item appears in an abbreviated form as "Answers to a Questionnaire" in *The Collected Poetry* (4: 552–55). The inclusion of Una's more complete answers here provides richer insight into the family's daily lives during the formative period of Jeffers's career.

### CONCLUSION

The decade of the 1920s, which saw the publication of *Tamar and Other Poems*, *Roan Stallion*, *The Women at Point Sur*, *Cawdor and Other Poems*, and *Dear Judas and Other Poems*, is Jeffers's most creative period. *The Collected Letters* makes available to the general public for the first time essentially all of Una's letters written during this period, many of which are in excess of 1,000 words. When taken together, these letters and their annotations create a window into the Jefferses' life with their sons; Jeffers's major breakthrough with *Tamar*, as well as his confusion, defense, and disillusionment in response to the criticism engendered by *Point Sur*; his embrace of formulaic Greek and biblical themes; and finally their initial family trip to the British Isles, during which Una shares her Gaelic experiences of 1912 and Jeffers ponders the next steps of his journey.

In his review of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, Robert Zaller wrote that "George L. White set three tasks for a new generation of

Jeffers scholars: a collected edition of the poetry; a collected edition of the letters; and a new biography.” Hunt produced *The Collected Poetry* and its chronological development in his monumental volume five. Now Karman has given us the first of three planned volumes of *The Collected Letters*. In addition, in volume one, Karman has meaningfully expanded the biographies of both Jeffers and Una. *The Collected Letters* will become as compellingly indispensable as Hunt’s *Collected Poetry*. The readers of *Jeffers Studies* eagerly anticipate the availability of *Collected Letters*, volume two, 1931–1940, which might be released by Stanford University Press later in 2010.

#### WORKS CITED

- Brophy, Robert. *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems*. Cleveland and London: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1973.
- Greenan, Edith. *Of Una Jeffers: A Memoir by Edith Greenan*. Ed. James Karman. Ashland, OR: Story Line P, 1998.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Tim Hunt. 5 vols. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988–2001.
- . *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, 1897–1962*. Ed. Ann N. Ridgeway. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins P, 1968.
- Karman, James. “A Note on William Hamilton Jeffers.” *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* 42 (1975): 9–11.
- . Introduction. *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*. Ed. Karman. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1990. 1–21.
- . Introduction. *Stones of the Sur*. Ed. Karman. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2001. 1–21.
- . “Terror/Terroir: Jeffers and the Poetry of Place.” *Jeffers Studies* 6:1 (2002): 13–20.
- . *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*. Ashland, OR: Story Line P, 1995.
- Lucretius. *De Rerum Natura*. Trans. W. H. D. Rouse. London: William Heinemann, 1982.
- Zaller, Robert. Rev. of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* and *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. *Jeffers Studies* 6:1 (2002): 5.

# NEWS AND NOTES

The Jeffers community lost a stalwart and indefatigable advocate with the death of John Hicks on May 19, 2010. John served as president of the Tor House Foundation from 1993 to 2000, and for many years was one of its trustees. A graduate of Middlebury College in Vermont, he later taught literature at Tufts University, at Wesleyan University, and for 30 years at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

As president of the Tor House Foundation, John fostered a synergy between the Foundation and the RJA, which was founded about the same time that he became president. He and his wife Priscilla were regular attendees at RJA conferences. John's efforts on behalf of the Jeffers project were determined and sustained; the close cooperation of the two "sister organizations" owes much to his leadership and vision.

\* \* \*

John Courtney, former Vice President of the Tor House Foundation and a member of the Robinson Jeffers Association advisory board, died on April 17, 2010. John's enthusiasm for Jeffers's poetry, and his continual questioning of and appeal to it in the light of his wide-ranging readings in evolution and contemporary science, are a keen reminder of the persistent relevance of Jeffers's work. He also led many Poetry Walks during the Fall Tor House Festivals. While everyone present was invited to read a poem by Jeffers or some other poet, John's readings always adhered to a theme that he had chosen. John will also be remembered as a preeminently skilled and knowledgeable hiker in Jeffers Country.

In 1998, John supplied excerpts from Jeffers's poetry with his customary careful consideration for an exhibit of "The Walk through Time" in Pacific Grove, sponsored by the Global Community (<<http://www.globalcommunity.org>>). To view "The Walk through Time" online (absent John's contribution to the Pacific Grove exhibit) go to <<http://conexions.org/take-online-walk-through-time>>.

In his enthusiasm for a religious rebirth founded upon science, John attended in February 2000 the first congress of the World Pantheist Movement conference in Rome, on the 400th anniversary, and at the

site, of Giordano Bruno's martyrdom at the stake. John's very thoughtful address, illuminating both to Jeffers's readers as well as those who have never encountered him, is available online at <<http://www.pantheism.net/paul/jeffers.htm>>.

\* \* \*

The collections in the James S. Copley Library, an elegant private library in La Jolla, California, have been sold at auction. Among the library's significant collections (mostly centering on American history and Mark Twain) was a collection of Jeffersiana, including several manuscripts and letters, and many limited-edition fine-press issues. The entire collection was sold at Sotheby's, New York, for \$14,000—an astonishingly low price, considering that a copy of *Granite and Cypress*, the 1975 magnum opus of fine-pressman William Everson, was included. For a summary of the contents of this collection, see the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* 84 (Fall 1992), page 23. The Copley Library was funded by the Copley newspaper empire, publisher of numerous local newspapers in Southern California, led by the flagship *San Diego Union-Tribune*. The Copley Press went out of business due to declining advertising revenue. The handsome building has been purchased by a La Jollan, who will use it to display his collection of memorabilia of the 1960s singing group "The Four Seasons," as well as other art, books, and fossils.

\* \* \*

Tim Hunt's collection of poems *Fault Lines* was published by The Backwaters Press in December 2009.

\* \* \*

In April 2009, Cambridge University Press published Robert Zaller's *The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers* in paperback.

\* \* \*

On January 30, 2010, at the UCSC Monterey Bay Education, Science, and Technology Center in Marina, Rob Kafka gave a one-hour PowerPoint presentation to 75 members of the Ventana Wilderness Alliance on "Jeffers's Encounters with the Big Sur Region." The event was enhanced by displays of period maps of the Los Padres National Forest provided by Boon Hughey, and the USGS topographical maps that Jeffers himself used, on loan from Lindsay Jeffers.

## 2011 ROBINSON JEFFERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

February 18–20, 2011

Long Beach, California

*Conference Theme: The Mid-Length Narratives**Co-sponsored by: Department of English, CSU Long Beach**Keynote Reader and Speaker: B. H. Fairchild,  
Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award*

*Call for Papers:* In his well-known essay “Can Poetry Matter?” Dana Gioia points out that narrative poems of middle length “have played an important role in English from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* to Browning’s major dramatic monologues, but today they are shunned by editors, publishers, and critics alike.” Robinson Jeffers is justly renowned for his lyrics of the natural world, politics, and family, for his book-length narrative poems, and for his tragic dramas, but Jeffers also wrote at least half a dozen mid-length narrative poems that are masterpieces of the genre. These poems, most of which can be read aloud in well under an hour, span his career, from “Roan Stallion” in the early 1920s to “Hungerfield” almost 30 years later, and constitute an exciting body of work that deserves to be treated as a whole.

The Robinson Jeffers Association invites proposals on any aspects of Jeffers’s mid-length narratives (“Roan Stallion,” “Resurrection,” “Solstice,” “Margrave,” “Mara,” “Hungerfield,” etc.) in the context of American poetry and literature and culture broadly conceived, including comparisons with other poets, writers, and artists, definitional and theoretical concerns, and more. As usual, serious papers on other subjects and on the relation of Jeffers to other writers, artists, and thinkers are also welcome.

*Proposals for papers should be relatively brief and must be postmarked by December 15, 2010.* The conference has a number of different formats and includes opportunities for standard academic talks (15–20 mins.), longer plenary presentations, responses to longer talks, panel chairs, participation in discussion sections, and poetry readings.

Please send all queries and proposals to Erika Koss, Executive Director, at [ExecutiveDirector@RobinsonJeffersAssociation.org](mailto:ExecutiveDirector@RobinsonJeffersAssociation.org).



## ROBINSON JEFFERS ASSOCIATION UNVEILS RENOVATED WEBSITE

In February 2009 at the Boulder conference of the Robinson Jeffers Association, the board and the membership approved a redesign of the Association's website. Malinda Miller, a new Association member and the Associate Director of Media Relations at the University of Colorado, generously offered to serve as Project Manager for this challenging task. Malinda assembled a working group that included Rob Kafka (treasurer), George Hart (editor of *Jeffers Studies*), Peter Quigley (designer of the original website and immediate-past RJA president), David J. Rothman (current RJA president), Bob Brophy, and a number of web designers and other technical support staff, and set to work. Over time, the new RJA executive director Erika Koss also joined the project, and a wide range of others, including Tim Hunt, Boon Hughey, the docents at Tor House, and many more contributed new copy, proofreading help, links, resources, photographs, design advice, and other support.

As of early October 2010, after more than 18 months of hard work, thousands of emails, and endless revisions, the site was poised to go live. It is the product of a great deal of collective energy donated by scores of people. Those who have worked on the project have sought to make it one of the strongest sites devoted to any American author. Among other features, the site now has full e-commerce capacity, enabling new members to join, old members to renew, donors to contribute, and conference-goers to register with the click of a mouse. There is also a news feature with information about current events of interest to members, along with direct links to information about all previous RJA conferences, back issues of *Jeffers Studies*, a fully searchable critical bibliography, resources for teachers in K-12 and post-secondary institutions, RJA governance information and documents, and more.

It is the hope of the Association that this new site will make Jeffers available to as wide a range of teachers, students, scholars, critics, and editors as possible, and those who worked on the project welcome your feedback. Please visit <[www.RobinsonJeffersAssociation.org](http://www.RobinsonJeffersAssociation.org)> and let RJA know what you think.

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The editor of a book collection tentatively called *The Wild That Attracts Us: New Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers* invites proposals for essays that evidence the advance in Jeffers scholarship, especially since the publication of the most recent collections in the early and mid-1990s. Since the publication of those volumes, there have been significant accomplishments in Jeffers scholarship: the entire five volumes of the

*Collected Poetry* and the first of three volumes of the *Collected Letters* have been released, *Jeffers Studies* was established, and the Robinson Jeffers Association has flourished. Given the enlivened atmosphere of Jeffers scholarship, the time is right for a new collection of essays, one that significantly adds to the body of critical work on Robinson Jeffers.

To that end, proposals are invited for essays that specifically address the critical sea-change of the past two decades, especially as it concerns Jeffers study, including but not limited to: the full advance of ecocriticism; the re-imagining of regionalism as place studies; the continuing development of cultural studies and the new historicism; the development of the New Formalism; the increasingly poignant vector of science and literature; the advances in narratology; the glaring omission of feminist analysis in Jeffers scholarship; the similar dearth of writing about the teaching of Jeffers. The primary audience for this project will be academic, faculty, and students primarily at the undergraduate and graduate level; secondary audiences would include the general public, especially given that Jeffers has long maintained an energetic and mindful readership.

Proposals should be 750–1,000 words, include a clear title, highlight a unique contribution to Jeffers scholarship, and provide the editor with an unambiguous argument as to Jeffers's poetry, the critical tactics undertaken by the essay's author, and the significance of the essay to Jeffers scholarship as a whole. The deadline for proposals is December 31, 2010. Proposals may be sent either electronically or in hard copy to ShaunAnne Tangney, Associate Professor of English, Humanities Division, Minot State University, 500 University Ave. W, Minot, ND 58707, sa.tangney@minotstateu.edu.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Axelrod, Stephen Gould. "Jeffers Redux." *Resources for American Literary Study* 29 (2003): 317–30. A review-essay of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, which Axelrod claims "puts other editions of twentieth-century American poets to shame," *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, and *Stones of the Sur*. Includes discussions of "Roan Stallion," "Tamar," and a handful of lyric poems from throughout Jeffers's career.

Bradley, Nicholas. "Men with Guts: Al Purdy, Robinson Jeffers, and Geopoetic Influence." *Canadian Poetry* 62 (2008): 44–63. Examines importance of geology in the work of Jeffers and Canadian poet Al Purdy (1918–2000), also briefly linking both with contemporary Canadian poet Don McKay. Bradley discusses Jeffers's influence on Purdy, surveying the younger poet's comments on Jeffers in poetry

and prose. Both poets use geological ideas to stage an “ontological inquiry” into humanity’s place in the universe, though Purdy’s view accommodates the comic and absurd more readily.

Cusatis, John. “Studying Robinson Jeffers.” *Encyclopedia of American Literature*. New York: Facts on File, 2007.

Davis, William V. “‘The Lame Feet of Salvation’: A Reading of R. S. Thomas and Robinson Jeffers.” *Renascence* 60.2 (2008): 161–76. Compares the pantheism and “agnostic piety” of Jeffers and R. S. Thomas, a Welsh Anglican priest, with a particular focus on their response to similarly rugged coastlines and attention to predatory birds.

McClintock, Scott. “The Poetics of Fission in Robinson Jeffers.” *Clio* 37.2 (2008): 171–91. Examines Jeffers’s literary reputation and poetry in the context of post-WWII culture. McClintock argues that the new critical rejection of Jeffers parallels Cold War rhetoric of containment, which projected a masculinized control over a feminized hysteria.

Quigley, Peter. “‘Battle Is a Burning Flower’: Natural Beauty as the Basis for Jeffers’s Opposition to War and His Commitment to Political Neutrality.” *American Studies in Scandinavia* 40.1–2 (2008): 25–49. Offers a corrective to views that characterize Jeffers as glorifying violence and war, placing his work in the context of the neutrality/America First movement and connecting it with Asian views of nature and humanity such as Lao Tzu’s. Ultimately, Quigley argues that Inhumanism is Jeffers’s philosophical justification for the political position of neutrality.

Richardson, Edmund. “Re-living the Apocalypse: Robinson Jeffers’ *Medea*.” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 11.3 (2005): 369–82. Reads *Medea* alongside *The Double Axe* in order to demonstrate that the play contains many of the same political points as the poems. Drawing on Jeffers’s interest in the work of Oswald Spengler, Richardson argues that Jeffers used an ancient narrative to comment on the contemporary world, especially the threat of world annihilation posed by the atomic bomb.

## CONTRIBUTORS

*Dirk Aardsma* is an independent scholar living in Washington, DC. His transcription of the Library of Congress “Cawdor” draft appeared in *Jeffers Studies* 10.2/11.1–2.

*Temple Cone* is an associate professor of English at the U.S. Naval Academy and the author of several poetry collections.

*John Cusatis* teaches English and journalism at the School of the Arts in Charleston, SC. He is the author of *Understanding Colum McCann* and editor of *Postwar Literature, 1945–1970*. He has published articles on some two dozen American writers. His essay “The Curious Desire of Knowing: Robinson Jeffers and the Poetry of Science” will appear in the forthcoming anthology *Restoring the Mystery of the Rainbow: Literature’s Refraction of Science*.

*Gere S. diZerega, M.D.* is a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. He would like to thank Laura diZerega, Margaret diZerega, Gus diZerega, Samantha Mauro, and Rob Kafka for their excellent conceptual and technical contributions to his review.

*Robert Kafka* is the managing editor of *Jeffers Studies* and Treasurer of the Robinson Jeffers Association. His essay “The Lighthouse-Keeper’s Daughter” was published in *Jeffers Studies* 10.2/11.1–2.

*Robert Zaller* is Professor of History at Drexel University. His essay “The Theme of Resurrection in Jeffers’s Later Narratives” was published in *Jeffers Studies* 10.2/11.1–2.

JEFFERS STUDIES (ISSN 1096-5076) is published twice each year by the Robinson Jeffers Association. Archived articles are available in electronic format through Jeffers Studies Online at <www.jeffers.org>. Jeffers Studies is indexed in the MLA International Bibliography.

#### EDITORIAL BOARD

George Hart, Editor; Robert Brophy, Senior Editor; Robert Kafka, Managing Editor; Peter Quigley, World Wide Web Editor. Copy-editing and typesetting: Greg Williams.

#### ADVISORY BOARD

Charles Altieri, Albert Gelpi, Dana Gioia, Robert Hass, Mark Jarman, Brenda Jeffers, Lindsay Jeffers, Thomas Lyon, Scott Slovic, Gary Snyder, Diane Wakoski.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

*Jeffers Studies* is included with Robinson Jeffers Association membership. Annual dues are currently \$25 (Regular), \$50 (Sustaining), \$100 (Patron), \$500 (Lifetime). Institutional subscriptions are \$35. The RJA is a tax-exempt corporation under Section 501 (c) (3) of the IRS tax code; dues, except for that portion (\$15) attributable to the subscription to *Jeffers Studies*, are tax-deductible. RJA membership dues should be sent to Robert Kafka, RJA Treasurer, at the address given below. Inquire for pricing of back issues of *Jeffers Studies* and the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*.

#### ADDRESSES

Subscriptions and back issues: Robert Kafka, UCLA Extension, Room 214, 10995 Le Conte Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90024, e-mail <rkafka@unex.ucla.edu>. Submissions and editorial communications: George Hart, Department of English, CSULB, Long Beach, CA 90840, e-mail <ghart@csulb.edu>. RJA membership applications should be sent to Robert Kafka, RJA Treasurer, at the above address.

#### GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Submit double-spaced, MLA-format Word file of critical essays, book reviews, short articles, and news items as e-mail attachments. The author's name should appear on the initial page only. All copies are non-returnable. Citation of Jeffers's poetry should be from the *Stanford Collected Poetry*, abbreviated CP. Until the *Collected Letters* (CL; Stanford) is complete, citation of Robinson and Una Jeffers letters written after 1930 should be from Ann Ridgeway's *Selected Letters* (SL; Johns Hopkins) or from the Una Jeffers Correspondent series in issues of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* (see *RJN* index, issue 100, Fall 1996). Formatting should follow the *MLA Handbook*, sixth edition, with parenthetical citations, endnotes, and works cited. Final revisions of accepted articles should be submitted as e-mail attachments.

VOLUME 12 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2008  
VOLUME 12 NUMBER 2 FALL 2008