

JEFFERS STUDIES

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Jeffers Studies* gives readers much to consider. Not only the three scholarly articles that place Jeffers's work in a variety of contexts and analyze it from multiple angles, but also a book review of an environmental history of interest to our readers and an account of Jeffers's induction in The Poets' Corner at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine in New York City. Sadly, it also contains an obituary for Jeff Norman, cultural and natural historian of the Big Sur region, fan of Jeffers, and friend of the RJA. In this way, *Jeffers Studies* continues to serve its readers and members of the RJA on all fronts, presenting the best in current scholarship and criticism on Jeffers, locating and reviewing discussions of Jeffers in the culture at large, and providing information on and relevant to the "Jeffers community."

Although the date on this issue is 2006 (we continue to work towards currency in our biannual issues), this year, 2008, marks the thirty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Robert J. Brophy's *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems*. To honor the durability of this seminal work of Jeffers criticism, we have put out a call for submissions of full-length, critical articles on Jeffers's narrative poems. We encourage contributors to submit articles on any of Jeffers's longer poems, especially those examined by Brophy ("Tamar," "Roan Stallion," "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," "Cawdor," and "At the Birth of an Age"). As RJA president Peter Quigley mentions in the bulletin for this issue, there will also be a celebration of this anniversary at the upcoming conference in Aptos, CA. We hope readers and conference attendees will continue the momentum of this discussion and submit full-length articles for consideration.

Soliciting articles on Jeffers's narratives not only pays tribute to Bob's book (only the most obvious of his numerous contributions to the study of Jeffers's work), but it also fills a gap in current Jeffers scholarship. *Jeffers Studies* mainly receives submissions that focus on the shorter poetry, and we publish the best of those, such as Cone's

and Fleming's articles in this issue. (I'm not complaining about it—we want criticism on all aspects of Jeffers's work.) However, there seems to be less active interest in the narratives, so encouraging readers to reconsider those works is to our benefit. Using Bob's work as one possible starting point is also greatly beneficial—it should inspire and provoke current critics to investigate the narratives as deeply as he did thirty-five years ago. *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems* is literally a key to the long poems from Jeffers's breakthrough period. It combines close reading with archetypal myth criticism to support a cogent argument for the achievement of Jeffers's craft. Take up this book again if you haven't read it in a while and see how thorough and deep the research is, how clear and insightful the writing and interpretation is. It is virtually a field guide to these narratives. As the introduction points out, "each poem is analyzed structurally, textually, and thematically" (3), so the reader will find her or his way through the poems clearly charted and expertly contextualized. Furthermore, she or he will find a schema (à la Northrop Frye) in the appendix summarizing the mythic patterns that structure Jeffers's work, and a map of Jeffers Country that places scenes and events from the narratives in the Big Sur geography. The book is also illustrated with photographs of Jeffers, the coast, Tor House and Hawk Tower, and even the Horsehead Nebula—a collection of images that touches on nearly all of Jeffers's major themes and inspirations. On top of all this, William Everson provides his imprimatur in a generous foreword. This book was the first complete account of Jeffers's narrative techniques and theory. It certainly provides the current generation of scholars a point from which to expand on, complicate, analyze, and explicate the major portion of Jeffers's oeuvre.

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RJA BULLETIN

PETER QUIGLEY, RJA PRESIDENT, 2006–2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

An eagle's nest on the head of an old redwood on one of the precipice-footed
ridges
Above Ventana Creek, that jagged country which nothing but a falling meteor
will ever plow; no horseman
Will ever ride there, no hunter cross this ridge but the winged ones, no one
will steal the eggs from this fortress. (*CP* 2: 537)

I just received today's "Jeffers Google alert." This alert brings me references to Jeffers from all over the web. Every day, I see Jeffers quoted and referred to by political writers, poets, scientists, and many others. Every manner of writer, blogger, professional, and lay person draws on Jeffers to admire his poetry, fix on an idea, or help illustrate the point the writer is making. In sum, Jeffers has survived, and is surviving and thriving, despite New Criticism's dismissal, despite attacks by the likes of Yvor Winters and Helen Vendler, despite Foucauldian, Althusserian, Derridean trends in the theoretical ether, despite being sidelined because of political correctness, and, most recently, in spite of his omission from the latest full-length edition of the *Norton Anthology*.

Like wolves and moose making their way back to ancient grazing areas after being pushed north by hunters and human encroachment, Jeffers's work has a survivalist spirit and an opportunistic energy. He continues to make his way into the hands of readers who are not governed by official reading rubrics. Readers who love poetry, who love powerful and moving language, who love the lonely, hawk-haunted coast of mind and spirit, often read, re-read, and remember Jeffers.

One way to understand why Jeffers is not embraced by recent trendy theories is because he offers hope. Yes, Jeffers, the Inhumanist, the walker of gaunt shores, the supposed pessimist, holds out hope. As the epigraph above demonstrates, Jeffers imagines a nature that cannot be subdued, overwhelmed, summed up, or conquered. He describes a

“country which nothing but a falling meteor will ever plow; no horse-
man / Will ever ride there, no hunter cross this ridge but the winged
ones.” Jeffers does not deny humanity its urges, its day in the sun:

It is good for man
To try all changes, progress and corruption, powers, peace and anguish, not to
go down the dinosaur’s way
Until all his capacities have been explored . . . (CP 2: 537)

He is interested in this human drama as well. Jeffers simply insists on the larger, stranger context: nature bats last.

Looking at the last twenty-five years of critical theory, it seems to me more than anything else this movement stands out as jaded and cynical. Abandoning the utopian, the fresh, the romantic, the removed, the refuge, a more “sophisticated” and bitter and aging boomer generation (licking its wounds as Eagleton suggested from the street battles of ’68) dismissed such concepts as naïve at best and “logocentric” at worst. Recently, it occurred to me that in the same way that McKibben had posited a vision of nature, no part of which had not been touched, tainted, and altered with ideology/pollution, so the postmodernists posited “power” and “angled interest” everywhere. There was no space left free from human construction and desire (at least Foucault discussed variations on the completeness of such saturation in “Of Other Places”). The logic seemed to be: if I can’t have my vision no one will have one since all are pure ideology. As the quote suggests at the beginning of this article, Jeffers held nature out as just such a place, a place removed, free from our scenes of destruction and greed, untouched by our lurching end-of-times trajectories.

Part of the reason for his endurance is the dedication to place. What is becoming rare, even rarer than available coastline property, is anyone who commits to place. Brad Leithauser put it this way in the *New York Times*:

Jeffers is also rare among American poets in inspiring what might be called a geographic loyalty: a readership whose devotion is rooted in the appeals of a specific place. In our current literary culture, we’re used to encountering allegiances based upon a writer’s gender or race or sexual orientation, but ties of geography are generally far less compelling.

In addition, Jeffers is a heroic warrior against the seductions of joining anything. Political movements, “demagogues and redeemers,” religious and social martyrs of any stripe, Jeffers warned us all to steer far and around. He warned of the increasing speed and pressure and chaos of modernist cultural trajectories. He noted that

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)

In short, as poems such as "The Purse-Seine" make clear, huge collections of multifarious citizens crammed into metro areas and shot up with commercial and political imagery did not instill him with hope or enthusiasm. He tended to share some of John Adams's concerns about freedom and mass culture. Adams, after surveying the religious fervor in America, told Jefferson the following: "What a mercy it is that these People cannot whip and crop, and pillory and roast, as yet in the US! If they could they would" (Jacoby 66). It is easy to forget, amidst today's religious revival, that America's great accomplishment was replacing religious and political tyrants with the individual mind. Even during the heady days of the formation of the Republic, many evangelicals and orthodox Christians resented the secular revolutionary qualities of the age of reason. Recently these same issues have reasserted themselves. Luckily we have Jeffers to neutralize fanaticism.

The complaints Jeffers had about modern life easily lead some to accuse him of isolationist and misanthropic attitudes. A quick survey of his poetry however makes it clear that he was one of the most politically and historically engaged poets. Although seeking refuge on the coast of Carmel, Jeffers was never "separated," or "isolated," from his culture. He simply had the distance he thought we all required for health, peace, and well-being.

Last February, the RJA held its conference in Hawaii at the University of Hawaii, Manoa. The President of the UH system, David McClain and his wife Wendy McClain were gracious enough to offer us the University mansion to hold the reception. W. S. Merwin read some beautiful, moving pieces to us on the lanai, palms swaying, the Pacific in the backdrop. The next morning David Rothman gave a brilliant introduction to Merwin who then presented an illuminating talk charting his own poetic development through the twentieth century. Yes, there was hula as well.

This year we will hold the conference at Cabrillo College in Aptos, CA. Thanks to Jim Weckler, Dean of the Business, English, and Languages Division, for helping with the facilities. Dave Mason will keynote the conference, and we will have another special moment or two. We will have an overdue and special panel dedicated to Robert Brophy's work, and also film producer Sharyn Blumenthal's documentary on Jeffers.

The times are stressful and call for more hours under the lamp with Jeffers. Hunter S. Thompson humorously said that “when the going gets tough, the weird turn pro.” In my case, I turn to Jeffers for his refreshing and wild sea-fragrance.

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ARTICLES

TEMPLE CONE

ONE TEMPER WITH THE GRANITE THE TROUBLING ACHIEVEMENT OF ROBINSON JEFFERS'S ECOLOGICAL LYRIC

And I imagine that he saw, finally,
That though rock stands, it does not breed.

Robert Hass, "The Return of Robinson Jeffers"

Robinson Jeffers fashioned the moral and ecological philosophy he termed "Inhumanism" from the natural cycles of "bright power, dark peace; / Fierce consciousness joined with final / Disinterestedness" ("Rock and Hawk" *CP* 2: 416) which he witnessed from the stone cottage and tower he inhabited on the Carmel coast of Monterey County, California, from 1919 until his death in 1962. In the original version of his "Preface" to *The Double Axe and Other Poems* (1948), Jeffers described Inhumanism as "a recognition of the astonishing beauty of things and their living wholeness . . . a rational acceptance of the fact that mankind is neither central nor important in the universe; our vices and blazing crimes are as insignificant as our happiness" (*CP* 4: 418). But these ideas were already in play in Jeffers's first significant book, *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924), where he began stripping away the egoistic immanentism of the Wordsworthian nature lyric in favor of an ecocentric perspective that could transform human interactions with the natural environment. Though his reputation was diminished in his own lifetime by the staunch isolationist poems he published in *The Double Axe*, in recent years, Jeffers has been heralded both as a father of the modern environmental lyric and as a significant forerunner of the contemporary Deep Ecology movement.¹

While it may be anachronistic to speak of Jeffers's poetics as having an environmentalist motivation, his use of the sublime to address environmental degradation is grounded in the economic and environmental history of Monterey. During the two World Wars and their interim, development of the Carmel coast increased dramatically, and the Monterey sardine fisheries were overfished until they failed to produce an economically measurable harvest for two years straight.

Jeffers's lyrics represent these and other environmental events, but by contrasting them with the sublime setting of the California coast, Jeffers aims to diminish the significance of human impacts and reframe the traditional Western anthropocentric perspective ecocentrically. Such a use of the sublime elevates the status of the natural world, as Bernard Quetchenbach and others have noted, and this elevation represents Jeffers's attempt to fashion a global ecological vision from a local one.² But the diminished representation of human impacts on nature risks reducing the significance of human life as a whole, revealing a potentially dangerous misanthropy behind the ecocentric values of Jeffers's Inhumanism, the consequences of which range from political apathy to complete inaction with regards to large-scale human conflict and suffering.

Nowhere is Jeffers's conflict with humankind more apparent than in the poems from *The Double Axe*, where he espouses a staunch isolationism that views the significance of widespread human casualties in WWII skeptically. These isolationist poems do not address environmental problems directly, but images of sublime nature occur throughout them. This persistent natural troping arises from Jeffers's need to make his ecological vision truly ecological, by extending the connections he makes in the natural environment into the historical, social, and political realms. As Everson says of Jeffers's encompassing vision, "he sought to wrench man's attention from his own self-deceptions, and fasten his soul upon the naked divinity manifest in the cosmos" (vii). Thus, Jeffers's understanding of history is filtered through his ecological vision, and his confrontation with WWII provides an important oblique approach to testing the global implications of his locally derived ecological ideals. By examining the WWII poems in an ecological context, we can see Jeffers's nascent but unfulfilled self-consciousness about the terrible political and human costs that might result from a purely ecocentric attitude.

Jeffers evokes the sublime, which is so important to his ecological vision, in various ways. In "Continent's End," with the vastness of the coast echoed in long lines of eight and ten stressed beats, Jeffers evokes the earth's vastness when he exclaims, "The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to you, you have forgotten us, mother" (CP 1: 16). Moreover, the speaker is a depersonalized "I," its importance as subject subdued by the expanse of images that follow. The poem operates as an expression of the Kantian sublime, with the vastness of nature resulting in silence and diminishment of the human figure. In his essay, "Desire, Death, and Domesticity in Jeffers's Pastorals of Apocalypse," Kirk Glaser comments on the relation between Jeffers's apocalypticism and his use of the sublime, and in so doing

provides an important term for discussing Jeffers's ecocentrism: the geologic sublime. Glaser notes that "In many central poems, he [Jeffers] turns to an apocalyptic vision by which he may fuse his imagination (and identity) with that of God, often through his uses of the 'geologic sublime'—setting the individual and all human history in a context of geologic time" (140). Jeffers's work is replete with this device, from early poems like "Credo" (1925), where he writes that "The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself; the heart-breaking beauty / Will remain when there is no heart to break for it" (*CP* 1: 239); to poems from his middle period, like "Gray Weather" (1935): "It is true that, older than man and ages to outlast him, the Pacific surf / Still cheerfully pounds the worn granite drum" (*CP* 2: 485); and even in a posthumously published poem, "The Last Conservative" (1962), where Jeffers writes:

The world deteriorates like a rotting apple, worms and a skin.
They have built streets around us, new houses
Line them and cars obsess them . . . and my dearest has died.

The ocean at least is not changed at all,
Cold, grim and faithful . . . (*CP* 3: 418)

Glaser's account of Jeffers's geologic sublime emphasizes its mystical properties—the experience, in nature, of the Kantian sublime as God—and the break achieved by resisting Romantic and Modernist valuations of human consciousness as absolutely separate from nature (149). But the significance of the geologic sublime as an environmental device in Jeffers's work remains unexamined.

Given that Jeffers's vision of the sublime (which he terms the "beautiful") is correlated to an effectively infinite geological index of time, his sublime treatment of nature as an order of reality outside of and more perdurable than human existence evinces an ecological imperative. As Frances Ferguson writes in her study of the Romantic sublime, "We love what is beautiful for submitting to us, for being *less* than we are; we react with dread and awe to what is sublime because of its appearing greater than we are, for being *more*, and making us acknowledge that power" (8–9). Here Ferguson's dynamic of cause and effect might be reversed in order to make sense of the political implications of Jeffers's verse. By valuing that which submits to the imagination, one reduces its status, but by valuing that which awes or escapes imaginative control, one elevates it and distances it from human control. In an environmental context, such a dynamic becomes a device for advo-

cating conservation; the ecological poet's task is to pluralize the sublime and render the reader susceptible to multiple sublimities.

There is a significant risk to Jeffers's model of sublimity, however: its own construction remains uninterrogated, leading to a didacticism that is especially apparent in the closing lines of many of Jeffers's poems, which are often sweeping and forceful in tone, but can be moralizing as well. Quetchenbach connects this didacticism and lack of ambiguity to the political need to communicate information (31–33), but while Jeffers's proponents value this style, which prophesies, excoriates, and assumes an apocalyptic rhetoric on behalf of environmental cause, it has drawn sharp criticism from such critics as Yvor Winters and Helen Vendler.³ The didactic is rarely reflective, a point Quetchenbach eventually raises against Jeffers (though he does consider Jeffers's direct engagement with environmental issues an achievement in and of itself), and as Patrick Fritzell notes, without a self-conscious examination of the rhetorical stances in which nature writing is couched, "Nature" risks becoming a transcendent construct that conceals "basic, psychobiotic self-interest . . . and the conflicting interests and inroads of historic human institutions" (29). The solitary, misanthropic speaker featured in many of Jeffers's poems actively and varyingly questions human separation from and misuse of the natural world, but the critique often rests on an essentialized or pristine model of nature. At times, this pristine model seems directly tied to Jeffers's misanthropy. In "A Little Scraping," for instance, the speaker claims, "This mountain sea-coast is real, / For it reaches out far into past and future; / It is part of the great and timeless excellence of things" (CP 2: 282). The rhetoric of wilderness from which such assertions of "reality" and "timelessness" derive is politically compromised, as William Cronon notes, given its prioritizing of a historically non-existent pristine nature over other matters, such as responsible environmentalism and social justice (80–81). Not surprisingly, the poem concludes with this harrowing prophecy: "God is here, too, secretly smiling, the beautiful power / That piles up cities for the poem of their fall / And gathers multitude like game to be hunted when the season comes" (CP 2: 282).

Yet Jeffers's poetry is more historically rooted than may be first apparent, for his attempt to engender greater environmental respect via the poetic sublime is correlated with the economic and environmental history of Monterey during the two World Wars and their interim. From 1914 to the 1950s, Monterey experienced a boom-to-bust cycle in the sardine industry that all but eradicated its fishery.⁴ According to John Walton, whose *Storied Land: Community and Memory in Monterey* offers the best single-volume history of the coun-

ty, Monterey at the start of the twentieth century was best known as California's first capital and as a major resort town (home of the world-renowned Del Monte Hotel). But Monterey had always supported a multi-ethnic fishing industry that relied on the world's third largest (by tonnage) sardine fisheries. From 1902 to 1920, the fishing and canning industry expanded, in large part due to wartime demand, and developed a fish reduction industry that would crucially impact the economy and the environment during the interwar years.⁷ Fishing, canning, and reduction surpassed real estate as the major components of the Monterey economy, employing between 30 and 40% of the population seasonally (and another 30% in support services), but brought with them significant conflicts over water and air pollution that pitted major real estate interests against the canning industry and, ironically, against the industrial canners and fishermen who suffered most from the environmental pollutants. A postwar slump from 1923 to 1926 was corrected by a rising demand for reduction (the combined result of low demand for Pacific sardines as edible fish and increased use of fish by-products in items as various as fertilizer, medicine, and precision-machine oil). Reduction benefited from advanced efficiency technology and from improvements in the fishing fleet, specifically the use of the purse-seine launch and net, a large, diesel-powered boat that required a smaller crew and could carry two to three times the cargo tonnage of the earlier Italian lampara launch and net (150 tons in the largest purse-seiners, to 40–50 tons in the lamparas).

The sardine industry's efforts were regularly opposed by the California Fish and Game Commission, which warned that increased reduction would jeopardize the health of the sardine fishery. The California Fish Act of 1919 (amended 1921) placed a 25% quota on the portion of sardine catches that could go to reduction, but the development of offshore "floaters" (offshore reduction factories outside of California legal limits) and lobbying by compromised onshore reduction factories led to a 32.5% quota in 1929. The result was what Arthur F. McEvoy calls "the fisherman's problem": "In a competitive economy, no market mechanism ordinarily exists to reward individual forbearance in the use of shared resources" (10). The environmental impact of the competitive sardine industry was staggering. Harvests from 1932 to 1945 averaged 571,000 tons (McEvoy 150), but in the 1947–48 season, the number of tons landed was 31,391, an 86.8% decline in the span of two years (Mangelsdorf 166). In 1949 and 1950, the sardine fishery failed to spawn, ensuring the industry's collapse in 1952 (McEvoy 154).

It is unnecessarily limiting to link Jeffers's ecological vision solely to the environmental crises affecting the Monterey community during

this time. Nevertheless, he would have known of the situation, and of the California Fish and Game Commission's escalating environmental warnings. Certainly the topography of his poems demonstrates a careful observer's understanding of the local industry. "The Purse-Seine" uses the image of the seine net scooping up the harvest as a metaphor for the plight of modern urban culture:

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)

In such a context, the sardines evoke a primordiality in conflict with the effects of technology. Yet the poem's specific reference gives it ecological value; the sardines may be primordial, but more to the point, they are real creatures whose continued survival as a population is threatened. Jeffers's image does not entirely forego the symbolic here, but his may be better described as an emblematic image. Less exact in its relations than symbol or allegory, the emblem delays movement from figure to that which is figured, thereby drawing as much attention to the former as to the latter. By obscuring figuration of the sardines, the poem opens the possibility of attending to and valuing them referentially. Moreover, by lingering in the referential world, Jeffers's emblems run counter to Romantic immanentism, or the belief that external reality is more or less defined by the perceiving consciousness.⁶ Thus, the metaphor may be inverted, so that the purse-seining of sardines resonates as ominously as the enervation of urban culture.

Jeffers's historically based premonitions were not limited to the demise of the sardine fishery, either; real estate development also prompts his anxiety and scorn. According to Walton, "The modern landscapes of Monterey, Pacific Grove, and Carmel were created" by WPA projects in the late 1930s "devoted to works of infrastructure and urban redevelopment" (225). Moreover, in the wake of property sales following the collapse of the sardine industry, urban renewal interests in Monterey overran small businesses and significantly altered and extended the urban landscape (191, 240-49). Most notably, the Del Monte Properties Company proposed and eventually constructed a 47-acre shopping center on Carmel Hill, a mile from the downtown (244, 246-47), while Highway 1 was expanded into a six-

lane freeway (247). Jeffers condemns this expansion in "Carmel Point," where he writes of "This beautiful place defaced with a crop of suburban houses" (CP 3: 399), and in "The Coast-Road," where a man riding horseback "looks down / At the bridge-builders, men, trucks, the power-shovels, the teeming end of the new coast-road at the mountain's base" and "shakes his fist and makes the gesture of wringing a chicken's neck" (CP 2: 522). But in spite of these very real pressures, Jeffers is consoled by his vision of the geologic sublime, which will eventually subsume the environmental damage to Carmel Point: "It knows the people are a tide / That swells and in time will ebb, and all / Their works dissolve" (CP 3: 399).

In keeping with the vast historical scope of the geologic sublime and with the principles of Inhumanism, the human figures Jeffers portrays frequently appear at a distance from the speaker in his poems. They appear as isolated individuals, much like the speaker himself, suggesting the possibility that they are more projections onto the landscape than attempts at representing human presence.⁷ There is the "old Chinaman gathering seaweed from the sea-rocks" (CP 1: 90) in "Point Joe," who would likely be part of the Chinese fishing community of Monterey, which suffered open racial bigotry and routine vandalism of their boats and nets (Walton 176–86), though such socioeconomic facts are not part of Jeffers's characterization. In "The Beach," there is the figure of the wife, isolated from the crowd by the tragedy of her husband's drowning: "I have seen a young wife / Scream on the beach, writhing among the bystanders, they held her with their hands" (CP 1: 201). When Jeffers presents closer, fuller portraits of individual characters (usually in the longer narratives), they generally appear as neglected prophets, hermits, or lonely madmen, as with the sculptor in "The Artist," the old man in "All the Little Hoofprints," and the man bearing self-inflicted stigmata in "A Redeemer." When groups of humans do appear, they remain background figures, like the bystanders in "The Beach," or they integrate themselves into the natural environment through their work (generally labor or fishing, but rarely agriculture and never trade). In the latter process, the people become almost like animals themselves, as in "Boats in a Fog," where Jeffers says of a line of fishing boats, "A flight of pelicans / Is nothing lovelier to look at" (CP 1: 110).

By naturalizing and setting human communities in the background, Jeffers attempts to resolve the conflict between environmental ethics and the fact of human presence. The moments when the speaker himself enters into a community and represents himself as a member of it prove rare. In "The Place for No Story," for instance, the speaker claims that "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). Here Jeffers imperils the conservationist intent of the poem, for the speaker situates himself outside of the system of relations (in this case, human-nature relations) that ecology presumes to study. While the speaker's erasure of his own human identity expresses psychic integration within the natural world, it risks obscuring his ethical integration, which must attend to separation and difference.

Moments of similar self-contradiction occur throughout Jeffers's work, and though Quetchenbach charitably claims that "the poetics of the time allowed for Jeffers to sidestep his own personal identity" (38), such misanthropy is of a dangerously privileged sort. The refusal to count himself a presence on the scene gives the speaker license to present his sentiments as the rightful discourse of nature. Thus, Jeffers can powerfully convey a sense of union with the realities of the natural order, as in "Fire on the Hills," in which the speaker watches an eagle hunting small animals harried by a brushfire: "I thought, painfully, but the whole mind, / The destruction that brings an eagle from heaven is better than mercy" (*CP* 2: 173). But such rhetoric can be carried all too easily into human affairs: "Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity / Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars, let your eyes / Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself and man" ("Sign-Post," *CP* 2: 418).

In "Tor House," this effacement in fact proves unattainable. Imagining the site of his home ten thousand years in the future, Jeffers presumes to eliminate all marks of humanity over time, but the poem's topological identification belies this annihilation or makes of Jeffers's stonework something close to God's creation of nature: "these four [the granite knoll, the granite and lava tongue, the bay, the Carmel River-valley] will remain / In the change of names" (*CP* 1: 408). Jeffers's use of the river's proper name here reveals a linguistic and philosophical paradox at odds with an ecological ideology that would deny or at least minimize human contact with the wild, for even though language is disappearing with humankind, Jeffers continues to use names as identifiers. This and other efforts at poetic closure indicate a totalizing consciousness at odds with the chaotic materialism embodied by the Carmel coast that Jeffers had hoped, in "The Purse-Seine," would counter modern "Progress."

The conflict in Jeffers's poetry over the issue of human presence may effectively be judged by examining the social, political, and ethical ramifications of Deep Ecology, which was "founded" by Arne Naess in 1973 and claims Jeffers as an early influence.⁶ Such a comparison illuminates common values and facilitates analysis of Jeffers's paradoxical

handling of human presence, an issue that remains an entrenched problem for Deep Ecology. According to Michael Zimmerman, Deep Ecology asserts the inherent value of both human and nonhuman life, as well as of biodiversity, which humankind has no right to reduce; claims that human interference with the nonhuman world harms the latter and therefore necessitates environmental policy revision; urges a distinction between quality of life and standard of living; and requires of its subscribers practical implementation of these agreed-upon theoretical tenets (19–36). In writing that “We must uncenter our minds from ourselves; / We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident / As the rock and ocean that we were made from” (“Carmel Point” *CP* 3: 399), Jeffers, like Naess, advocates a wider identification with the natural world as a means of both protecting it and enriching the experience of life.

Yet as critics of Deep Ecological theory have noted, practical application of these philosophical tenets is difficult to achieve.⁹ One of the central dilemmas of Deep Ecology, identified by Naess himself, is its failure to reconcile competing vital interests. When the needs of two individuals are deemed vital (i.e., necessary for continued existence and self-actualization) and are in competition with each other, Deep Ecology offers no model for conflict resolution. Although its multi-philosophic, multi-religious emphasis on self-actualization for all beings seems to imply a respect for community, Deep Ecology’s general view that a global population 1/6th the current size (i.e., one billion) is the greatest the earth can sustain, represents a significant philosophical problem. Naess himself acknowledges that Deep Ecology’s position on global population risks transforming its progressive-utopian narrative into an ecofascism that sacrifices individuals and individual rights to the environmental whole (“Deep” 108–19).

At its best, Jeffers’s poetry enacts the central tenets of Deep Ecology, for it emphasizes reciprocal self-actualization, non-intrusive interaction with the natural environment, and a rural lifestyle at odds with modern, technological society. While this nature-culture division risks oversimplification, in a poem like “Triad,” Jeffers shows himself to be more critical of Modernism’s failed narrative of progress than of “culture,” even urban culture, as a whole. Referring to the October Revolution, he writes:

new Russia,
That stood a moment at dreadful cost half free,
Beholding the open, all the glades of the world
On both sides of the trap, and resolutely
Walked into the trap that has Europe and America . . . (*CP* 2: 309)

But the insistence on solitude throughout Jeffers's poetry is matched with a scorn for humankind in general and large communities in particular; in "November Surf," he writes that the earth "Keeps dreaming of the bath of a storm that prepares up the long coast / Of the future to scour more than her sea-lines: / The cities gone down, the people fewer and the hawks more numerous . . ." (CP 2: 159). That he ventriloquizes the earth's apocalyptic wish after detailing the trash left on the coast—"The orange-peel, egg-shells, papers, pieces of clothing, the clots / Of dung in corners of the rock, and used / Sheaths that make light love safe in the evenings . . ." (CP 2: 159)—further indicates how Jeffers links population growth causally with environmental degradation.

From a regional perspective, an ecocentrism like Jeffers's may prove highly effective in preserving uninhabited spaces, because it is unlikely to yield to "resource conservation" arguments for careful *use* of the natural environment (the implication being that nature exists in order to provide resources). But Deep Ecology aims for a politically radical shift in Western behavior; the DEP does in fact operate as a political platform. If we read Jeffers as a proto-Deep Ecological poet, then we ought to ask how the radical ethical changes his lyric poems model and demand at the personal level (whether in the briefer lyrics or the dramatic narratives, with their limited cast of characters) fare when extended to a national or international scale.

Even before WWII, Jeffers was signaling, in *Solstice* (1935), a local and even inward turn away from the pressures of external history. "Return" expresses this move in a reclamation of the primitive roots of man-in-nature: "A little too abstract, a little too wise, / It is time for us to kiss the earth again" (CP 2: 409). Fittingly, the poem is a Shakespearean sonnet, with the object of the speaker's love being unspoiled nature. The poem recounts the revitalization that renewed contact with natural settings can bring—"I will find my accounting where the alder leaf quivers / In the ocean wind over the river boulders" (CP 2: 409)—and the speaker expresses a desire to commit absolutely to a life of the senses. Yet this desire is also escapist in tone, a turn away from historical complexity; almost wearily, the speaker says:

I will touch things and things and *no more thoughts*,
That breed like mouthless May-flies darkening the sky,
The insect clouds that blind our passionate hawks
So that they cannot strike, hardly can fly. (CP 2: 409, emphasis added)

Jeffers registers this return to nature more darkly in “Life from the Lifeless,” which naturalizes human ruin and then, paradoxically, finds comfort in the natural world that has just subsumed that suffering.

The deer starve, the winter birds
Die on their twigs and lie
In the blue dawns in the snow.

Men suffer want and become
Curiously ignoble; as prosperity
Made them curiously vile.

But look how noble the world is,
The lonely-flowing waters, the secret-
Keeping stones, the flowing sky. (CP 2: 414)

The parallel structure of the stanzas links the events of human history to the accidents of animal life, suggesting a fatalism about improving the human condition. Written during the Great Depression (“Men suffer want”), which was compounded by heedless agricultural practices in the American Midwest, the poem connects present ignobility with the excesses of prior prosperity by means of the repeated adverb “curiously.”

Yet in spite of this attention to national catastrophe, Jeffers’s environmental anxiety was motivated largely by local changes he witnessed. As noted earlier, Monterey in the late 1920s was just beginning a nearly two-decade period of economic success that would lead to significant urban expansion, population growth, and the eventual destruction of the sardine fishery. Jeffers’s criticism began early; as Glaser observes, such poems as “Bixby’s Landing,” where Jeffers writes that “The laborers are gone, but what a good multitude / Is here in return” (CP 1: 388), show an attention to the process of decay as nature’s means of overtaking and reclaiming the land from human civilization (“Desire”). Primarily, this reclamation occurs through the geologic sublime, wherein changes are subsumed in a far-seeing temporal perspective. As Jeffers became a more and more recognizable public figure (*Time* magazine featured his photograph on the cover of the April 4, 1932 issue), his poetry also began to extend its implicit paradoxes into the political and historical realms. In this new context, the poems first urge humankind to reclaim the morality of natural associations, then condemn humankind for its environmental injustices and relegate human suffering to a natural order. A harsh paradox, but as Everson remarks, political poetry “is best when it is extreme: intemperate, explosive, and scornful” (ix).

In poems about the events leading up to WWII and the war itself, Jeffers's application of natural metaphors to contemporary political events shows an increasing effort to reframe history in ecological terms. Responding in "Rearmament" to the Russian rearmament in 1934, Jeffers writes:

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)

"Beauty," Jeffers's key philosophical term and marker for the sublime, here is ironized in its application to the swelling national forces for which Jeffers feels terror and awe, but no love (whereas in the poems about the Carmel landscape, love accompanies the other sublime emotions). Beauty is also ironized by the pity that Jeffers feels for the individual victims of the war and then regrets for the insufficiency of that pity. In equating these political developments with natural processes—"It is beautiful as a river flowing or a slowly gathering / Glacier on a high mountain rock-face, / Bound to plow down a forest" (CP 2: 515)—the poem voices a fatalism about international peace. We might read this fatalism as a sophisticated tonal move, designed to shock an audience out of complacency. But in their situation of human history within biological cycles, these poems risk a social Darwinism that would make Jeffers's political isolationism a dangerous passivity. In this light, we begin to see Jeffers's Inhumanism as the *reductio ad absurdum* of Deep Ecology's position on world population.

While Jeffers's figuring of war in terms of natural images continues the Homeric tradition, his attempt to subsume the motives and consequences of war into a natural order is distinct. He writes in "The Bloody Sire":

It is not bad. Let them play.
 Let the guns bark and the bombing-plane
 Speak his prodigious blasphemies.
 It is not bad, it is high time,
 Stark violence is still the sire of all the world's values.

What but the wolf's tooth whittled so fine
 The fleet limbs of the antelope?
 What but fear winged the birds, and hunger
 Jewelled with such eyes the great goshawk's head?
 Violence has been the sire of all the world's values. (*CP* 3: 25)

The rich sounds and phrasings depicting the dynamics of natural selection in the second stanza ("wolf's tooth whittled") are missing from the first stanza's pale description of military violence. It is as if the natural order has altogether assimilated human history, though such a gesture seems naively optimistic of its success in the face of the events it would subsume. Yet by alternating between tones of sardonicism, revelation (produced by the rhetorical questions), consolation (enacted, perhaps, by the almost liturgical last line of each stanza), and reduction (the opening line, "It is not bad. Let them play," sounds parental in tone), Jeffers invokes an almost prophetic voice. Whether his prophecies prove true or not, it makes sense that he would come to read human history in terms of ecological relations, given his frequent citation of the Carmel coast as his core of knowledge.

The poems in *Be Angry at the Sun* (1941) show Jeffers wrestling with his treatment of the war in natural terms. "The Day Is a Poem" not only describes the war with natural imagery but reflects on Jeffers's own tendency to employ such metaphors. Dated September 19, 1939, the poem is occasioned by Hitler's radio broadcast from occupied Danzig, which Jeffers turns from in the sixth line to describe the oppressive coastal heat and a minor earthquake, linking Hitler's "invoking destruction and wailing at it" with a "south wind like a blast from hell's mouth" (*CP* 3: 16). In the last lines, though, Jeffers reflects on the associations he has just made: "Well: the day is a poem: but too much / Like one of Jeffers's, crusted with blood and barbaric omens, / Painful to excess, inhuman as a hawk's cry" (*CP* 3: 16). Fourteen lines long, it echoes the sonnet form, but its irregular rhythm and lack of rhyme suggest instead the absence of love from the world described. That he links this criticism to his own poems is a rarity in Jeffers's work. That historical circumstances are now proving his poems true suggests the accuracy of his prophecies, but the reflexive quality of the poem shows Jeffers's awareness that he is constantly trying to compare historical events to relations within an ecosystem ("like one of Jeffers's," "inhuman as a hawk's cry") and might now be judging against this very tendency.

Early in his work, Jeffers decried the failure of America's responsibility to its natural surroundings. In "Shine, Empire" (1941), Jeffers evokes the earlier "Shine" poems ("Shine, Perishing Republic" in

1923, "Shine, Republic" in 1935), with their condemnations of the United States, and here he draws an important conclusion:

Powerful and armed, neutral in the midst of madness, we might have held the
 whole world's balance and stood
 Like a mountain in a wind. We were misled and took sides.

 I have often in weak moments thought of this people as something higher than
 the natural run of the earth.
 I was quite wrong; we are lower. We are the people who hope to win wars with
 money as we win elections. (CP 3: 17)

In describing the start of WWII in terms of a failure to connect even figuratively with the environment ("we *might* have . . . stood / Like a mountain," but by implication did not), Jeffers implies that the nation's inability to recognize its place in the natural order contributes as much to historical conflict as to environmental degradation.

Almost in response, the poems of *The Double Axe*, written during and after the war, stop exploring the connections between human and natural worlds, but strive to overpower and subsume history in natural cycles. "Fourth Act" articulates this reversal precisely. The poem, to which Jeffers appends the note "written in January, 1942," first critiques the amassing of power that resulted from America's entry into the war: "It is scene two act four of the tragic farce The Political Animal. Its hero reaches his apogee / And ravages the whole planet; not even the insects, only perhaps bacteria, were ever so powerful" (CP 3: 113). Although the "ravage" Jeffers mentions is in the context of war, his negative comparison of man to insects and bacteria ("not even . . . so powerful") reiterates the human situation within a biological context and also indicates how far civilization has strayed from that context. In addition, by calling WWII "the tragic farce The Political Animal" (an allusion to Aristotle's *Politics*), Jeffers directly critiques western political thought and the damages that have resulted from it. By the close of the poem, Jeffers fully subsumes human events in a natural order: "the whole affair is only a hare-brained episode in the life of the planet" (CP 3: 114).

The poems in *The Double Axe* take the reciprocal relations between human and non-human worlds, which were previously a Wordsworthian source of moral virtue for Jeffers (the human respecting the conditions of the non-human, the non-human imparting virtue and energy through proximity), and judges civilization an inadequate component of the relation. After describing a morning by the ocean in "Their Beauty Has More Meaning," Jeffers concludes:

And when the whole human race
 Has been like me rubbed out, they will still be here; storms, moon and ocean,
 Dawn and the birds. And I say this: their beauty has more meaning
 Than the whole human race and the race of birds. (CP 3: 119)

Assuming the human race alone could not be more meaningful than the natural landscape, Jeffers ironically appends “the race of birds” to the final judgment, after already having included it in the list of the things that will remain. Thus, even with a connection to the non-human world (a significant connection at that, for Jeffers values birds as emblems of spirit), the human still lacks value.

In “Calm and Full the Ocean,” Jeffers’s Inhumanism reaches a brutal conclusion. Having conceived of contemporary historical events as a division between human and non-human worlds, Jeffers must eventually subordinate one component of that binary. In order to assert the primacy of the natural world, Jeffers must subsume human history within the natural order, diminishing not only the importance of human accomplishments, but the importance of humankind itself. This outcome was already forecast by his prior use of the geologic sublime, but in the earlier poems, the geologic sublime was meant to counter egocentrism by reducing the significance of human cultural production. In “Calm and Full the Ocean,” the geologic sublime reduces the value of human *life*, and it is this judgment that has led critics to call Jeffers an ecofascist. Beginning with a characteristic meditation on the coast, the poem quickly shifts to the war in Europe and in the Pacific. The shift is almost a non sequitur, the only link a claim of temporal simultaneity:

Calm and full the ocean under the cool dark sky; quiet rocks and the birds
 fishing; the night-herons
 Have flown home to their wood . . . *while* east and west in Europe and Asia and
 the islands unimaginable agonies

Consume mankind. Not a few thousand but uncounted millions, not a day but
 years, pain, horror, sick hatred;
 Famine that dries the children to little bones and huge eyes; high explosive
 that fountains dirt, flesh and bone-splinters. (CP 3: 124, emphasis added)

The poem initially fails to explain how the natural scene relates to the massive historical conflicts taking place away from it; the adverb “while” follows an ellipsis that connotes hesitation about the soundness of the link. Jeffers’s evocation of human suffering is unflinching and would make a powerful protest. But in the next stanza, Jeffers appears to connect the war’s desecration of life to the perceived sepa-

ration of man from nature: "*Sane and intact* the seasons pursue their course, autumn slopes to December, the rains will fall / And the grass flourish, with flowers in it: as if man's world were perfectly separate from nature's, *private and mad*" (CP 3: 124, emphasis added). As a Wordsworthian, Jeffers repeatedly asserts nature's value as a source of moral virtue. Here, he seems to argue that humankind's separation from nature has resulted in the destruction of war. It is a crude Romanticism, and even Jeffers seems to realize this, for he opens his statement of the consequences of separation with a subjunctive, "as if," as if even the Inhumanist could not bear making such a fatalistic utterance.

In the following stanza, Jeffers attempts to reject the separation he himself described, and it appears that this rejection is motivated by a developed ecological sense that affirms the value of human life because of its interrelations with the natural world. However, Jeffers's resistance fails because he has avoided portraying or even considering healthful human community interactions between the human community and the environment. His poems feature the individual in the wild (usually the poet himself), or else small groups of individuals whose community interactions are not explored. Generally speaking, large groups of people are only spoilers for Jeffers. The poet himself can be at one with the natural world, but in order to integrate communities of people with a natural setting, he must not only serve as a link between them, but must represent community as a community. Yet this he cannot do because a diversity of voices speaking on behalf of their individual interests will inevitably generate the sort of conflicting views of the natural environment to which Jeffers's didactic vision is opposed. For Jeffers, proximity to nature grants authority, while community interrupts proximity and distributes authority democratically. By neglecting community in his work, Jeffers avoids the potential for dialogue. For a poet whose ecological vision presumes to respect competing vital interests, but who paradoxically demonstrates a Wordsworthian reliance on nature as the source of moral authority, this neglect poses a fundamental problem. Without the vocalicity of community, compromise between mutual self-actualization of all beings cannot be reached, and the subordination of humanity to natural order becomes singular and unshakable:

. . . even the P-38s and the Flying Fortresses are as *natural* as horse-flies;
It is only that man, his griefs and rages, are not what they seem to man, not
great and shattering, but really

Too small to produce any disturbance. This is good. This is the sanity, the mercy. It is true that the murdered
 Cities leave marks in the earth for a certain time, like fossil rain-prints in shale, equally beautiful. (CP 3: 124, emphasis added)

Jeffers dissolves the nature-culture divide by calling the instruments of war “natural,” but they are so only potentially, in that their materials of manufacture are earthly; their manufacture is human. One could certainly argue that “Calm and Full the Ocean” brings Jeffers’s geologic sublime to bear on the course of human events, thus solemnizing the events of WWII. But his continued efforts to bring together nature and culture (as history) reveal their separation in the inadequacy of the rhetorical links he deploys: joining by simultaneity in line two (“while”) and comparison by simile in line ten (“Cities leave marks in the earth for a certain time, like fossil rain-prints in shale”).

In spite of his effort to subordinate human authority to the environment, Jeffers’s unreflective reliance on individual subjectivity to make this claim contradicts itself in the midst of its own utterance. The eighth line bears this out. A naked, Cassandra-like assertion (it is no surprise that he identifies himself with this figure elsewhere in *The Double Axe*), it subordinates all other truth positions to its own. This quality is underscored by the declarative sentences that mark the final lines, a shift from the reflective perspicacity suggested by the earlier poems. The poem ends with a terrifying equation, an expression of social Darwinism multiplied by the geologic sublime, which overlooks human catastrophe in the long sweep of geological history. It equates the terror and awe felt in the presence of nature with the experience of human violence and evil, blurring the necessary difference of will between them. Perhaps as Robert Zaller claims, “Such effects were not intended to dwarf or diminish human actions; on the contrary, they often lent them a grandeur they sadly lacked themselves” (qtd. in Quetchenbach 36). But this perspective comes at the cost of the compassion that Jeffers’s ecological philosophy would seem to demand.

As we have seen, the consequences of Jeffers’s totalizing ecocentrism, viewed in light of world historical events, demonstrate a misanthropic stance bordering on ecofascism. Yet Jeffers’s own work belies the attainment and perhaps even the value of such a totalized perspective, for Jeffers’s poems sometimes undercut this visionary drive by suggesting that there are human limits (often figured as linguistic limits) to attaining such a perspective. It is in the moments of self-doubt that his work perhaps shows how to evince an ecocentrism that does not fall prey to the absolutism of a privileged isolation. Jeffers’s widely anthologized poem “Hurt Hawks” offers a representative portrait of

this cross-current in his work. At first, the poem seems a perfect illustration of Inhumanist values: it dramatizes the speaker's mercy-killing of a wing-damaged hawk, and Jeffers's praise of the hawk as a killing machine blessed with purity of purpose has generally been read as a Nietzschean condemnation of group morality and a valorization of the individual will to power: "The wild God of the world is sometimes merciful to those / That ask mercy, not often to the arrogant. / You do not know him, you communal people, or you have forgotten him" (*CP* 1:377). Yet through this act, the speaker attempts an act of stewardship on behalf of a natural world that he identifies as a site of neo-primitive moral power, but from which humankind has become separated (through culture, mores, and language).

Throughout the poem, Jeffers harshly criticizes his own efforts to save the hawk, emphasizing its need to live apart from human interference:

We had fed him six weeks, I gave him freedom,
 He wandered over the foreland hill and returned in the evening, asking for
 death,
 Not like a beggar, still eyed with the old
 Implacable arrogance. I gave him the lead gift in the twilight. (*CP* 1: 377–78)

Given that natural entities and settings in Jeffers's work can be read referentially as well as symbolically, the hawk in this case should be seen as a historically specific hawk as well as an embodiment of the will to power. Accordingly, Jeffers's mercy-killing may be read as an other-oriented act (i.e., acting on behalf of the non-human natural world), yet ecocritical stewardship is not so easily achieved. The heavy personification of the bird reveals the difficulty of establishing a fully ecocentric stance toward the non-human natural world and forsaking an anthropocentric one; when Jeffers claims to give "him the lead gift in the twilight" (*CP* 1: 378), he receives the gift of mastery in return. Though his act may seem exceptional and transgressive according to certain ethical systems (especially the sentimental Christianity and liberal humanism Jeffers frequently satirized), it still shows the human propensity to establish moral codes for governing action: "I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk" (*CP* 1:377). Awareness of the paradoxical difficulty of achieving ecocritical stewardship is painful, as the plural title indicates. Read literally, the title indicates that there are two different hawks, suggesting the burden humankind faces in stewarding nature is far greater than expected. Read metaphorically, the second hawk may be Jeffers himself, who suffers not because he must kill such a beautiful beast, but because this mercy-

killing is aligned with an enfeebling care for others which the hawk gainsays by its very nature.

If we allow for Lawrence Buell's definition of ecocentrism as a regard for nature which is reverential, minimally or even completely antitechnological, committed to defending diversity as a basis for ecological stability, and resistant to the bigness and impersonality of modern (especially urban) society (430), then "Hurt Hawks" appears to dramatize the challenge of negotiating between anthropocentric and ecocentric standards for stewarding nature.¹⁰ What Jeffers tries to represent as a selfless act underscores the difficulty of achieving and sustaining an ecocentric relation to the non-human natural world. The poem's elevated tone and psalm-like rhythms suggest a degree of anthropocentric self-satisfaction with this act which is perfectly in keeping with what Jeffers articulates as the law of nature: "He is strong and pain is worse to the strong, incapacity is worse" (CP 1: 377). The ghost of the hawk rising in the night reflects Jeffers's failure to relinquish his central place in the natural world, and its semblance to a phoenix emphasizes Jeffers's role as poet or metaphor-maker. Thus, Jeffers foregrounds the separation from nature that can result from linguistic expression. Yet this foregrounding is not necessarily an omen of ecological catastrophe, since the poem further suggests that healthful relations between humans and their environment might be possible in spite or even because of the self-conscious acknowledgment of the limits and mediating effects of language.

ENDNOTES

1. See Bernard Quetchenbach: "[Jeffers's] reputation has been kept alive and his books in print primarily as a result of his early advocacy for wild nature" (30); John Elder: "[Jeffers's] passion for obliteration also establishes, and begins to redress, the loss from which new community may grow. American poets today continue with this effort to clear the ground" (23); Lawrence Buell: "Jeffers's work has been celebrated as disclosing 'an ecological vision of divinity'" (162).

2. See Frederic Carpenter, *Robinson Jeffers*; Robert Zaller, *The Cliffs of Solitude* and "Robinson Jeffers and the California Sublime."

3. One may infer from Quetchenbach that Jeffers's poems are lyrically "thin" only from a New Critical perspective. It therefore appears that an environmentally committed lyric demands reevaluation of lyric qualities, valuing rhythmic intensity and explicit subject matter over ambiguity and irony.

4. Jeffers's source for this information, besides the highly visible socioeconomic effects, would have been local periodicals. Jeffers's son Donnan claims that "There was only one periodical that he [Robinson Jeffers] subscribed to and read constantly: *Time*. I should have qualified that, of course, by saying that he always

got and read the daily Monterey newspaper and part of the time the San Francisco *Chronicle*" (qtd. in Brophy, "The Tor House Library" 10–11).

5. Reduction is the process whereby fish are converted to fish meal or oil.

6. For Leonard Scigaj, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's view of consciousness as imbricated in a material body grounds environmental ethics in the potential for embodied consciousness to sympathize with other life across a shared, practical space (Scigaj 65–77). I would note the parallels between his idea of language as imbricated and the referential turn in Martin Heidegger's poetics exemplified by his claim that "Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it" (218).

7. Monterey County was in fact sparsely populated during the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s. Still, Jeffers's representation of human figures may be more an expression of preference than an accurate recording; as Robert J. Brophy notes, "Jeffers's ideal was ten miles between neighbors" ("Ecology" 8).

8. Although it is inappropriate to speak of the "founding" of Deep Ecology, since the Deep Ecologists draw authority from various pre-modern thinkers, we can identify the Norwegian thinker Arne Naess as the founder of the modern Deep Ecology movement (in 1973). It is also worth noting that Naess himself distinguishes between the Deep Ecology Platform (DEP), a loose coalition of differing ecological philosophies joined for the sake of political expedience, and Ecosophy T, the ecological philosophy of self-realization, non-dualism, and wider identification with the world, for which Naess is considered the major proponent and spokesman. In spite of Naess's efforts to associate the term Deep Ecology with the DEP, it is most often associated with Ecosophy T, an association I will continue, *pace* Naess, so as to emphasize its theoretical parallels with Jeffers's thought and to avoid anachronistically linking Jeffers to the DEP.

9. Anna Bramwell distinguishes between biological ecology, which examines energy flows in a closed system objectively, and normative ecology, which evinces ethical responses to severe disruptions of that system (4).

10. Buell's definition is itself a modification of one advanced by environmental historian Timothy O'Riordan (Buell 430). Their definitions differ on two points. Unlike Buell, O'Riordan does not allow for complete antitechnologism. Unlike O'Riordan, Buell does not require ecological homeostasis as a condition for ecological stability (this accords with the dynamism described by community ecology).

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DEBORAH FLEMING

RATIONALISM AND THE
GREAT MEMORY OF THE WORLD
A STUDY OF YEATS AND JEFFERS

W. B. Yeats and Robinson Jeffers, two twentieth-century poets whose styles differed widely, nevertheless shared a vision of modernity which commented on their own work as well as their times and created poetry which sought to change contemporary values. Among their poetic philosophies which distinguished them from other major modern poets is their belief in what Yeats called *Spiritus Mundi* and Jeffers called *Anima Mundi*, the Great Memory, or universal consciousness. The existence of this Great Memory or buried consciousness of the world that included individual, cultural, and natural history and manifested itself to individuals through images and archetypes was for them among certain truths that superseded human reason in importance. Yeats's *Spiritus Mundi* connected all peoples who understood their different myths in the same universal way; Jeffers's Great Memory is the essence of the physical world, the pulse of life, inseparable from it. Yeats believed that certain ideas, themes, and archetypes were innate and did not come entirely from sense perception; Jeffers on the other hand emphasized sense perception and hence, "objective fact" in order to know the majesty of the world but rejected empiricism—which claims that sense perception is the sole way we know anything. Yeats wrote that revelation came to an individual from an "ages-long memoried self" and that genius was a "crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our trivial daily mind" ("*Hodos Chameliontos*," *Collected 2*: 216–17). Birds' instinctive knowledge of how to build their nests was an example he cites as evidence that creatures are born with "innate ideas" which prove the existence of this buried storehouse of images. Yeats's Great Memory or *Spiritus Mundi* dwelt largely in the unconscious mind; its symbols came from the natural world, but individual and cultural memories were as important as instinct and the history of the land itself. Jeffers further believed in the existence of a buried consciousness contained in the physical and biological processes of the earth that at times (usually when the individual

human being was inspired by natural beauty and power) rose into individual consciousness. Thus, even though he believed that human beings were spoilers and desecrators of the natural world, he considered them to be physically and spiritually part of that world and therefore important to it. Jeffers identifies the Great Memory with the physical world, not with a spirit located within but separate from it. "I believe that the universe is one being," he wrote, "all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, influencing each other, therefore parts of one organic whole" (qtd. in Karman, Introduction 9).

I will begin by discussing in detail Yeats's short poem "Fragments" through which the poet conveys his idea that empiricism—especially Locke's—destroyed belief in myth and engendered materialism and industrialism. His essay on Bishop Berkeley further spells out his theory that Locke's idea of the primary and secondary characteristics of things led to dialectical materialism and the end of creation from a culture rather than from individuals. In order to contrast Yeats's philosophy with Locke's I discuss his ideas of *tabula rasa*, the individual mind which can know only from experience, and his ideas about economic pragmatism. Further developing Yeats's idea about *Spiritus Mundi*, I examine the key passages from his essay "Magic" in which he declares that all minds can "flow into one another" to create a single mind and that individual memory comes from one Great Memory which emanates from Nature. I then show how his philosophy compares with Jung's *Anima Mundi*. The second half of this paper deals with Robinson Jeffers's idea of the Great Memory, especially as he works out his philosophy through the poems "Consciousness," "De Rerum Virtute," and "Anima Mundi." In the first poem he laments that self-awareness that separates human beings from nature, but by the last he celebrates this quality that enables us to know the beauty of the universe and the Great Memory itself.

Because of their belief in the great storehouse of images, Yeats and Jeffers distrusted Enlightenment emphasis on human reason and sense perception as the only way of knowing the world. They might be called anti-rationalists and anti-empiricists both in their belief in a buried consciousness and in their conviction that Enlightenment rationalism, which led to industrialism, also led to desolation. Although Jeffers has been called a rational poet inspired by science, "the ultimate criterion of what is and is not" (Brophy 4), his belief in the primacy of the physical world and in the ability of science to dispel anthropocentrism is not synonymous with Enlightenment rationalism, which was born of Newtonian scientific thinking, but made the supreme mistake of declaring human beings—because they can ponder

issues of cosmological and causal significance—the center of the universe and the primary measure of its importance. Yeats too found distasteful the philosophy of empiricism—and particularly that of John Locke—to which he attributed both the death of belief in the supernatural and the rise of the Industrial Revolution and its materialism. In “Fragments” he makes clear his skepticism:

I

Locke sank into a swoon;
The Garden died;
God took the spinning-jenny
Out of his side.

II

Where got I that truth?
Out of a medium’s mouth,
Out of nothing it came,
Out of the forest loam,
Out of the dark night where lay
The crowns of Nineveh. (*Collected I*: 214)

Part I thus parodies the creation account in Genesis by showing that Locke’s philosophy did not create woman but rather spawned a machine; in the process “The Garden died”—empiricism and the ensuing industrialism destroyed paradise. What Yeats means here may be that Enlightenment empiricism and emphasis on human reason rendered belief in myth impossible or perhaps—given the reference to the Garden—put an end to literary pastoralism or Romanticism. For Yeats, spiritual presences can make known to the individual truths from the other realm; thus, innate ideas—which John Locke asserted do not exist—make manifest this other world. Locke’s “common sense” philosophy—his belief that rationally grounded judgments, especially those based on sense perception, should prevail over expressions of emotion—as well as his denial of the existence of innate ideas prompts Yeats to condemn his philosophy so soundly, attributing to it both the death of religious myth (“The Garden died”) and the birth of the Industrial Revolution and its attendant movement toward mechanization (“God took the spinning-jenny / Out of his side”), not only of production but also of culture. For Yeats, love of reason such as Locke’s philosophy implies a separation of human beings from nature and the collective unconscious of the world, from which emanate the images that make great art possible.

He titles the poem "Fragments" not only because of its cryptic nature, but also because he believed Locke had fragmented human understanding with his theory of the primary and secondary qualities of objects in the world and his denial of innate knowledge. At the outset Yeats proclaims that Locke "sank," implying that the empiricist has fallen to a lower state—he has sinned or become separated from God—rather than that God has brought about his unconsciousness. Yeats further employs "swoon," one of John Keats's words in "Bright Star!" rather than the King James Version's "deep sleep," which God causes to "fall upon" Adam (Genesis 2.21). Thus Locke, not God, is responsible for the Industrial Revolution. The sin is the separation of consciousness. In his essay on Bishop Berkeley (1931), Yeats describes Berkeley's disagreement with the philosophy of a neighboring nation—England—and of Newton and Locke in particular. Among "certain great constructions" created by Locke, his articulation of the primary and secondary qualities, although refuted by Berkeley, led to the idea that things could be separated from their characteristics—"from that day to this the conception of a physical world without colour, sound, taste, tangibility . . . has remained the assumption of science" (*Essays* 401)—and to the dialectical materialism of European socialism. Berkeley—like Swift, Goldsmith, and Burke—found in England the opposite that "stung their thought into expression and made it lucid" (*Essays* 402). Yeats concludes by lamenting the end of the romantic movement and the advent of an age in which human beings could think and create only from their own individual minds and not a culture (*Essays* 411).

The irony of the first part of "Fragments" gives way to the satiric second part which begins not with a rhetorical but a reflexive question whose form subverts modern syntax and attempts to subvert modern logic and reasonableness: "Where got I that truth?" He obtained it in part from William Blake who declares in "Milton" that he will "cast off rational demonstration" especially of "Bacon, Locke, and Newton" and in "Jerusalem" tells the reader to "behold the loom of Locke," the cruel wheels on which the Industrial Revolution moved. Yeats asserts that he obtained this "truth" from a medium—one who connects the natural and supernatural worlds; from "nothing"—perhaps the Great Memory; from the "forest loam"—natural processes; or from the "dark night where lay / The crowns of Nineveh"—myth. In "Hodos Chameliontos" while examining the characteristics that create a national consciousness he asks "Was not a nation, as distinguished from a crowd of chance comers, bound together by this interchange among streams or shadows; that Unity of Image, which I sought in national literature, being but an originating symbol?" (*Collected* 3: 210).

Concluding that truth would come not from books but from a moment of passionate experience akin to what he felt when writing poetry (*Collected* 3: 215), Yeats knew himself “face to face with the Anima Mundi described by Platonic philosophers, and more especially in modern times by Henry More, which has a memory independent of embodied individual memories, though they constantly enrich it with their images and their thoughts” (*Collected* 3: 210). His observances of tame birds building nests confirmed the existence of the buried consciousness of the world: he concludes that creatures could have innate ideas or instincts that came from some buried consciousness not accessible or explainable by reason (*Collected* 3: 215–17).

Although Robinson Jeffers does not condemn Locke specifically as Yeats does, in “Metamorphosis” he concludes the first verse paragraph with the assertion that “The harlot Goddess of Reason— / I mean desolation’s handmaid—inherits all.” He begins with a declaration of the earth’s beauty and strength: “The beauty of the earth is a resilient wonderful thing, / It dies and lives, it is capable of many resurrections” (*CP* 3: 417). Describing a canyon which was once “a hushed and holy place” where redwood trees had towered “for a thousand years, and for a million their ancestors, / In their own sacred twilight,” he states that human beings had destroyed the canyon’s dignity and virtue by cutting down the trees. The location is now “one of the cursed places” and is “A temple profaned and atheist.” In Jeffers’s philosophy, while sense perception reveals the beauty of nature and scientific truth that invalidates anthropocentrism, reliance on reason separates human beings from nature and leads to destruction of it.

John Locke was an empiricist in that he believed that all knowledge was supplied by sense perception and introspection (Copleston 70), a rationalist in that he believed all questions could be answered by human reason. He put forth his doctrine of *tabula rasa*, the blank page, on which “experience alone can write” and which enabled people to believe each individual entirely free from what has already happened (Laslett 83). Certainly Locke advanced the principle that there exists no “innate knowledge,” titling Book One of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* “Neither Principles Nor Ideas are Innate,” and proceeding to declare in Chapter One (titled “No Innate Speculative Principles”) that “No proposition can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of” (40). Alexander Campbell Fraser notes that this argument pre-empts any idea of the unconscious, collective or otherwise:

The argument in this section assumes that ideas cannot be held mentally in a latent or unconscious state, that there cannot be impressions made on the

mind without accompanying consciousness of them, a mental impression and a consciousness of it being regarded as identical. That there may be *conditions*, implied in the constitution of reason, to which our ideas, when they do emerge in consciousness, must conform, by necessity of reason, is a conception foreign to his view. Locke argues that no idea can be said to be “in the mind” of which that mind is not either actually percipient, or through memory capable of becoming percipient. (Fraser n. 2, 40–41, emphasis in original)

Consequently, Locke’s philosophy contradicts the idea that all people share in a common mythological heritage imbibed intuitively at birth or conception, not learned through experience. In Book Four, “Of Knowledge and Probability,” but especially in Chapters Four, Nine, Ten, and Eleven, Locke lays out his theory that human beings know things from experience alone and explicitly from the experience of sense perception:

The knowledge of the existence of *any other thing* [other than God] we can have only by *sensation*: for there being no necessary connexion of real existence with any *idea* a man hath in his memory; nor of any other existence but that of God with the existence of any particular man: no particular man can know the existence of any other being, but only when, by actual operating upon him, it makes itself perceived by him.” (325, emphasis Locke’s)

He continues that knowledge can come only from the senses: “It is therefore the *actual receiving* of ideas from without that gives us notice of the existence of other things, and makes us know, that something doth exist at that time without us, which causes that idea in us . . .” (326, emphasis Locke’s). Although Locke does not deny spiritual reality or supernatural order—he firmly asserts his belief in and founds many of his principles on Christian theology—Yeats found his denial of innate principles to be spiritually sterile. He asserts in Part II of “Fragments” that his own truth does come from “nothing,” and therefore truth can emanate from nothing.

Locke’s philosophy furthermore led to economic pragmatism and materialism which spurred the Industrial Revolution that both Yeats and Jeffers abhorred. In the *Second Treatise of Government* (also known as Book Two of *An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government*), he puts forth his idea that all improvement of human society has come from human desire to increase “conveniencys” of life. The desire to increase these conveniences makes men want to improve land in order to obtain them.

Locke refers to people who did not wish to acquire more than they needed as living in a “state of nature” and dismisses any possible value for land which is not cultivated. He also believed large human popula-

tions preferable to largeness of dominions (315). For Yeats, land contained historic, mythological, and literary significance that far transcended any material value. Since Yeats disliked industrialism, mechanization, and utilitarianism, calling them “this filthy modern tide” (“The Statues,” *Collected* 1: 336), he would have found Locke’s theory of value loathsome as he seems to indicate in “Fragments.” In addition, although he does not express the same love of wilderness that Jeffers does, Yeats found many of his poetic symbols in the natural world and embraced the idea that Ireland should remain a rural, essentially pastoral, country in which people did not seek primarily to increase their material possessions:

Whenever men have tried to imagine a perfect life, they have imagined a place where men plow and sow and reap, not a place where there are great wheels turning and great chimneys vomiting smoke. Ireland will always be a country where men plow and sow and reap . . . (qtd. in Ellman 113)

Jeffers even more soundly than Yeats denounces industrialism, mechanization, and “progress.” “The Coast-Road” describes his philosophy of the best life as “the life of men who ride horses, herders of cattle on the mountain pasture, plowers of remote / Rock-narrowed farms in poverty and freedom.” The road, which many might consider to be “progress,” will, however, bring what will destroy that life: “a rich and vulgar and bewildered civilization dying at the core” (*CP* 2: 522). In “Shine, Republic,” he further declares his conviction that poverty and freedom should go together but do not because Americans have fallen in love with luxuries. Here he departs from Locke in that while the philosopher believed in individual freedom to increase one’s possessions, the poet believed in individual freedom to live and to love the natural world. He certainly would not have agreed with Locke that numbers of human beings are to be desired more than land, because Jeffers believed people and their society to be the worst part of the world, albeit an insignificant part; definitely he would not have agreed that land left to itself was “waste” since he valued wilderness more than civilization, and the only “entrepreneurs” he respected were the small farmers and ranchers who eked out their livings from the land, not those who increased their “conveniences,” which were not only unnecessary but created dependence and hence weakness. The passion for freedom created America, Jeffers says in “Shine, Republic”; it was not “born to prosperity” but “born to love freedom.” Nevertheless,

Freedom is poor and laborious; that torch is not safe but hungry, and often requires blood for its fuel.

You will tame it against it burn too clearly, you will hood it like a kept hawk,
you will perch it on the wrist of Caesar. (CP 2: 417)

Love of luxury had made the freedom-loving Americans weak and timid, and thus the desire for what Locke called “conveniencys” had not contributed anything of value to society. The example America set would inspire future states not to emulate it but to feel “contempt of luxury.”

Yeats associated the Great Memory primarily with place and the heritage of a people. Artists, in order to bring the universal consciousness to individual understanding, must draw from their own ancestral literature; for example, Keats’s and Shakespeare’s knowledge of folklore made them greater than Shelley and Blake, who took their symbols from other cultural mythologies or created their own.¹ Yeats claimed that Irish history and literature possessed an abundance of imaginative events and legends that were surpassed only by those of ancient Greece for wild beauty. Every mountain in Ireland, as in Greece, was associated with some tale; therefore, Irish artists should “fix upon their memory the appearance of mountains and rivers and make it all visible again in their arts” (*Essays* 205). In order to create a national literature, poets must have access to symbols, archetypes, and stories found only in the folk imagination: “No conscious invention can take the place of tradition, for he who would write a folk tale, and thereby bring a new life into literature, must have the fatigue of the spade in his hands and the stupor of the fields in his heart” (*Uncollected* 1: 288). The folk—illiterate or semi-literate peasants, tinkers, and fishermen—possessed, Yeats claimed, a popular imaginative tradition which connected artists to their own cultural history: “There is no song or story handed down among the cottages that has not words and thoughts to carry one as far, for though one can know but a little of their ascent, one knows that they ascend like medieval genealogies through unbroken dignities to the beginning of the world” (*Mythologies* 138–39). He wrote that he had not yet lost the belief that he would come to understand, in some faraway village or island that had not lost its tradition, “how this pagan mystery hides and reveals some half-forgotten memory of an ancient knowledge or of an ancient wisdom” (*Uncollected* 2: 275).

Folklore could do more than connect the artist with the past, important for the revivication of Irish traditions; artists needed to know the mythological and legendary images and symbols because the act of creation itself involved remembering images of past greatness (*Letters to the New Island* 43) stored in a universal memory—what Yeats called the “fibrous darkness” out of which all ideas sprang.

Folklore not only united people spiritually to their own localities but also expressed universal themes: "The root-stories of the Greek poets are told to-day at the cabin fires of Donegal" (*Uncollected* 1: 284). The same Irish mind produced the old sagas as well as folklore (Thuente 24); furthermore, the great myths of Ireland expressed not only Irish history but also the collective imagination of the world, the *Spiritus Mundi*—similar to Carl Gustav Jung's *Anima Mundi*, the collective unconscious described in Yeats's essay "Magic":

. . . I believe in three doctrines, which have, as I think, been handed down from early times, and been the foundations of nearly all magical practices. These doctrines are:—

(1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.

(2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.

(3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols. (*Essays* 28)

Thus Yeats as well as Jeffers identified the Great Memory with nature and believed that imaginative supremacy emanated from the collective: "the power of many minds to become one, overpowering one another by spoken words and by unspoken thought till they have become a single, intense, unhesitating energy" (*Essays* 36). Artistic vision stemmed from "buried memories," symbols from the inherited psychic past. In "The Message of the Folk-lorist" Yeats wrote: "There is no passion, no vague desire, no tender longing that cannot find fit type or symbol in the legends of the peasantry or in the traditions of the scalds and gleemen" (*Uncollected* 1: 295). Human experience throughout the ages was part of the Great Memory which became manifest to people through myth, folklore, and legend:

Whatever the passions of man have gathered about, becomes a symbol in the Great Memory, and in the hands of him who has the secret it is a worker of wonders, a caller-up of angels or of devils. The symbols are of all kinds, for everything in heaven or earth has its association, momentous or trivial, in the Great Memory. (*Essays* 50).

Artists sought to remake the world but could do so only according to the patterns and impulses of the Great Mind. The soul was "individual" only in its temporal manifestation; it also remained part of universal and historical truth. Yeats wrote of the natural universal divine in Whitmanesque terms:

To the greater poets everything they see has its relation to the natural life, and through that to the universal and divine life: nothing is an isolated artistic moment; there is unity everywhere; everything fulfills a purpose that is not its own; the hailstone is a journeyman of God; the grass blade carries the universe upon its point. . . . The Irish peasant and most serene of Englishmen are at one. Tradition is always the same. The earliest poet of India and the Irish peasant in his hovel nod to each other across the ages, and are in perfect agreement. (*Letters to the New Island* 174, 204)

Thus, the poet, by contemplating nature and traditional ways of life, understands their relation to the universal and divine. Neither the imagination nor creation is solitary, but collective; great art makes manifest the relationship of the individual to the universal. Yeats articulates in “The Philosophy of Shelley’s Poetry” (*Essays* 65–95) his theory that the Great Memory serves as storehouse of poetic symbols which do not originate in the individual imagination but the universal consciousness:

Nor I think has anyone, who has known that experience [the mystical state of the soul] with any constancy, failed to find some day, in some old book or on some old monument, a strange or intricate image that had floated up before him, and to grow perhaps dizzy with the sudden conviction that our little memories are but a part of some great Memory that renews the world and men’s thoughts age after age, and that our thoughts are not, as we suppose, the deep, but a little foam upon the deep. Shelley understood this . . . but whether he understood that the Great Memory is also a dwelling-house of symbols, of images that are living souls, I cannot tell. (*Essays* 79)

Later, in the second section of *Per Amica Silentia Lunae*, titled “Anima Mundi” (1917), Yeats explained that “Our daily thought was certainly but the line of foam at the shallow edge of a vast luminous sea” (*Collected* 5: 18). Examining the philosopher Henry More’s conception of Anima Mundi, Yeats explains that he “came to believe in a great memory passing from generation to generation” (*Collected* 5: 18) and that “Our animal spirits or vehicles are but as it were a condensation of the vehicle of Anima Mundi, and give substance to its images in the faint materialisation of our common thought . . .” (*Collected* 5: 21). Even the emotions were not individual but part of a vaster scheme: “We carry to Anima Mundi our memory, and that memory is for a time our external world; and all passionate moments recur again and again, for passion desires its own recurrence more than any event . . .” (*Collected* 5: 24).

James Olney explains in “Sex and the Dead: *Daimones* of Yeats and Jung” (1981) that for both Yeats and Carl Gustav Jung, furthermore,

the Great Memory is the storehouse of the “residue of experience” that becomes manifest to the individual in the form of powerful images that cause that individual to recreate a vision of the world in terms of those images:

When an archetype takes hold of us (nor can we avoid possession by them since we are human and possessed of all the instincts specific to humans), then—as Yeats and Jung jointly maintain—events of the day do not (as in Freud) determine the images of our dreams nor does experience in the world determine our vision; rather our vision breaks the world and reforms it according to an image that comes from deep within and from far in the past. An instinct insistently forces its own self-portrait on us, and it is not—nor will it ever be—the portrait of anyone in the world; so that all our Freudian incestuous desires—Yeats and Jung agree—are deeper and other than the son’s desire for his mother or the brother’s for his sister. They are nothing less than the serpent’s closing on his own tail, Antaeus returning to the earth, the self wedding the anti-self in a *hieros gamos*, Narcissus joined to his daimonic image, Leda’s Egg turning inside out and outside in without ever breaking the shell. The figures of such visions and dreams, Yeats one place declares, are “shadows of the impulses that have made them, messages . . . out of the ancestral being of the questioner” (*Essays* 36). Another way—less poetic but more psychological—of saying this is that such visionary and dream figures are self-portraits of specifically human instincts which are themselves the inherited product of the accumulated experience of the race. In yet other words, they are archetypal images from the collective unconscious, symbolic figures from *Anima Mundi*, *daimones* reflecting the cumulative experience and psychic possibilities of humankind and, at the same time, shaping that experience and those possibilities. (222)

In “The Second Coming,” the only poem in which Yeats uses the term *Spiritus Mundi*, he anticipates the advent not of Christ but of Antichrist, the “rough beast” that will bring forth an era of violence. Yeats believed that the millennium would usher in a new era of violence, that just as the two previous eras (two-thousand-year cycles) had commenced with miraculous births (that of Helen and that of Christ), so would the next, although of course the result would be disastrous. The image that “troubles” the poet’s sight—that of a sphinx in the desert which becomes animated although its gaze is “blank and pitiless as the sun” (*Collected* 1: 187)—comes from the Great Memory, the universal storehouse of images, to foretell a cataclysmic change of historical phase.

Jung believed that the almost universal parallelism between mythological motifs provides evidence that archetypes grew from the collective ancestral experience. Myths, he concludes, express the nature of the soul: “Primitive man impresses us so strongly with his subjectivity

that we should really have guessed long ago that myths refer to something psychic" (*Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* 6). Since they are allegories of psychic processes, myths cannot be invented. Jung, in describing his theory of Collective Unconscious or Anima Mundi, proposed the existence of two layers of the unconscious, the personal and transpersonal or collective: "There are present in every individual, besides his personal memories, the great 'primordial' images . . . the inherited possibilities of human imagination as it was from time immemorial. The fact of this inheritance explains the truly amazing phenomenon that certain motifs from myths and legends repeat themselves the world over in identical forms" (Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* 65). The personal unconscious is individual and subjective, while the collective unconscious is universal and objective: "the collective unconscious is anything but an encapsulated personal system; it is sheer objectivity, as wide as the world and open to all the world. There I am the object of every subject, in complete reversal of my ordinary consciousness, where I am always the subject that has an object. There I am utterly one with the world, so much a part of it that I forget all too easily who I really am" (Jung, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* 22).

The greatest thoughts of humankind are shaped by what Jung calls "dominants" or "archetypes" of the collective unconscious, which, although they cannot be personified, are independent and express the recurrent experiences of humanity: "The archetype is a kind of readiness to produce over and over again the same or similar mythical ideas. Hence it seems as though what is impressed upon the unconscious were exclusively the subjective fantasy-images aroused by the physical process. We may therefore assume that the archetypes are recurrent impressions made by subjective reactions" (Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* 69).

That Robinson Jeffers was aware of Jung and the concept of the great storehouse of images is clear from his reference to "the great memory of that unhumanized world" in "Subjected Earth" (*CP* 2: 129) and in a late manuscript retitled "Anima Mundi" that was left unfinished at his death. Throughout his career his conviction that the beauty of the world is the proper subject for poetry does not change, but, as Steven Chapman argues in "De Rerum Virtute: A Critical Anatomy," Jeffers's later poetry gives voice to a more fully developed view of both nature and humankind "encompassing ethics, aesthetics, and religion" (22) and moving from his earlier stance of human insignificance to a more generous view of the place of human beings in the world. In fact, Jeffers moves from the hatred of human self-awareness he expresses in the early poem "Consciousness" (1920–23) to appreciation of its

importance for the Great Memory in "De Rerum Virtute" (1948–53) and later poems such as the unfinished fragment "Anima Mundi."

"Consciousness" (CP 1: 7–8), a sequence of three English sonnets, articulates Jeffers's conviction that human self-awareness separates individuals from the natural world with which the speaker himself wishes to be a part. In the first sonnet Jeffers considers the separation between instinct and will, describing the human being acting on impulse: "What catches the eye the quick hand reaches toward / Or plotting brain circuitously secures, / The will is not required, is not our lord." The following metaphor of the rifle and bullet ("The bullet flies the way the rifles's fired") reveals the unconsciously mechanistic nature of the impulse or instinct as well as its deadly earnestness. In the following rhetorical question, however, Jeffers poses the quintessential dilemma of Inhumanism: "Then what is this unreasonable excess, / Our needless quality, this unrequired / Exception in the world, this consciousness?" He cries out against that which the Renaissance and Enlightenment celebrated—the individual consciousness as avatar of God, human reason which could enable people to unlock the secrets of the universe. For Jeffers this consciousness was not to be held up as evidence of human superiority but a quality to be reviled, ironically calling it "unreasonable" as well as "needless" and "unrequired," in contrast to Enlightenment pride in this human faculty. Jeffers then recognizes that although the consciousness stems from the same source as the instincts ("Our nerves and brain have their own chemic changes"), the consciousness "surely . . . stands outside." The metaphor of the consciousness as a horse illuminates its connection to the natural life: "It feeds in the same pasture and it ranges / Up and down the same hills, but unallied, / However symbiotic, with the cells / That weave tissues and lives." He closes the couplet with the simple declarative statement "It is something else," and while for centuries people celebrated this difference between human and animal consciousness, the poem makes clear that Jeffers reviles it.

The sonnet's description of separateness does not satisfy, however; the reader needs a more fully stated argument. The second sonnet begins with the proposition in a sentence fragment implying Jeffers's pantheistic view of the universe: "As if there were two Gods." The description of the first, the creator of the natural world, contains some of the most beautiful lines in the poem, alternating between iambs, trochees, and anapests, all full end rhyme with one exception, "men" / "brain," and that slant rhyme carefully chosen to ally the human being with that which engenders the great separation, the unusual brain. Line two, however, by the use of "and" equates human beings with the wonders of nature by using strong stresses to accentuate "All visible

things, waves, mountains, stars and men,” then the more impressionistic and mysterious qualities of nature that inspire our perception—“The sweet forms dancing on through flame and shade,” reminiscent of the imagery of Yeats’s poems. Jeffers then turns to the description of the body, revealing not only his knowledge of current physiology but also his understanding that science reveals human beings to be more a part of the natural world than Renaissance or Enlightenment philosophy could ever acknowledge:

The swift messenger nerves that sting the brain,
 The brain itself and the answering strands that start
 Explosion in the muscles, the indrinking eye
 Of cunning crystal, the hands and feet, the heart
 And feeding entrails, and the organs that tie
 The generations into one wreath, one strand (*CP* 1: 7)

The repetition of “strand” within five lines emphasizes the interconnectedness of the individual nerve with the generations of all living things (a theme he will return to in “*De Rerum Virtute*”), and the image of the wreath signifies the unity of all things. As in the first sonnet, he acknowledges the importance of the chemical processes but at the same time the tangible world that he loves so much. For all their complexity they nevertheless need only “brain and patience to understand”; the use of the singular form of the verb “needs” again suggests unity of the mental and physical worlds. The last three lines, however, shatter the love of the world felt by this creature mankind with the introduction of “the other God” who arrives suddenly, declaring its sovereignty to uplift or despise, to “crown” or “damn,” to add a “different fire” to the existence of the forms. The last line utters a curse: “These forms shall feel, ache, love, grieve and be glad,” suggesting that the “sweet forms” of the earlier line which danced “through flame and shade” were human beings. Emotions and awareness, however, have cast the innocent natural beings out of Eden.

The last sonnet dwells on the life of men after the expulsion from the Garden. Jeffers returns to the “insolence” of this God or devil who brings not only the “sting” but also the “rapture” and asks, evoking the Greeks’ pantheistic world view and Prometheus in particular, “By what right did that fire-bringer come in?” As the consciousness is “needless,” the second God is “uncalled for,” a conqueror who enslaves the beings and gives both joy and misery. With the second quatrain the speaker shows us the result of our loss of innocence but also the triumph of our consciousness; we are divided in our allegiance to each God, and the second God allows us to realize the profundity of the beauty of the world:

suddenly

An August sundown on a mountain road
 The marble poms, the primal majesty
 And senseless beauty of that austerer God
 Come to us, so we love him as men love
 A mountain, not their kind . . . (CP 1: 8)

Even as we love the world, however, we grow conscious of ourselves and the nature of our existence, outcast from the Garden of our innocence:

love growing intense

Changes to joy that we grow conscious of:
 There is the rapture, the sting, the insolence.
 Or mourn dead beauty a bird-bright-May-morning:
 The insufferable insolence, the sting. (CP 1: 8)

The quality that allows us to love and appreciate nature also alienates us from it; our joy is our misery, our freedom our captivity. Thus he reveals the double, impure nature of human life. Jeffers's (and the deep ecologists') very credo is contained in the narrative poem "Roan Stallion" where the narrator declares that

Humanity is the start of

the race; I say
 Humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break through, the
 coal to break into fire,
 The atom to be split. (CP 1: 189)

Foiled by desire (love) and science (intellect) into believing that they are the masters of the world, people are miniscule beings in the great universe: "what is humanity in this cosmos?" the speaker asks (CP 1: 189), the first announcement of Jeffers's philosophy which he would later call "Inhumanism" and work out in his poetry from 1925 on. Central to Jeffers's philosophy, as not necessarily to the deep ecologists', is his conviction that human beings are not only not the fallen angels of the traditional religious view but also one of the worst of the creations of nature, an aberration, a mistake of evolution. At times Jeffers refers to them with scorn, sometimes with pity, and sometimes with reluctant admiration. In "Orca" (CP 3: 205–6) he calls the human species a "botched experiment" as he watches the killer whale devour a sea lion, but not with the ugliness and hypocrisy of human beings:

Here was death, and with terror, yet it looked
 clean and bright, it was beautiful.
 Why? Because there was nothing human involved, suffering nor causing; no
 lies, no smirk and no malice;
 All strict and decent; the will of man had nothing to do here. The earth is a
 star, its human element
 Is what darkens it. War is evil, the peace will be evil, cruelty is evil; death is
 not evil. But the breed of man
 Has been queer from the start. It looks like a botched experiment that has run
 wild and ought to be stopped. (CP 3: 206)

Still, human beings had the power to realize the beauty of nature and their place in it. Jeffers states in many poems that they should not separate themselves from nature but should instead abandon what is conscious and human, therefore temporary, transitory, and ugly. In "The Answer" Jeffers implies a readership, an inquiring presence aware of his earlier work. He "answers" the question of how people, imperfect as they are, should live:

Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is
 Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the
 universe. Love that, not man
 Apart from that . . . (CP 2: 536)

He thus implies that human beings can separate themselves from their own narcissism by contemplation of and immersion in nature. In "Sign-Post" Jeffers also instructs the reader how to transcend the merely human, the failings, the narcissism:

Civilized, crying how to be human again: this will tell you how.
 Turn outward, love things, not men, turn right away from humanity,
 Let that doll lie. Consider if you like how the lilies grow,
 Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity
 Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars, let your eyes
 Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself and man.
 Things are so beautiful, your love will follow your eyes;
 Things are the God, you will love God, and not in vain,
 For what we love, we grow to it, we share its nature. At length
 You will look back along the stars' rays and see that even
 The poor doll humanity has a place under heaven.
 Its qualities repair their mosaic around you, the chips of strength
 And sickness; but now you are free, even to become human,
 But born of the rock and the air, not of a woman. (CP 2: 418)

Thus, although they are ignoble and prone to self-absorption as well as cruelty, people could “become human”—that is, realize their nobler natures. His allusion to the Biblical passage in which Christ admonishes his people to “consider the lilies how they grow” (Luke 12.27) turns the table on that passage, for while Christ teaches his hearers to leave concern for the moment’s well-being and turn to the spirit, Jeffers tells his readers to leave the spiritual and return to the earth. James Baird explains that Jeffers’s philosophy that we discover our very humanness by realizing the fullness of our relationship with nature replaces anthropocentrism with what we now call ecocentrism (8). People are no longer the center of the universe but one of many parts which together make up a beautiful whole; the only beauty they can discover lies in the physical universe, not in their desires, intellect, or creations.

As R. Ellis Roberts points out, Jeffers’s philosophy resembles Lucretius’s pantheism (147), but it was certainly not the pantheism of Wordsworth—which Arthur Coffin describes as simply the assurance of God’s benign presence in the world of nature (250)—or of Whitman, both of whom embraced a much more anthropocentric philosophy. Coffin has also examined in detail the significant influence of the Latin poet Lucretius on Jeffers (242–52). In his lengthy, didactic poem *De Rerum Natura* (*The Nature of Things*), Lucretius draws from Epicurus’s belief in the atomic basis of all substance, denial of the existence of a god or gods which concerned themselves with human affairs, the “theory of the exclusive validity of sense perception” as the only reliable source of knowledge or truth (seemingly prefiguring Locke), and “an ethical doctrine that pleasure was the criterion of the good,” pain of evil (Copley ix–x). What Epicurus meant by pleasure, however, was no hedonistic notion: pleasure is “the normal state of being, the product of properly balanced and integrated atomic structure; pain results from loss of balance and structural harmony” (Copley xiii). When he asserts the primacy of sense perception in determining truth, he does so in order to refute religious teaching, unlike Locke. Epicureanism constituted a philosophy of peace rather than exhilaration; consequently, Epicurus tolerated the religious cults and even advocated that his followers take part in religious ceremonies—but only to contemplate serenity and not with any expectation of winning the gods’ approval. Lucretius, on the other hand, adopted the harsher view that religion was an ignorant, viciously distorted view of the world: “For true knowledge, humanity should turn away from the perversions and distortions of religion to the actuality of the world, its outer appearance and its inward laws” (Copley xvii). Early in the poem Lucretius declares his purpose—

For I shall tell you of the highest law
of heaven and god, and show you basic substance,
whence nature creates all things and gives them growth,
and whither again dissolves them at their death . . . (2)

—and forcefully articulates his contempt for religion: “. . . human life lay foul before men’s eyes, / crushed to the dust beneath religion’s weight . . .” (2). His example of the foulness of religious influence is the sacrifice of Iphianassa (Iphigenaia) by her father Agamemnon, “So much of evil could religion prompt” (3). From his diatribe against religion Lucretius proceeds to articulate the principles taken from Epicurus, that “nothing was ever by miracle made from nothing” (4). Lucretius instructs his readers in a form of what modern science would call the Law of Conservation of Matter, the belief that the universe contained a limited number of atoms which could neither be created nor destroyed. He explains:

Things seem to perish, then, but they do not:
nature builds one from another, and lets nothing
be born unless another helps by dying.
Come now: I’ve shown that things cannot be made
from nothing nor, once made, be brought to nothing. (7)

While the universe (“the sum of things”) was infinite and indestructible (7, n. 5), however, the world (earth) was finite and subject to death. For Lucretius, the soul lives only in the body and is dissolved into the elements after death (Copley xvii).

Jeffers similarly believed that human beings were part of nature and that after death they return to the earth. In “Inscription for a Gravestone,” for example, the dead man proclaims “now I am part of the beauty” (CP 2: 125). Like Lucretius, Jeffers rejected formal religion, but unlike Lucretius he retained his faith in a creator although not in a personal God; as Coffin argues, “Jeffers’s logic is simple enough: he accepted the atomic theory of Lucretius, but if God created the atoms which are present in all things, then by the act of creation all things are by extension divine” (248). If God were manifest in nature, he reasoned, then to recognize the beauty in nature is to reverence God. Jeffers follows Epicurus in that he believes in the integrity of sense perception, but he also confirms the necessity of experiencing God through perception of nature (as in “Sign-Post”).

As he rejected the separation between God and nature, Jeffers similarly repudiated anthropocentrism. The last lines of “Carmel Point” make clear that he believed human happiness possible only by conceiving of the self as part of nature:

We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
 We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
 As the rock and ocean that we were made from. (CP 3: 399)

Human beings could return to their better selves by realizing they were part of nature, by ceasing to insist on separating themselves from the unconscious. The human tendency to interpret all nature in androcentric terms, on the other hand, Jeffers called frailty. As the eye itself fails because of age or disease it begins to see human figures—a rock looks like a man's face; a tree warped by storm and surrounded by fog is a man running; the huddle of bed-clothes is a woman dying. For the eyes are human: "to see the human figure in all things is man's disease; / To see the inhuman God is our health" ("As the eye finds through age or disease" CP 3: 479). In "Nova" he further explains that contemplation of nature and acceptance of our belonging to it bring awareness that the physical world transcends the individual human one. Just as the nova explodes and swallows the planets around it, so will our sun, "And we know that the enormous invulnerable beauty of things / Is the face of God, to live gladly in its presence, and die without grief or fear knowing it survives us" (CP 2: 531). In "Credo" Jeffers insists on the integrity of the world apart from what imagination makes of it:

. . . I think that the ocean in the bone vault is only
 The bone vault's ocean . . .

 The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself; the heart-
 breaking beauty
 Will remain when there is no heart to break for it. (CP 1: 239)

Death means only dissolution into the elements, the source of all life. The beauty of the world will survive all human appreciation of it even though the chief goal of humankind should be to reverence the beauty of nature.

Yet even as he vilifies that consciousness which separates human beings from nature, Jeffers refines and develops his philosophy of Inhumanism, showing through the poetry just how the mind belongs in the world and is not alien from it. Most notably in "De Rerum Virtute" (CP 3: 401–3), the title of which alludes to Lucretius's poem, Jeffers turns from his view of people as desecrators and aberrations of nature to positing his theory that they are an essential part of the Great Memory itself.² In Stanza One, the speaker, observing a skull, considers that all thoughts and emotions are gone from it like clouds; what remains is a "blown-out eggshell." As Hamlet, standing in a

graveyard and holding a skull, meditated on the end of all human beings and their decomposition into the earth, the speaker in Jeffers's poem considers what this "bone bubble" once held—thoughts and emotions moved under the "thin bone vault" like clouds moving under the vault of sky. Not only did love, desire, anger, and fear fill the mind, but also "the curious desire of knowing / Values and purpose and the causes of things" floated among the emotions like "a little observer airplane." Stanza Two then leads Jeffers to ruminate that the egg too had a mind, one that was not conscious of itself and yet could do what chemists themselves could not—build "the body of a hatchling, choosing among the proteins" for the wing-muscles, nerves, eyes, brain, forming "a limited but superhuman intelligence, / Prophetic of the future and aware of the past." The intelligence is "limited" because its purpose is to animate the world, not busy itself with emotions and abstract thoughts like human intellect; it is "superhuman" because it transcends even the greatest ideas articulated or developed by human beings. All their ideas in fact have their birth in this great mind. The creature, hawk or serpent, is created, like and unlike its ancestors, and slowly forms a new race. This is all part of the plan:

. . . I believe the first living cell
Had echoes of the future in it, and felt
Direction and the great animals, the deep green forest
And whale's-track sea; I believe this globed earth
Not all by chance and fortune brings forth her broods,
But feels and chooses. (*CP* 1: 401–2)

Jeffers asserts here his conviction that all nature is one living being. That the earth "feels and chooses" implies that it possesses will and consciousness of a sort different from the human. The galaxy and whirlwind of stars is "not blind force, but fulfils its life and intends its courses" (*CP* 3: 402). As Robert Zaller describes, in Jeffers the Christian drama of redemptive release from time was replaced by the vision of an ever-renewed universe in which all things were created, resumed, and spewed forth again from a nameless matrix that conferred on them an ungraspable transcendent order; this order was God, immanent in all things yet definable in none (*Cliffs* 217): "All things are full of God. / Winter and summer, day and night, war and peace are God" (*CP* 3: 402).

The third section of "De Rerum Virtute" foretells the extinction of human beings and concludes that their lives have no meaning, that the sun will burn itself out and wander the galaxy like a blind beggar, yet in Stanza Four he declares that mankind too is beautiful. Here the

speaker, standing on the cliff at Sovranes like Whitman facing the end of the continent, and describing the Korean war in Macbeth's image of a "tale told by an idiot" cannot make up his mind whether to praise or condemn the "sick microbe." He can find no beauty in the acts of human beings, yet first considers that they may come to something, then declares the great sculptors and poets (Michael Angelo, Homer, Shakespeare) merely "flattered the race." The concluding stanza states again that it is the beauty of things and not men that is the "immense beauty of the world." He directs the reader's attention—unadulterated by the human frailties of imagination, desire, or dream—to the details he will take ten lines to enumerate and describe—the peaks, ocean, pelagic birds soaring, the desert, rain-forest, Arctic ice—four times posing the rhetorical question of the earth's beauty which the reader must affirm. The relationship of the human being to this immense beauty he explains in the last five lines:

The beauty of things means virtue and value in them.
 It is in the beholder's eye, not the world? Certainly.
 It is the human mind's translation of the transhuman
 Intrinsic glory. It means that the world is sound,
 Whatever the sick microbe does. But he too is part of it. (CP 3: 403)

Virtue and value come from human perception, the beholder, or human mind who gives to the immense beauty of the world its interpretation, "the transhuman / Intrinsic glory." Although the beauty of the world exists independent of human observation and appreciation, the "intrinsic glory" is "transhuman": in order for the world to be aware of its own glory there must be creatures who can know the glory consciously. Thus human consciousness, once the demon which deprived the upright ape of joy, makes the world sound, whatever desecration the "sick microbe" causes. As Chapman comments on the third section, "Jeffers seems to suggest that if consciousness was part of the plan from the beginning there must be a role for consciousness throughout the entire unfolding of the cosmological drama until the end" (28). The last sentence confesses that God and the Great Memory of all things include humankind, self-deluded as people are. This poem sounds Jeffers's conviction in his later work that human beings are part of the great beauty, inseparable from it.

A poem unfinished at Jeffers's death further explores his belief in a Great Memory of the world and its scientific and mythological ramifications. The original title, "The Beauty of Things," is struck through and the poem retitled "Anima Mundi," C. G. Jung's term for the Great Memory. Even earlier he had titled it "the unformed volcanic earth"

(*CP* 5: 874–85). Instead of beginning with the private contemplation of something small and emblematic like a skull (as in “*De Rerum Virtute*”), he begins with creation of humankind and what he knew of human evolution from the historical-geological perspective, that climate change (one theory advanced at the time this manuscript was written) resulted in deforestation, drought, and forest fire which drove the apes out of their habitat, described as a home, “the green roof of Asia,” mother of the continents because it is the largest that came from Pangea. The apes thus lost their “Eden-garden,” perhaps the state of nature so reviled by Locke or lack of consciousness once praised by Jeffers in “*Consciousness*.” The apes lost their innocence and were forced to live on the “bloody” earth and struggle against predators, the wolf and tiger. Jeffers follows this with the explanation given by the theory of natural selection but takes it farther: the most alert survived, adopting not merely an erect posture but “our erect attitude,” that of a rearing animal (perhaps gorilla or bear), revealing the violent nature of the climate change and loss of innocence. Comparing posture to attitude, Jeffers continues the examination of the ramifications of evolution: “Man’s ancestors were apes going erect / In terror and rage and wonder.” After the metaphoric language of the first nine lines, Jeffers adopts that of direct statement and abstraction and in so doing captures the human condition: people’s lot was terror and rage, but also wonder and hence appreciation of and curiosity about the world they inhabited and now thought they ruled. In these few lines he also combines the Aristotelian definition of tragedy with the Judaic myth of the loss of innocence.

Jeffers continues his rhetorical tone in discussion about the evolution not of the body but the mind: “the old estrangement” (from nature) still haunted people to the extent that they invented magic, religion, and philosophy. The speaker then extrapolates from the discourse on history to give his philosophy, which differs from other philosophies in that it heals the estrangement: he declares that “we” (as he is now part of the group of terrified, raging, wondering people) need only to become aware that “all things are one thing, from the farthest star / To the slime in a ditch or blood in our hearts, one energy, / One organism” (*CP* 5: 876). He has stated in earlier poems that the whole world is one organism and that it is beautiful, but here he goes on to declare that “nearly all things are beautiful” (including the erect apes) and that “the whole glory / Certainly is” (*CP* 5: 876). He places himself inside the poem, ceasing to be the omniscient observer, declaring that “I think it is alive” and fortifying his theory with human experience, feeling the life of trees, rocks, “the fire-nourished / Fierce lives of stars.” In this poem as well as “*De Rerum*

Virtute" his use of Anglo-Saxon-sounding alliteration and Homeric-sounding epithets lends epical force to his verse which is concerned with profound issues of historical consequence. In the earlier poem we hear "sombre stupendous glory," "foam flying at the flanks," "plunging promontories," "flame-shaped peaks," "cloud-stream," "sage-brush desert," "sun-stricken," "high thrones of ice." With "the whale's-track sea" he alludes to Beowulf's "whale-road," an image that captures the dependence of human life on the natural world. "Anima Mundi" contains images of "thunder-set fires," "fire-nourished / Fierce lives of stars," and "Eden-garden" in order to reveal through metaphor the earth's beauty just as our consciousness stands as intermediary, interpreting for the world and God their own beauty and magnificence. He has in these two poems solved the problem of the deep ecologist who wishes to be part of nature and at the same time realizes his or her separation from it: merely by loving it and beholding its beauty we transcend, not desecrate, its glory.

He then develops his philosophical treatise with a self-reflexive question: "the world is not a machine but living: it is not credible / That life and awareness—what shall I say?—*soul*— / Are confined [to] the little clan of oxygen-breathing / Copulators, man, beast and plants, in the immense world" (CP 5: 876). The second rhetorical question formulates his conception of Anima Mundi, asking how human beings can be conscious if the universe (earth and sun) which made them are not. He concludes this discussion with a syllogism: "And if parts, then the whole."

He continues with the comparison of galaxies to the cells of the body, the metaphor revealing the organic nature of what many believe to be nonliving—the universe—and the interconnectedness of the body with its environment: "This whole—the innumerable galaxies / Are the cells of its body; beyond them we know not anything—this everlasting life, this God / Is like the life of a man" (CP 5: 876). The whole is an "everlasting life," a God, the galaxies being the cells of its body, and God and man are alike in that they are neither good nor evil. The recognition that beyond the galaxies "we know not anything" asserts that neither can we plumb the depths of the nature of God. The description in parentheses contains the standard Jeffersian comment on the human condition, that we are "happy awhile and awhile miserable"; then he compares the human life again to the "life of lives," God, which is young and old, joyful and sad, victorious and vanquished—the list of oxymorons goes on—without "goal" or "hope." Again adopting the stance of an observer commenting on what he sees, he names the God Heautontimoroumenos, the self-tormenter, very like the dying god Dionysus or Christ. The beauty of

this god is excellence or virtue: nothing else has value, although Jeffers here does not celebrate this beauty by enunciating its details as he has earlier.

Jeffers breaks a line in order to emphasize the speaker's adopting the pose of a prophet contemplating tragedy: human lives are so futile that it might be better if we all committed suicide except for our appreciation of the beauty of the world which shines over all "Like a fire on a mountain" (*CP* 5: 877): he again asserts that "The beauty of things is the only value; / Whatever is beautiful is worthy of love." Thus humankind's ability to appreciate the glory and beauty of nature is all that matters, but what separates this fragment from his earlier statements of the same principle is the working out of his philosophy of the organic wholeness of all things, that wholeness being God.

With this group of manuscripts Jeffers examines not only the origins and evolution of human life but the origins and evolution of human thought, postulating that the beauty of the world drove the great artists like Aeschylus and Michael Angelo to create their masterpieces. The consciousness of human beings is "a little window in the world/ Through which God's own emotions . . . / Glare at the stars" (*CP* 5: 877). Later he compares the Fallopian tube to a "blind cave" (perhaps the intellectual blindness of early human beings or their dark dwellings) and again states that human consciousness "opens a little window in the wall / Through which God's emotions . . . / Glare at the stars" (*CP* 5: 878). A poet like Wordsworth, however, would not have found peace in wild nature but only in the tamed landscape of England. Jeffers proposes the idea that the ice-age itself created human beings by awakening their minds to fire, and from "the old grounded ape" came Michael Angelo and Shakespeare, praisers of violence, and Buddha and Christ, praisers of love (*CP* 5: 879). Drafts from "The Urchin" contain further assertions that all things are part of a unified, living creation that knows itself through those species that experience self-consciousness: "I think the dumb rocks / And wind and water, and this planet the earth, / Have a diffused consciousness; all things are dimly conscious, / But the nerves of an animal, the nerves and brain, / Bring it to focus" (*CP* 5: 879). Here he incorporates the idea that human consciousness is part of the *Anima Mundi*. If human beings can be said to have a purpose in the world, it is that they reflect, in their emotions, the glory of the universe. The nerves and brain "like a burning-glass" ignite the heat (consciousness) and enable the universe to know itself: "So we scream, laugh and moan. / The rocks and stars do not scream, / but I think they feel" (*CP* 5: 879). In other fragments he asks whether early life somehow foresaw its end, whether early cellular life could hope for the mind of Aeschylus, the lion, or eagle

(CP 5: 881). Towards the end of the fragments he returns to his declaration of the unity of God with the cosmos: "I believe the universe / Is all one God" (CP 5: 882) and continues with Whitmanesque scope:

There is a power beyond powers, there is a consciousness
That includes all their criers, and the secret-keeping
Rocks and the sky; there is no atom nor energy in all the univese but feels the
weight
Of all upon it: the farthest star's rays
Influence the life of the sun, which makes and changes the lowest worm in the
sod (CP 5: 882)

Thus late in his career Jeffers confirms the idea of the oneness of everything, which is God, and asserts his conviction that human beings for all their folly are not only part of the beauty but an important part precisely because of the self-awareness that he regrets so bitterly in "Consciousness."

Yeats's *Spiritus Mundi* contained images that enabled artists to speak to people out of their own cultural memory. Jeffers's *Great Memory* existed as part of the very physical processes of the world, the atoms and chemical changes of the biological and nonbiological universe, and was present in everything. The similarity in their language, Yeats declaring the *Great Memory* to be "a single, intense, unhesitating energy" (*Essays* 36), and Jeffers describing it as "different expressions of the same energy . . . in communication with each other, therefore parts of one organic whole" (qtd. in Karman, "Introduction" 9), shows that they developed similar philosophies of culture and history, but while Yeats's *Spiritus Mundi* is the memory of Nature, Jeffers's is Nature as understood through human consciousness.

ENDNOTES

1. I have discussed at greater length the relationship of Yeats's appreciation for Irish folklore and his concept of *Spiritus Mundi* (Fleming 63–70).
2. For a detailed discussion of "De Rerum Virtute" and its function in the transition of Jeffers's thinking from Inhumanism to Transhumanism, see Chapman.

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STEVEN CHAPMAN

JEFFERS'S EVOLUTIONARY MUSE A READING OF "THE UNFORMED VOLCANIC EARTH"

I. VARIATIONS ON THE THEME OF EVOLUTION

Evolution appears as a major theme of Jeffers's work fairly late, after his engagement with quantum mechanics, stellar evolution, the expanding universe, and other cosmological concerns. While it is true that Jeffers speaks frequently in the earlier poetry of the need to "return to nature," and of such concepts as "organic wholeness," evolutionary theory in the Darwinian sense really only comes to the fore in the poetry of *The Double Axe* volume. In "The Inhumanist," he even pays tribute to Darwin (along with Copernicus) as one of the founding fathers of his own philosophy of Inhumanism.

Jeffers's use of Darwinism in *The Double Axe* is primarily "critical," in two ways. First, Darwinism allowed him to adopt a scientifically informed understanding of human origins and of the human condition as a critical counter-point to traditional "Christian humanist" definitions of what it is to be human. Second, Darwinism provided him with an objective scientific perspective within which to examine humanity at the species level, and in terms of humanity's interaction with other species. This holistic ecological perspective leads him to a critical appreciation of the magnitude of the crisis facing humanity in its relationship with the rest of the planetary life, which is another important thrust of his philosophy of Inhumanism. He will even speak of a "new age" of troubled human-earth relations, which demands in turn a fundamental questioning of our current ways of thinking and behaving, and of the assumptions upon which modern technological civilization is based (see especially Chapter XLV of "The Inhumanist").

But Darwinism was more to Jeffers than a critical instrument for bashing the conceits of the American patriarchic-technocratic ruling class. In addition, Darwinism offered a new and compelling view of the emergence and diversification of life, which, as Darwin himself put it, is "not without grandeur." Like many of Darwin's philosophically

inclined interpreters, Jeffers was concerned above all with how the theory of evolution meshed with an overall view of reality. This convergence is especially prominent in “De Rerum Virtute,” where Jeffers presents in epigrammatic form his mature cosmological-evolutionary worldview, along with a “transhuman” perspective in which humanity assumes not merely a negative role vis-à-vis the larger story of life, but a positive “interactive” role as conscious participant in the creative unfolding of the whole.

Jeffers returns to the theme of evolution in “The unformed volcanic earth,” where he takes up many of the ideas of “De Rerum Virtute” and reworks them into a comprehensive account of the origin and diversification of life, including human life and human consciousness. In what follows, I will try to touch on the most important themes, while showing how up-to-date his ideas were, both with respect to the latest scientific understandings of his own day, and to some of the theories and hypotheses of more modern investigators. One of my aims will be to show how Jeffers’s views are broadly based in the history of ideas, and can be related to many strains of evolutionary thinking: to older organic or “organismic” understandings, to Aristotelian and neo-Aristotelian ideas of formal and final causes or “entelechies,” to Spinoza’s monistic philosophy, to a “holistic” strain of pre-Darwinian evolutionary thinking from Goethe through Ernst Haeckel (the founder of modern ecology), to the evolutionary philosophies of Henri Bergson and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. At times, his thinking even seems to anticipate modern trends in evolutionary theory, including complexity theory, systems biology, theories of self-organization and self-making (autopoiesis), non-linear thermodynamics, bioenergetics, and symbiogenesis. Remarkably, Jeffers was able to synthesize all these diverse strains into a coherent narrative which combines profound scientific insight with the creative craft of the poet to present a viable story or “myth” of how all things came into being. Such, I believe, was the grand ambition behind the fragmentary remains.

2. GEOGENESIS

The fragment begins abruptly, *in medias res*, with an account of the formation of the planet Earth, or *geogenesis*. As his notes make clear, the fragment was intended to follow an account of cosmogenesis (“Explosion” [CP 3: 413–14]; “The Great Explosion” [CP 3: 471]) and an account of the formation of the moon ripped from the Earth’s crust (“At the near approach of a star” [CP 3: 458]).¹ He picks up the narrative here at a point approximately four and a half billion years ago, during the early stages of the development of our solar system, when

the earth began to assume her characteristic though still “unformed” identity:

The unformed volcanic earth, a female thing,
 Furiously following with the other planets
 Their lord the sun: her body is molten metal pressed rigid
 By its own mass; her beautiful skin, basalt and granite and the lighter elements,
 Swam to the top. (CP 3: 430)

Jeffers is obviously using mythical imagery when he refers to the earth as a “female thing” (like *Ge* or *Gaia* of the Greeks) and when he refers to the sun as the planets’ “lord.” These images, however, serve to illustrate important insights. By beginning his narrative with homage to the earth as a singular “thing,” Jeffers introduces the important notion that the earth, from the beginning, can be conceived of as a single being or system. Jeffers seems here to intuit a holistic approach towards understanding earth’s history, as in Vernadsky’s concept of the biosphere, or in James Lovelock’s more recent Gaia hypothesis. Similarly, the idea that the sun is “lord” suggests not only pagan sun-worship, but the primacy of the sun, from both a physical and thermodynamic viewpoint, as the prime mover and provider of energy in our solar system.²

Like the other planets, and like the cosmos as a whole, the earth did not achieve her present form all at once, but *evolved* over time. While Jeffers is concerned here with the very early (“prebiotic”) stages of earth’s evolution, there is clearly the suggestion that the earth will be subject to further forming activity, and that she will achieve her familiar flourishing form through the formative creative processes of life itself. This story of self-forming creativity is the story of evolution itself—and of Jeffers’s poem.

The narrative continues with a reconstruction of the early geology of the planet. The identification of the early earth’s mass as consisting of molten metals such as iron and nickel is accurate, as is his reference to earth’s gravitational field in giving the planet its characteristic identity. His notion that in these early “unformed” stages the earth was primarily volcanic points to the primacy of igneous activity in the early stages of landmass formation, in which the planet was boiling over with volcanism though not yet subject to the large-scale biogeochemical alterations caused by the formative activity of life itself in later epochs. Thus whereas zircon crystals have been dated to around 4.5 billion years ago, and metamorphic gneisses to around 3.9 billion years ago, other types of mineral formations, such as chalk, limestone, and chert, are of more recent biogenic origin. Jeffers’s understanding of the

dynamics of the lithosphere as a voluble mix of elements in which the lighter ones “swim” to the top is equally apt, inspired perhaps by the exposed granite batholiths of the Santa Lucia range. While this is not yet plate tectonics, it certainly accords well with modern geophysical theories of the transformative processes underlying geological formation.

Jeffers continues his story with a description of the harsh atmospheric conditions which prevailed during the early stages of earth’s history, which is also an accurate rendition of the latest scientific hypotheses:

. . . her atmosphere
 Was the breath of her passion: not the blithe air
 Men breathe and live, but marsh-gas, ammonia, sulphured hydrogen,
 Such poison as our remembering bodies return to
 When they die and decay and the end of life
 Meets its beginning. (*CP* 3: 430)

This account of the chemical composition of the early atmosphere corresponds to the most advanced models of his day. For instance, the litany of proto-organic elements, including methane (“marsh gas”), ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide, reiterates almost exactly the reconstruction of earth’s early atmosphere offered by Aleksandr Oparin in his classic work, *The Origin of Life*.

As Jeffers correctly points out, the atmosphere of the early earth was not the “blithe air” of today’s atmosphere, but almost entirely lacking in oxygen. Through the evidence of banded iron formations and other geological clues, scientists came to realize that oxygen was scarce until what is sometimes called “the oxygen revolution” about two billion years ago, when the oxygen released as a waste product of early photosynthesizers (primarily cyanobacteria) fundamentally altered the chemistry of the atmosphere. Before that, early life emerged and thrived in an anaerobic environment and depended on other metabolic pathways than oxidation, such as chemoautotrophy and fermentation. The supposition that our bodies “remember” these conditions when they die has a physiological basis insofar as an anaerobic environment is still necessary for many of the bacterial decomposers and other “primitive” organisms which are nonetheless vital for the maintenance of the biosphere.

3. BIOGENESIS: THE ORIGINS OF LIFE

The next threshold in Jeffers’s story of creation is the emergence and growth of life properly speaking, or *biogenesis*—a term Jeffers himself

employs in his notes (*CP* 5: 880–81). While continuing the mythic theme of a “sacred marriage” between the earth and the sun (with the fecund earth compared in explicitly sexual terms to a “a mare in her heat eyeing the stallion, / Screaming for life in the womb”), his description of how life actually originated follows a line of speculation which is thoroughly secular and “Darwinian,” beginning with Darwin’s own account of life’s origins in a “warm little pond,” and popularized in Ernst Haeckel’s fanciful tale of the spontaneous emergence of primitive life from the “primordial soup” of the early oceans. Jeffers describes similarly how life arose as the result of the sun “stirring” the earth’s thick chemical-laden atmosphere and salty young seas:

The sun heard her and stirred
 Her thick air with fierce lightnings and flagellations
 Of germinal power, building impossible molecules, amino-acids
 And flashy unstable proteins: thence life was born,
 Its nitrogen from ammonia, carbon from methane,
 Water from the cloud and salts from the young seas[.] (*CP* 3: 430)

The assumption that life should be seen as a process of spontaneous emergence from a reactive chemical substrate again accords well with the general theory outlined by Oparin. Even more remarkable, in terms of the convergence of Jeffers’s insights with contemporary scientific discoveries, is the supposition that “flashy unstable proteins” could be catalyzed by lightning flashes. This might refer to Stanley Miller’s famous experiments (1953), in which he was able to synthesize heavy organic molecules (including amino acids and nucleotide bases) by applying an electric discharge to a brew of ammonia, methane, and water vapor—exactly the elements hypothesized in Oparin’s theory and in Jeffers’s poem!

Jeffers’s reference to the chemical pathways and inter-reactions at the foundation of life, as when he points to life’s ability to extract usable nitrogen from ammonia, or carbon from methane, evidences a more than a basic understanding of organic chemistry, as well as a clear sense of life emerging out of, and dependent upon, a pre-existing and highly complex molecular substrate. His focus on prebiotic chemical reactions as the ground out of which life emerges would seem to anticipate Manfred Eigen’s work on chemical “hypercycles,” as well as recent studies on molecular autocatalysis and “chemical evolution.” What is particularly modern is the notion of a continuum between life and non-life, the idea that life grows naturally out of a germinating, polymerizing chemical substrate. In this, he is closer to the thinking of Vernadsky, for whom life emerged in continuity with prebiotic evolu-

tion, and not as a single miraculous event, as Oparin's theory implied. Jeffers is in fact quite explicit in his view that the entire earth, as well as the cosmos as a whole, is in some sense "alive," and that the difference between inorganic and organic life is one of degree rather than of kind.

4. REPRODUCTION, SELF-ORGANIZATION, AND AUTOPOIESIS

Another essential adaptation for any minimum definition of life is the ability to grow and reproduce. The poem describes this as a further step of self-organization and complexity, whereby "chemically growing" macromolecules acquire the capacity to self-replicate:

. . . heavily built protein molecules
Chemically growing, bursting apart as the tensions
In the inordinate molecule become unbearable—
That is to say, growing and reproducing themselves, a virus
On the warm ocean. (*CP* 3: 430)

The supposition that life emerged from heavy "chemically growing" molecules again suggests the idea of a continuity between the self-organizing properties of autocatalytic chemical cycles and the emergence of the earliest forms of self-perpetuating life. The picture given here of heavy macromolecules growing and "bursting apart" is in fact an accurate illustration of binary fission and associated cytokinesis, the simplest form of self-replication which is still the way bacteria reproduce, and which was most likely common among all organisms before the emergence of more complex forms such as meiosis and the alternation of generations.

Jeffers's focus on the biochemical basis of life and the reproductive mechanism is very much in line with the latest thinking in organic chemistry and genetics, in particular with regard to the functioning of the genetic code, well before any of this had been observed by the electron microscope—though by the time of composing these lines he might have been aware of the discoveries of Watson and Crick and others. His description of early life as a "virus" floating on the warm ocean even bears comparison with the recent hypothesis of an earlier pre-cellular "RNA world," in which ancestral life forms were able both to metabolize and reproduce in the soup of the early oceans (Gilbert). In this hypothesis, the reproductive mechanism of the earliest forms of life would have been governed by the looser recombinations of RNA before the further consolidation of life and the genetic code in the modern "DNA world," in which RNA serves mainly a messenger func-

tion. In this respect, it is suggestive that many viruses code only in RNA, though whether this points to an ancient origin—as Jeffers's lines might imply—is subject to much debate.

The notion that life crossed a significant barrier in its ability to self-replicate, which distinguishes it from the inorganic world, can be correlated with life's capacity for what in complexity theory is called "self-organization." Thus many complexity theorists and systems biologists today view life as a semi-autonomous system which organizes itself according to its own internal principles of organization and creativity. More precisely, the capacity of life to self-produce coincides with what proponents of the "Santiago School" of systems biology call *autopoiesis*, literally "self-making" (Maturana and Varela). Jeffers suggests a similar idea through his diction, in which early life forms are described as "growing and reproducing *themselves*" (my italics) from an internal capacity for creativity and evolutionary novelty. Such concepts can be correlated in turn to earlier pre-Darwinian notions, such as Spinoza's idea of the freely creative aspect of *natura naturans*, or to Goethe's similar notion of "eternally creative nature" ("*die ewig schaffende Natur*"). Poetic insight and complexity theory complement each other in revealing aspects of nature's intrinsic creativity, which has led poets over the ages to identify nature as the ultimate source of their own poetic inspiration.

5. THE CELLULAR REVOLUTION

A third threshold which Jeffers points to in his sequencing of the origins of organic life, after the spontaneous emergence from the chemical substrate and the ability to self-replicate, and which almost all theorists point to as an essential component for any minimum definition of life or "Least Common Ancestor," was the formation of a bounded membrane and the enclosure of living matter within cells:

Time and the world changed,
The proteins were no longer created, the ammoniac atmosphere
And the great storms no more. This virus now
Must labor to maintain itself. It clung together
Into bundles of life, which we call cells,
With microscopic walls enclosing themselves
Against the world. (CP 3: 430-1)

The first thing about this passage worth noting is the "non-uniformitarian" approach to time, the notion that the conditions which first gave rise to life were different from the conditions which allowed for life's further development. In documenting the various steps or "ages"

of living matter, Jeffers suggests strongly the productive role of time and irreversibility in evolutionary processes. These processes are irreversible in the sense that evolutionary history moves only in a single direction, continuously breaking time symmetries. Such a view implies further that the structures and organizing principles behind evolution are related to their emersion in the flow of time, which allows for an increase in organization and complexity over the course of time.³

The recognition of the primacy of the cell accords well with the standard "cell theory" of modern biology, the notion that the cell is the basic unit of life, and that all cellular life comes from pre-existing cells (*omnis cellula e cellula*). Thus viruses are not considered to be living because they are not cells, and depend on the cellular metabolism of their hosts in order to reproduce. The claim that, in this new dispensation, life must labor to "maintain itself" points to another fundamental concept of modern biology and physiology, namely self-maintenance or *homeostasis*: the idea that life perpetuates its own internal equilibrium which sets it apart from its environmental milieu. Bounded protective membranes would have been all the more important in the early stages of earth's history, when the planet was boiling over with volcanic activity, the atmosphere continually bombarded by ultraviolet radiation, and with none of the nurturing habitats which life would later give rise to. The assertion that cellular life emerged by enclosing itself "against the world" interjects an important thermodynamic concept as well, namely, that life is able to establish its internal homeostasis only by positioning itself "against" what is outside, as a semi-autonomous open system which maintains itself in far-from-equilibrium conditions against the fluxes of the outer world.

A final point worth commenting on about this passage is the claim that life emerged from the "clinging together" of multiple components. Such a notion of the "polyphyletic" origin of life emerging out of the inter-reaction and cohesion of various chemical systems fits well with Jeffers's overall view of life as a self-organizing system which strives towards ever greater complexity. In Jeffers's holistic perspective, the emergence of cellular life is but another manifestation of an integrative tendency underlying all evolutionary processes (cosmic, chemical, biological), whereby new unities form continuously out of diversity, larger wholes out of smaller wholes. This same tendency to self-organize, Jeffers will suggest later in the poem, could explain the emergence of more complex multi-cellular forms through more elaborate patterns of clinging together and coevolutionary convergence. In Jeffers's view, the "tree of life" is not a tree at all, but a convoluted *anastomosis* in which more complex forms arise out of the self-organization of simpler forms, an organically evolving whole forever increas-

ing in molecular and cellular diversity. Given the parallelisms between Jeffers's evolutionary poetics and complexity theory, it is worth recalling that the word "complexity" comes from the Latin *con* (with) and *plexus* (braid), so Jeffers's image here of various component chemical strands "clinging together" to form the self-enclosed bundles of early cellular life is particularly apt.

6. DIRECTION, ENTELECHY, ORTHOGENESIS

At this point, Jeffers interrupts his narrative to introduce a philosophical perspective, and to ask *why* evolution would have taken place the way it did, as well as *what* its significance is for human beings as both participants and observers in the unfolding evolutionary drama:

But why would life maintain itself,
Being nothing but a dirty scum on the sea
Dropped from foul air? Could it perhaps perceive
Glories to come? Could it foresee that cellular life
Would make the mountain forest and the eagle dawning,
Monstrously beautiful, wings, eyes and claws, dawning
Over the rock-ridge? And the passionate human intelligence
Straining its limits, striving to understand itself and the universe to the last
galaxy— (CP 3: 431)

The clear suggestion here is that evolutionary processes from the very beginning are informed by purpose, meaning, and foresight, and that the future is to some extent contained or prefigured in the past. These reflections follow from Jeffers's earlier ruminations in "De Rerum Virtute," where he announces his "belief" (almost a religious conviction) that the first living cell had "echoes of the future in it, and felt / Direction," and that the earth "[n]ot all by chance and fortune brings forth her broods, / But feels and chooses" (CP 3: 401–2).

Jeffers is a Darwinist in a broad, pluralist sense. What distinguishes him from mainstream Darwinists is his view that evolution is guided by end-directed or teleological processes. Teilhard speaks similarly in the *Phenomenon of Man* of evolution as informed by "an active center of direction and transmission" in which the plurality of living matter is organized, or what he calls the "law of complexity and consciousness" (140). This view is antithetical to the reductionist-mechanistic model of most modern evolutionary biologists, for whom the randomness of genetic mutation is the driving engine of evolutionary change (Monod), and who admit no other ghost in the machine than the nonsensical image of the "blind watchmaker" (Dawkins). While Jeffers certainly did not believe that the goal of evolution was the production

of human beings or in any similar anthropocentric fallacies (as Teilhard did), he did believe that evolution has intrinsic purpose and meaning, and that human beings play some part in that overall purposefulness.

Jeffers's views on evolution are rooted in a broad "polyphyletic" history of ideas. While the links to Darwinism and the "synthetic" approach of genetics and biochemistry are clear, he was also influenced by an older "organismic" approach. His belief in evolutionary "direction" in particular can be correlated with Aristotle's notion of formal and final causation, the idea that organisms achieve their final form through end-directed processes which are both intelligent and illegible (what Jeffers refers to as a "limited but superhuman intelligence" informing all natural processes). His thinking also bears comparison with Hans Driesch's similar neo-Aristotelean doctrine of *Entelechie*: the idea that living beings are self-organizing entities guided in their development by an immanent relation to the whole. Jeffers's notion of evolutionary "foresight," the idea that later evolutionary events were already present at some level from the very beginning, accords well with what Driesch, in his animist period, referred to as life's "pre-figured purposefulness" (*vorgebildete Zweckmässigkeit*). Along similar holistic lines, Jeffers will even suggest the idea of a system-wide "entelechy," in which life as a whole displays purpose and intentional structure, and in which all parts co-evolve together as a vast super-organism (again anticipating the Gaia hypothesis).

Complexity theory here offers some useful approaches to the question of evolutionary direction, in areas where classical evolutionary biology fears to tread (perhaps blinded by its own prejudices). One major insight is the finding that life tends, as a general rule and secular trend, to increase in complexity and diversity over time, as does perhaps the cosmos as a whole (Kaufmann; Chaisson). While such a view is still contested by orthodox neo-Darwinists (the ghost of Stephen Jay Gould most prominently), Jeffers certainly viewed life as a continuous process of self-forming complexity or "orthogenesis." While he did not believe in any upward "progress" in the simple linear sense (as in Haeckel's teaching that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny), and while he certainly did not subscribe to the metaphysical conceit of a *scala naturae* or "Great Chain of Being," he did believe, based on empirical evidence and on his own deepest thinking, that life continually creates itself in such a way as to beget ever new and varied forms.⁴

My main argument here is that Jeffers's view of evolutionary "direction" as a process of stepwise orthogenesis anticipates many of the formulations of modern complexity theory. What distinguishes Jeffers's and the modern view of orthogenesis from earlier nineteenth-century

notions of “evolutionary progress” is the assumption that the organizing principles behind evolutionary processes are themselves emergent properties of the whole, and not the workings of some mysterious outside directing force, or *vis vitae* (as the animists believed). In this, Jeffers comes astoundingly close to the views of complexity thinkers associated with the Santa Fe Institute, such as Murray Gell-Mann, for whom life is a “complex adaptive system,” or Stuart Kaufmann, who has written eloquently of the importance of order and organization in evolutionary processes, which he maintains are at least as important as random mutation and natural selection in explaining evolutionary history. Such a view is also consistent with a thermodynamic approach, insofar as the increasing complexity and diversity of life can be correlated with life’s increasing capacity to reduce an energy gradient.

Another modern insight, to which Jeffers alerts his readers at this stage in his narrative, is the idea that among the various ends or “entelechies” governing the evolution of cellular life was the potential for more complex forms of organization, including human consciousness. Here again, his views are somewhat nuanced. He is not implying that evolutionary “progress” culminates in “higher” forms of cephalated life and finally in human beings. But he is saying that consciousness is an intrinsic part of the evolutionary story, and a phenomenon of evolutionary significance. While Jeffers will pursue some of the implications further on in his narrative, when he addresses the specific question of human evolution, this passage makes clear that implicit in the history of evolution *from the beginning* is the human ability to bring that history into focus. Such a view, it may be noted, falls directly in the tradition of his great predecessor Goethe, for whom the human striving (*Streben*) to discover the truth of nature was not a vain self-seeking, but a participatory dialogue between the human mind and nature.

7. THE ROAD TO MULTICELLULARITY: SYMBIOGENESIS

Jeffers resumes his narrative with an account of the emergence of multi-cellular organisms, which he understands as a further step of self-organization and complexification:

. . . after a time the cells of life
Bound themselves into clans, a multitude of cells
To make one being—as the molecules before
Had made of many one cell. (CP 3: 431)

Once again, Jeffers emphasizes the productive role of time and change, or “irreversibility.” There is some dispute as to when multi-cellular

organisms first appeared, as well as to the definition of what constitutes a true multi-cellular organism, but biologists are certain that a vast stretch of time occurred, between two and three billion years, during which single-celled bacteria ruled the earth before eukaryotes and, later, multi-cellular forms began to radiate and gradually assume their position of biospheric dominance. The major point here is that the rules governing the early prokaryotic phase of the biosphere's evolution changed fundamentally with the advent of multi-cellular organisms, representing a "phase transition" to a new order of complexity and a new chapter in the biography of life.

The specific claim here that multi-cellular organisms emerged from the "bonding together" of individual cells into "clans" points to another of Jeffers's extraordinarily prescient insights, namely, that complex multi-cellular forms could have arisen from the symbiotic union and partnership of simpler single-celled organisms. While theories of the symbiotic origin of multi-cellular life (*symbiogenesis*) were first promulgated in the beginning part of the twentieth century by the Russian botanist Merezhkousky and the American physiologist I. E. Wallin, they were scarcely respectable during Jeffers's day, and were radically at odds with the "central dogma" of the Darwinian synthesis as it emerged in the thirties and forties, according to which genetic mutation and natural selection alone give rise to new species. Only recently has the symbiotic origin of the eukaryotic cell been accepted as plausible (due in particular to the work of Lynn Margulis), as is the now widely held notion that many of the organelles found in the cell (including mitochondria and plastids) can be attributed to the acquisition of once free-living ancestral forms (*endosymbiosis*).

That there is a tendency among single-celled organisms to organize themselves into symbiotic communities is borne out by a variety of evidence, both from the fossil record and from DNA analysis. Bacteria aggregate into highly complex differentiated communities building up structures called stromatolites, some of which have been dated to the early Proterozoic, and which still form today in Australia and on the shores of the Sea of Cortez. Moreover, fossil evidence suggests that multicellularity arose independently among many unrelated genera, including brown and green algae, aggregating slime molds, and other protists. DNA evidence, gathered from the mapping of the genetic code of various living organisms, shows that genetic recombination and the acquisition of foreign genomes, rather than a modern invention, has occurred many times in the course of evolutionary history. For instance, even the human genome contains genes that were originally derived from bacteria.

All this has led in recent years to a radical revision of the traditional view of "descent through modification," towards a view of evolution as an "ascent through cooperation." In this sense, evolution can be described as the "survival of the fitting," rather than the "survival of the fittest." Evolution via symbiogenesis today stands as a powerful alternative to the standard neo-Darwinian account of the origin of species (Schwemmler, Margulis). According to these theorists, the emergence of new species does not occur through gradual change across a "fitness landscape" (as the neo-Darwinists believe), but through genetic recombination and fusion of previously distinct genomes to form new genotypes. Building on her earlier work on the symbiotic origin of the eukaryotic cell, Margulis has recently proposed that all speciation events are the result of just such a merger of genomes, and that we ourselves are symbiotic creatures living on a "symbiotic planet." It bears noting how closely such a view coheres with a general view of evolution as cooperation, or what Petr Kropotkin called "mutual aid," which he advocated already at the beginning of the last century as an alternative to Darwin's bleak Hobbesian vision of an unending "struggle for existence."

Jeffers seems to have hit on the idea not through the scientific literature, but because such a model accords well with an overall holistic or "organismic" framework, with its emphasis on the interrelation among parts and the whole. Symbiotic theory, in effect, offers a way to reconcile holistic notions (such as the unity of the biosphere) with a historical account of the emergence and unfolding of biodiversity. It also fits in well with the general theory of evolution as the manifestation of increasing complexity, as in the evolutionary philosophies of Bergson and Teilhard. In another example of the extraordinary convergence between Jeffers's insights and contemporary evolutionary theory, Jeffers's view of evolution as a process of stepwise jumps across successive levels of organization matches almost in detail Arthur Koestler's seminal ideas on "open hierarchic systems," and his similar view of nested hierarchies (or "holarchies") from particles to atoms to molecules to organelles to cells to organs to organisms to ecosystems to biospheres.⁵

Yet there is still a deep mystery. While individual organisms merge together to fit better within the larger system, the whole of the biosphere is not a given, but arises over time out of the self-organization of its constituent parts. If evolution does indeed have "direction," as Jeffers believed, then the biosphere is a dynamic structure containing both synchronic and diachronic principles of correlation and interconnection. It is axiomatic of all holistic thinking that everything is connected, that "all things feel and influence each other." But in Jeffers's

view, not only are the constituent parts related to all other parts in an immediate non-local fashion, they are related across time as well, rooted in the common phylogenetic kinship of all things in the past, and pointing ahead together towards an undetermined future.

8. HETEROTROPHY AND THE EMERGENCE OF COMPLEX ECOSYSTEMS

With the gaze of a holistic ecologist, Jeffers goes on to describe some of the major events in the early history of life, including the passage from the primarily autotrophic Proterozoic era to the elaboration of more complex ecosystems during the Mesozoic:

Meanwhile they had invented
Chlorophyll and ate sunlight, cradled in peace
On the warm waves; but certain assassins among them
Discovered that it was easier to eat flesh
Than feed on lean air and sunlight: thence the animals,
Greedy mouths and guts, life robbing life,
Grew from the plants[.] (CP 3: 431)

The distinction between those organisms which survive by “eating sunlight,” and those which depend on them for sustenance, points to the crucial physiological division between autotrophs and heterotrophs, established in the late nineteenth century by the German physiologist Wilhelm Pfeffer, and popularized by Vladimir Vernadsky in *The Biosphere*. It can be said that animals “grew from the plants” in the sense that heterotrophs depend upon sugars and carbohydrates produced by autotrophs at the base of the food web.

Jeffers’s characterization of the Proterozoic as a mainly peaceful era is not simply idyllic, but corresponds to the idea that there was a delay between the emergence of early “soft-bodied,” mainly photosynthetic communities, and the later emergence of predators. Jeffers’s characterization holds up well to what Mark and Dianna McMenamin term the “Garden of Ediacara Hypothesis,” which holds that early forms of complex multi-cellular life, such as represented in the Ediacaran fauna, thrived in peaceful conditions before the full effects of predation came into play during the Cambrian Explosion, with its fossil evidence of teeth, claws, and protective armor.⁶ Rather than nostalgia for a simpler world of pure autotrophy, Jeffers’s lines express a similar awareness of the advances of complexity and diversity made possible by increasingly elaborate food webs, and that the process of life depends upon the combined interactions of producers, consumers, and decomposers working in concert as a self-organizing system. He describes this as

“life robbing life,” emphasizing once more the formative or “auto-poetic” activity of life itself.

Also noteworthy is the emphasis on thermodynamics, including reference to such epochal events as the “invention of chlorophyll,” which allowed certain cyanobacteria and their descendants to “eat sunlight,” providing the energetic basis for the flourishing of the planetary biomass and biodiversity. This energetic conception of life falls again very much in the tradition of Vernadsky, for whom life was a bioenergetic system of cosmic significance, and of the Russian ecologist Kozo-Polyansky, who pioneered the synthesis of evolution and thermodynamics and the study of energy flows through the biosphere. Jeffers’s insights can also be related to much interesting work being done today aiming at a similar synthesis of systems biology, symbiotic theory, and thermodynamics to present a picture of the biosphere as an evolving organism developing and diversifying over time as it reaches ever upward to reduce the energy gradient of the sun, the “lord” of the system (Kauffman, Margulis, Volk).

9. LANDING ON LAND

The next threshold of early life, as the textbooks note, was the emergence of certain primitive life forms onto land during the late Silurian and early Devonian, including the ancestors of modern plants and animals:

. . . and as the ocean ebbed and flowed many plants and animals
Were stranded in the great marshes along the shore,
Where many died and some lived. From these grew all land-life,
Plants, beasts and men; the mountain forest and the mind of Aeschylus
And the mouse in the wall. (*CP* 3: 431)

The picture of the ocean ebbing and flowing suggests immediately a geological understanding of the effects of sea-level fluctuations on life, and the role of climate change in influencing the course of evolution. The reference to the many animals which died in the early marshes invokes a picture of fossil-rich shales, such as the famous Burgess Shale of the early Cambrian. The assertion that “many died and some lived” points to the paleontological evidence that the great majority of species which have ever lived have long since disappeared, but also to a kind of phylogenetic understanding that some lineages are more successful than others. For instance, the trilobites died, but early arthropods gave rise to insects; the seed ferns died, but conifers thrive in the great northern forests and flowering plants blossom all over the globe.

The dinosaurs died, but mammals, including us, live to continue the story and tell the tale.

Even more significant is the idea expressed here that the passage onto land represented another threshold of increasing complexity beyond anything known previously, leading to the emergence of complex forest ecosystems, highly adapted mammals such as rodents, and even to the expressions of human artistic creativity. The general idea pairs well with another of the McMenamins' hypotheses, that the "upwelling" of life from the early seas onto land represented an emergence of a new order of complexity, or what they term "Hypersea." They offer the hypothesis as a possible solution to what is sometimes called the "complexity problem," or why it is that terrestrial ecosystems should be that much more complex than aquatic ecosystems. According to them, the ensemble of land-adapted organisms, including vascular plants, animals, fungi and their associated protists and bacteria, constitute a symbiotic nexus of interactivity whose gradual unfolding and branching out into ever more articulated interrelations allows for an exponential increase in biological diversity. They argue that this is made possible by the "internalization" of the watery milieu into an endobiotic system of transport and distribution, thus permitting more extensive trophic webs of both predation and parasitism, which in turn allowed for higher diversity, such as found in the tropics and neotropics. This hypothesis is also consistent with a thermodynamic approach. Scientists know, for instance, that the sun's energy has increased over time. Without the increase in complexity and the related capacity to reduce a gradient enabled by life's movement to land, the earth would be much hotter and much less hospitable than the familiar blue-green planet we call home.

10. ANTHROPOGENESIS

No account of evolution could be complete without the mention of human evolution, or *anthropogenesis*. The notes indicate that this part of the narrative was intended as the third section of a longer poem, after the account of the origin of the cosmos (*cosmogogenesis*) and the early evolution of life (*biogenesis* broadly considered). Jeffers's final views on human evolution are somewhat nuanced, and involve both the familiar negative assessment, as well as a surprisingly positive appreciation of humanity's place within the evolutionary picture, particularly with regard to the human capacity to bring the story of life into consciousness. These divergent attitudes reflect an unresolved duality in Jeffers's late worldview, combining sharp-edged *critique* with an idealist or even utopian-eschatological dimension. If the poetry of

The Double Axe volume takes the critical dimension to an extreme, the poetry of the final period—including the long fragment here—tends rather to stress the positive possibilities, pointing the way towards a reinvention, re-positioning, or even a kind of redemption of humanity within the larger evolutionary scheme of things.

Jeffers begins his account with the branching off of the hominoid line from that of “the other anthropoid apes”:

But whence came the race of man? I will make a guess.
 A change of climate killed the great northern forests,
 Forcing the manlike apes down from their trees,
 They starved up there. They had been secure up there,
 But famine is no security: among the withered branches blue famine:
 They had to go down to the earth, where green still grew
 And small meats might be gleaned. But there the great flesh-eaters,
 Tiger and panther and the horrible fumbling bear and endless wolf-packs made
 life
 A dream of death. Therefore man has those dreams,
 And kills out of pure terror. Therefore man walks erect,
 Forever alerted: as the bear rises to fight
 So man does always. Therefore he invented fire and flint weapons
 In his desperate need. Therefore he is cruel and bloody-handed and quick-
 witted, having survived
 Against all odds. (CP 3: 432–33)

The view of human evolution offered in these lines is similar to that of *The Double Axe* period, although somewhat more elaborate in its use of anthropology to construct a plausible model of human origins and early development. The reference to a “change of climate” as the proximate cause leading early hominoids to abandon the tree habitat and adopt bipedalism can be correlated with the advent of a cooler and drier climate during the late Miocene and the replacement of forested areas by grasslands and plains. It is during this period that we find the first fossil remains of *Homo habilis* and *Homo erectus*. Fire and flint weapons were of course characteristic of the “tool box” of the Cro-Magnons during the Upper Paleolithic, and were necessary as a means of defense against other large carnivores during the hunter-gatherer state and, later, enabled early hunters to track down and hunt larger prey such as mammoths. They were, in a sense, the first technologies used by human beings as they came into conflict with other life forms. The extinction of many genera of large animals by the end of the Paleolithic suggests the effectiveness of these primitive technologies, as well as presaging the current biodiversity crisis (Diamond). These lines also make clear that, for Jeffers, humanity’s antithetical rapport

with respect to the rest of the life community is part of our evolutionary baggage, rather than a recent corruption due to civilization (although modern technology has certainly accelerated the process).

This Darwinian understanding is thus an apologetics of sorts, and seeks to explain human cruelty and propensity to violence through reflection on humanity's evolutionary origins and reference to his ancestors ("Never blame the man: his hard-pressed / Ancestors formed him:"). The approach recalls Konrad Lorenz's studies of aggressive behavior in mammals (including humans), as well as the controversial study of sociobiology (Wilson). In referring to "blood-sacrifice," Jeffers suggests as well a link between violence and the sacred. In his view, the great religions of love and kindness are not primary, but only "reactions / Against the hate" (CP 3: 433). Jeffers's critique of religious ideology here is very much in line with the materialist critique of Feuerbach and Marx, while making it clear that he rejects all Rousseau-inspired notions concerning the natural goodness of humankind in some idealized pre-civilized state.

As he did earlier in *The Inhumanist*, Jeffers insists on a hard-edged Darwinism in order to refute exalted notions of human self-importance associated with "Christian humanist" ideologies. To the question "What is man?" the narrator first invokes, ironically, the standard response of the Christian-humanist tradition: "They are a little lower than the angels, as someone said" (the anonymous author of Psalm 8, traditionally King David, repeated by Milton and others). The narrator responds with a different analogy: "Blood-snuffing rats." The analogy has a biological basis insofar as rats and humans are the only mammals known to engage in genocidal warfare (with some precedence among the social insects).

Yet there is something unique to the human condition. Unlike the other primates who were safe in the southern forests, "hardly changed / In a million years," the "race of man" represents a radical divergence from established patterns, an unprecedented punctuation of the previous equilibrium. It is not enough to say that man is "just" another animal. Rather, he is an animal who has learned to adapt and respond to his environment in entirely new ways. Jeffers relates the human capacity for intelligent reflection and manipulation of his environment to an ancestral "wound . . . in the brain," the result of the collective birth trauma suffered by our ancestors when they were first forced from the trees.⁷ "It [was] there," he writes, "that they learned to butcher beasts and to slaughter men, / And hate the world" (CP 3: 433). In this scenario, it was "quick-wittedness" which allowed humanity to enter into a new and antithetical rapport with the rest of the life community, and which helps explain humanity's very rapid evolutionary

advance as well as the current primate population explosion. Far from viewing humanity as the crowning achievement of evolution, Jeffers sees it as deeply problematic, and as a source of evolutionary disorder rather than order. In "Orca," in *The Double Axe* volume, Jeffers suggested that human evolution appears as a "botched experiment" which "ought to be stopped." Here too, his "critical" Darwinian perspective involves not only a "deconstruction" of traditional humanist conceits, but an awareness of the magnitude of the crisis facing all of life as a single out-of-control species is able to wreak havoc on the rest of the biotic community.

II. CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE TRANSHUMAN DIMENSION

After these lines, the tone changes abruptly, and the narrative concludes with a much more positive appraisal of humanity's evolutionary mission. Following the unflattering comparison of humans to "blood-snuffing rats," Jeffers offers a much more exalted definition: "The human race is one of God's sense-organs" he says; "It is a nerve-ending . . . a sensory organ of God's" (*CP* 3: 434). It is curious and even somewhat contradictory that right after rejecting the theistic definition of humans as being "a little lower than the angels," he would suggest that humans are, after all, intimate to God, defined in terms of a relationship to God, even part of God's body.⁹ These two contrasting assessments correspond in turn to the two thrusts of Jeffers's antithetical dialectic—his double-bladed axe—in which the downward swing of sharp critical analysis is accompanied by an idealist or utopian upswing of transformative vision.

This more positive appraisal of the human condition has to do with human consciousness and the human ability, through consciousness, to bring the world into focus. In earlier works, such as *Margrave*, consciousness was viewed as a problem, even as an "infection."¹⁰ In the final period, Jeffers came to value consciousness as a vehicle of communication and communion with the greater transhuman reality. Just as Goethe's exchange of ideas with Kant and Schiller led him to refine his epistemology and recognize the inward mental aspect of things, Jeffers came to value human consciousness as something more than a dark glass through which to view the world, but as a "sense-organ" capable of direct intuitive apprehension of the whole. While he believed that "all things are conscious"—including the earth and the cosmos at large—he credits the human nerves and brain with a unique ability to "bring it to focus." And while he is careful to point out the possibility of "even greater nerve-endings" in other part of the universe and in the future, humanity and human consciousness are explicitly

identified as one of the vehicles through which, in the current state, the whole comes into self-awareness.

Here again, there is a dynamic “interactive” relationship between part and whole, between the human intelligence striving to understand the whole and the whole coming into conscious articulation. Through the translations of participatory consciousness, humanity becomes part of the becoming of God, part of God’s own journey of self-discovery. Earlier in the narrative, Jeffers identified as one of the ends or “entelechies” of early cellular life the efforts of the passionate human intelligence “to strain its limits” in the quest to understand the whole, suggesting the epistemological difficulties involved, but also a religious-transcendental dimension: that human beings do have the capacity to strain or even transcend those limits. Human intelligence is described as “passionate,” in the obvious sense that the scientific “will to truth” is motivated by a deep desire to know and feel at home in the world, but also in a ritualistic sense that scientific discovery can involve something like a religious passion, as in the idea of a “sacred science.” Now, at the end of the poem, human consciousness is explicitly identified as a way for human beings to commune with the whole, and as an *organon* of the greater life of God/Nature.

For the late Jeffers, humanity’s relationship to nature is not just one of evolutionary kinship—that we share a common origin with the rest of life and indeed with the universe as a whole—but that, through consciousness, we can experience a direct intuitive apprehension of the workings of the whole. This almost mystical perspective is essentially similar to Spinoza’s notion of *scientia intuitiva*, or to Goethe’s notion of intellectual insight (*intellektuale Anschauung*). Jeffers also anticipates many modern thinkers, such as Gregory Bateson, who sought to discover the homologies between evolutionary processes and mental processes, or David Bohm, for whom consciousness provided a royal road into the awareness of the undivided wholeness of life and of the universe.

In “De Rerum Virtute,” Jeffers suggested, somewhat cryptically, that “man too is beautiful,” and that “Something perhaps may come of him” (*CP* 3: 402). Here, the mission of humanity is explicitly identified with the capacity to bring the world into consciousness. To the timeworn question of human “justification,” or “How should men live?” the answer is now definitive:

This is man’s mission:

To find and feel; all animal experience
Is a part of God’s life. (*CP* 3: 434)

It is humanity's mission to "find and feel" through discovery and participatory consciousness, and thereby become part of God's life. Rather than an accident of evolution (as was the case in *The Double Axe* period), humanity is viewed here as an integral, even necessary part of the evolutionary scheme of things.¹¹

Human consciousness is part of God's life—even of God's body—in the strict biological sense that cognition is an evolutionary phenomenon (another important insight of Maturana and Varela), but also because consciousness is above all a mode or medium of transpersonal connection with the whole. Jeffers explicitly relates his notion of universal consciousness (or *panpsychism*) to the ability of all the parts of the whole to "feel and feed and influence each other" (CP 3: 432). Similarly, the human ability to "find and feel" (CP 3: 434) involves a participatory connection to the whole, a way for human beings to enter into dialogue with the "superhuman intelligence" (CP 3: 401) of nature.¹² Such self-transcending of the human toward the transhuman is the culminating point of Jeffers's evolutionary-religious vision, his pantheist *visio beatifica*.

Obviously, Jeffers (or the narrator) still has doubts, and in typical dialogical fashion, he projects these doubts onto an imaginary interlocutor who interrupts: "Do you think so? This villainous king of beasts, this deformed ape?" This time, however, the idealist voice has the final word, and the narrator responds with a retort which is among Jeffers's most optimistic assessments of the human condition:

He has mind

And imagination, he might go far
 And end in honor. The hawks are more heroic but man has a steeper mind,
 Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light,
 You may calculate a comet's orbit or the dive of a hawk, not a man's mind.
 (CP 3: 434)

These are remarkable words for the "poet of Inhumanism." From the deliberately provocative attitude of one who would rather kill a man than a hawk, here he embraces the idea that there is something in the human mind which is of evolutionary value after all. Whereas the usual thrust of Jeffers's teaching is to "turn outward," away from human solipsism, here he "turns inward" to examine the landscape—or "inscape"—of the human mind. His description recalls Gerard Manley Hopkins's famous lines: "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed." The key notion for both poets is that the mind contains something in itself which is immeasurable and infinite—"incalculable"—which extends deep down into the very roots of things.

The message that humans might still “go far,” and “end in honor,” highlights the “utopian-eschatological” dimension of his late thinking (and why Melba Bennett’s original title “The Beginning and the End” does seem appropriate, even if unauthorized). Jeffers is not the misanthropic pessimist he is usually made out to be. On the contrary, the structure of Jeffers’s mature worldview is informed by a deep and principled hopefulness. This visionary or utopian aspect remained somewhat hidden among the caustic formulations of “The Inhumanist,” but assumes increasing emphasis in the final period. It involves an evolutionary dimension insofar as it asserts that humans are not necessarily locked into an antagonistic rapport with the rest of life, but that alternative scenarios and “better worlds” are possible. At some deep-seated, semi-irrational level, Jeffers believed that humankind may yet undertake a collective “evolutionary leap” from the current era of fractured human-earth relations to a new “symbiotic” era in which humans are part of the larger life community in mutually enhancing ways. In this way, the “direction” of human evolution could be brought into harmony with the larger “direction” of evolution, allowing humans to enter into a new and more honorable co-evolutionary rapport with the rest of the life community.¹³

12. MYTHOGENESIS: TELLING THE STORY

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the final poetry is Jeffers’s ability to take the story of the universe and the story of life, as interpreted by science, as the fitting subject matter for a new kind of epic poetry. The idea of such an all-encompassing epic is, I believe, the guiding creative impetus behind the somewhat scattered literary remains of the final period. Now that these poems have been re-collected, reedited and made available with a suitable critical apparatus, it is possible to appreciate the full scope and ambition of Jeffers’s late scientific-poetic investigations.

It is significant that after the *Hungerfield* volume Jeffers abandons the use of larger-than-life mythic personae as the vehicle for conveying his ideas, and settles into a depersonalized and expansive voice of the sage-scientist. The main model for this synthesis of poetry and science is Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*. Just as Lucretius used the best science available to assemble an epic which would recount how all things come into existence and persist in being, so Jeffers used the most accurate science of his day to tell the story of the universe and of life.

The Lucretian model is apparent in “De Rerum Virtute,” most obviously in the title, but also in its tribute to “the curious desire of know-

ing / Values and purpose and the causes of things" (CP 3: 401). The legacy is even more explicit in the long fragment here. In the passage where he counts among the "ends" or "entelechies" of cellular life the production of observers who strain their limits to understand the whole, he even cites Lucretius directly:

Flammantia moenia mundi, Lucretius wrote,
Alliterating like a Saxon—all those Ms mean majesty—
The flaming world-walls, far-flung fortifications of being
Against not-being. (CP 3: 431)

Here the highly allusive and free adaptation of Lucretius suggests a kind of willful synthesis of his project with Lucretius's earlier endeavor, even to the point of borrowing and adapting Lucretius's own rhetorical devices. The passage from *De Rerum Natura* which he cites is in fact Lucretius's own homage to his teacher and predecessor, Epicurus, whom he credits as having been the first to free humankind from the oppressions of religion (*sub religione*), and to have offered instead a truthful, scientific account of the world. It is within this line of philosophizing about the nature of things, extending from the pre-Socratics through Epicurus and Lucretius, that Jeffers is more or less self-consciously inserting himself.¹⁴

While it is always a hazardous endeavor to try to reconstruct the intentions of a poet after he has died, I believe it was the great ambition of Jeffers's final years to construct such a grand epic, a story which would be nothing less than the story of how all things—including the cosmos, life, and human observers—came into existence. Not only does such a "High Argument" correspond to his own ambition of a type of narrative in which "things themselves" are the true subject, and human beings only the "symbolic interpreters" ("Old age hath clawed me" CP 3: 484), it also brings to fulfillment the major westward thrust of the American eco-poetic tradition whereby "real nature," nature ecologically understood, becomes the true subject and real focus of poetry. And while the ambition to present a unified account combining myth and science hearkens back to the pre-Socratic view that scientific truths are best expressed in poetic form, it also presents in the modern period a unique synthesis of science and poetry, thus bridging what C. P. Snow called the "two cultures divide" in an altogether unprecedented way.

Had Jeffers lived to complete his project, the final-period poetry would no doubt be "packaged" somewhat differently, with the long fragment perhaps serving as the centerpiece and some of the shorter poems illustrating important points and insights. That Jeffers, like

Lucretius, was forced to abandon the project attests perhaps to the impossible or “tragic” nature of such a quest. Even so, it is possible from the fragments to reconstruct some idea of that ambition, which is announced in epigrammatic form in “De Rerum Virtute,” and which assumes a broader coherent structure in the long narrative fragment here.

This achievement has been insufficiently recognized outside the small circle of Jeffers’s critics. For while a cultural historian as eminent as Thomas Berry can wax poetically about the need for such a “universe story,” or while a cosmologist such as Brian Swimm can invoke shamelessly the resources of myth and poetry to embellish his account of creation, and while even many modern “mainstream” scientists insist on the need for such a scientifically informed creation story, Jeffers is the only modern poet of any standing to actually produce such a story. And if it is true, as Berry and others believe, that our own age is in need of such a story or “myth” to give us meaning and to allow human beings to feel at home in the universe again in sympathy with the great life of nature and all self-making creatures, then there can be no greater resource than Jeffers’s late cosmological-evolutionary epopoeia.

ENDNOTES

1. The textual issues surrounding the final ordering of Jeffers’s last poems are complex, and subject to competing editorial methodologies. In editing the *Collected Poems*, Tim Hunt adopted a chronological method in which the extant fragments were arranged in the order they were composed, as far as textual and biographical evidence allow. My opinion is that Melba Bennett’s ordering of the poems in the first part of *The Beginning and the End* is closer to the author’s original intention. Part of the purpose of this reading will be to suggest the grandeur of Jeffers’s epic vision, that what he had in mind was a final long poem which would be nothing less than account of how all things came into being, including human beings and human consciousness. I am also suggesting the need for a “revisionist” approach in assessing the late poetry. The period beginning with the *Hungerfield* volume (particularly “De Rerum Virtute”) and culminating in his great epic story of creation in the posthumously published works constitutes another distinct phase and “high peak” of his overall poetic development, not the scattered remains of a “Wordsworthian” falling-off period (as is sometimes maintained).

2. In *The Biosphere*, Vernadsky draws a similar analogy between thermodynamics and pagan sun worship: “The biosphere is at least as much a *creation of the sun* as a result of terrestrial processes. Ancient religious intuitions that considered terrestrial creatures, especially man, to be children of the sun were far nearer the truth than is thought by those who see earthly beings simply as ephemeral creations arising from blind and accidental interplay of matter and forces” (Vernadsky 44).

3. If life (or the biosphere) can be considered in some sense a single organism, then the history of life can be seen as a journey of discovery and development, even a kind of *Bildungsroman*. In documenting the various stages of life's journey, Jeffers presents a biographical history of the earth along the lines of Haeckel's *History of Creation*, Vernadsky's reconstruction of the historical stages of the biosphere, James Lovelock's *Ages of Gaia* or Richard Fortey's recent *Life: A Natural History of the First Four Billion Years of Life on Earth*.

4. Here we are confronted with one of the great riddles of modern cosmology: how to reconcile the increase in entropy, or the increase in the measure of disorganization of the universe as a whole—the infallible second law of thermodynamics—with the perceived increase of organization and complexity which is characteristic of evolutionary processes? This was a problem Erwin Schrödinger attempted to answer in his little book *What is Life?* with his strange concept of “negentropy”: the idea that a reduction of entropy (or an increase of “order”) in one place feeds off an increase of entropy in another place. Yet this explanation is not entirely satisfactory, because it fails to explain not only the tendency of open systems such as biospheres to become more complex over time, but also why the cosmos as a whole, or at least the observable universe, seems to display a similar increase of order and complexity. Many scientists today would put the matter somewhat differently, and say that passage of time produces both disorder and order. The work of Ilya Prigogine on the thermodynamics of complex open systems in far-from-equilibrium conditions may be mentioned in particular, because it provides a powerful model to explain the rise of complexity in nature as an intrinsic property of self-organizing systems.

5. Koestler points out as well the parallels between the probable origins of life out of the coalescence of diverse chemical lineages and later forms of symbiotic organization among organisms, which he holds are functions of an underlying “integrative tendency” infusing all life: “We may regard the stepwise building up of complex hierarchies out of simpler holons as a basic manifestation of the integrative tendency of living matter. It seems indeed very likely that the single cell, once considered the atom of life, originated in the coming together of molecular structures which were the primitive forerunners of the organelles, and which had come into existence independently, each endowed with a different characteristic property of life—such as self-replication, metabolism, motility. When they entered into symbiotic partnership, the emergent whole—perhaps some ancestral form of amoeba—proved to be an incomparably more stable, versatile and adaptable entity than a mere summation of the parts would imply. . . . The hypothesis is in keeping with all we know about that ubiquitous manifestation of the integrative tendency: symbiosis, the varied forms of partnership between organisms” (66).

6. As Mark and Dianna McMenamain explain in what reads like a gloss on Jeffers's lines here: “The late bloomer or Garden of Ediacara hypothesis attributes the delay in the appearance of metazoans to the existence of a photosynthetic or chemosynthetic autotroph-dominated sea floor during the pre-Cambrian. This self-sufficient global marine ecosystem was literally torn to shreds by the advent of large burrowers and predators. By their activities, these new, predatory forms created lengthy trophic chains, bringing an end to the Garden of Ediacara and thereby remaking the biotic face of the earth” (McMenamin 50).

7. There are further indications in the manuscripts that Jeffers intended to relate the human “wound in the brain” with the “great wound” suffered by the earth when the moon was ripped from the Pacific basin (no longer accepted scientific theory but richly suggestive). Such a “double wound” would be consistent with Jeffers’s tragic view of life, in which the sufferings of the planet earth—the earth “crying out” for tragedy—are intimately related to the sufferings of human beings, and to artistic creation.

8. Here again, Jeffers’s views are very similar to those of Arthur Koestler, who wrote: “When one contemplates the streak of insanity running through human history, it appears highly probable that *homo sapiens* is a biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process” (Koestler 267).

9. Jeffers’s God, of course, is not the traditional Creator God, removed from His creation by the act of creating it, but the God who is literally the God of the Universe, the God who is all in all. Even Jeffers’s definition of “God” evolved during the late period, and in its final form combines a Spinozistic ontology with a dynamic evolutionary quality, resulting in a notion of God which is analogous, in varying degrees, to Ernst Haeckel’s God-Nature (or *Theophysis*), to Bergson’s evolutionary God, or to Whitehead’s process God—the God who is Himself the unfolding movement of the whole.

10. Even in *Margrave*, the narrator leaves open the possibility of a more exalted conception of human consciousness: “It is likely the enormous / Beauty of the world requires for completion our ghostly increment, / It has to dream, and dream badly, a moment of its night” (CP 2: 167).

11. Jeffers’s view that one of the aims or “ends” of both cosmic and biological evolution is the production of human observers comes surprisingly close to what is called the “Anthropic Cosmological Principle” (Barrow and Tipler), the idea that only a universe finely tuned such as ours could produce human observers (weak version), or the idea that such a universe as our own must create human observers (strong version). While Jeffers would certainly deny that the universe was created for human beings, he does think humans are part of the whole, and as such have an important role in bringing the universe into consciousness in our particular region of space and time. In effect, Jeffers extends the notion of the indispensability of the observer, already formally recognized by Kant, and a factor in any interpretation of quantum mechanics and in cosmology, to the evolutionary level. For Jeffers, any account of evolution must include an account of how life evolved in such a way as to produce intelligent observers. This ties into the notion that life, as a singular creative and adaptive system, evolved and continues to evolve as an interconnected whole, and that among the various entelechies governing the evolution of cellular life was the production of observers who strain their limits in the effort to understand the whole. While evolution certainly does not culminate or conclude with human beings, evolutionary processes do seem sufficiently fine-tuned, producing exactly the conditions necessary to allow for intelligent observant life to evolve, so as to suggest that this correspondence is more than a simple coincidence, but that human observers are part of the larger meaning or “purposefulness” of life as such. At least that is what Jeffers believed.

12. In Jeffers’s view, consciousness is an emergent property of the whole rather than an exclusively human phenomenon; consciousness was “there already” at the

origins of life, and even at the beginning of the universe in the "Great Explosion" (or the "Big Bang"). Viewing human consciousness as an expression of a larger "transhuman" consciousness also helps to explain the reciprocity between the "mind of nature" and the "nature of mind" such as to constitute, in Bateson's words, "a necessary unity."

13. Jeffers's vision of a new "honorable" era of human-earth relations comes strikingly close to what Thomas Berry imagines, with similar ecotopian verve, as the coming "Ecozoic" era.

14. The passage cited is part of the famous tribute to Epicurus in the proem, where Lucretius credits the earlier Greek philosopher as having been the first to take a stand for truth against lies, helping humanity lying oppressed under the weight of religious superstition. The text then reads:

ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
processit longe flammantia moenia mundi
atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque,
unde refert nobis victor quid posit oriri
quid nequeat . . .

The plodding Loeb translation gives the following: "Therefore the lively power of his mind prevailed, and forth he marched far beyond the flaming walls of the heavens, as he traversed the immeasurable universe in thought and imagination; whence victorious he returns bearing his prize, the knowledge of what can come into being, what can not" (Lucretius 6–7).

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BOOK REVIEW

Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest. By Thomas Dunlap.
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004. 172 pp.

REVIEWED BY C. TRAVIS WEBB

Thomas Dunlap's *Faith in Nature* is an admirable and thoughtful essay across a vast field of scholarship: the history of environmentalism and its antecedents from Newton to Carson, and it proposes that that history is more akin to a religious emergence than a mere historical epoch. The book's virtue is, however, also its vice. At its best, the study is a skeleton upon which further historical analysis might be appended, but at its worst, it is little more than a skeleton, a meatless arrangement that barely suggests the sort of vitality such a study requires. It is notable that Dunlap succeeds in accomplishing anything on this subject in such a short span: the work, which surveys over 300 years of Western history, does so at a clip—a 172-page clip. It is a history that necessarily leaves out much detail, but still communicates, though does not necessarily convince the reader of, its central thesis: namely, wilderness is historically contextual (an argument attributed to William Cronon, who also wrote the Foreword), and that context has, in the course of Western progress, moved wilderness from an ill-considered obstacle to cultural expansion, towards a sacred place of worship in an emerging religious sensibility.

Dunlap's historical analysis depends on his interpretation of the legacy of two looming historical figures: Sir Isaac Newton and Ralph Waldo Emerson. "Newton's Disciples" and "Emerson's Children," the titles of the first two chapters, reveal the sort of Rationalist versus Romantic dichotomy that seems to be the unavoidable, and unfortunate, binary proposed by any accounting of environmentalism. The "disciple" and the "child," are, as metaphors, as instructive of the chapters' purposes as are the arguments. To be fair, Dunlap does his best to complicate each of the two worldviews, and he suggests the limitations of each attitude, though his objections to the cold impersonal "Newtonian" universe are more confident than his objections to the interpersonal ecological "Emersonian" universe—a subtle bias

that, as we will see, is potentially obviated by a more generous examination of Jeffers.

The latter criticism of Dunlap is, perhaps, a bit unfair, since clearly the fraternal impulses towards empiricism and transcendence are at work in the modern environmental movement, and their accounting is in order for any sufficient explanation of the American affection for Thoreau and the pioneer mythos, but the main problem with Dunlap's analysis is not his succinct historical account, but rather the sparse religious scholarship involved in his analysis of the "religious quest." Dunlap's argument regarding religion relies on such figures as Mircea Eliade, William James, and Aldous Huxley, figures that were significant in their time, but can no longer be considered of particular influence in the field of Religious Studies. Eliade, James, and Huxley read religion with a literary flair that is still persuasive for its rhetorical strength, but to use them without mention of the scholarship that has superseded, and in many cases refuted, them over the past fifty to a hundred years makes Dunlap's bony historical account even less weighty. Dunlap does mention Catharine Albanese, a major contemporary scholar in the field, but only in passing. Indeed, to rely on such religious scholars as Eliade, James, and Huxley (to call the latter a "scholar" is a stretch) is somewhat akin to relying on T. S. Eliot and Cleanth Brooks for literary criticism. It is, of course, true that a dated scholar is not necessarily an irrelevant scholar, but to use Eliade, James, and Huxley without at least the aforementioned nod to those who have succeeded them—Wendy Doniger, Clifford Geertz, and, particularly for Dunlap's project, Robert Bellah—seems problematic. Bellah, for example, coined the term "American civil religion," and though Dunlap uses this term in several places throughout the book, Bellah is nowhere to be found. It was Bellah, a sociologist following in the footsteps of Emile Durkheim, who first opened the field of Religious Studies to the possibility of analyzing seemingly secular social phenomena as religious.

For most of his argument Dunlap satisfies the book's stated premise by drawing analogies between the behavior of "environmentalists" and those of religious adherents. For example, "In addition to a literature, environmentalists adopted symbols of faith ranging from icons to areas. Environmentalists put up posters with Ansel Adams's views of Yosemite Valley or Eliot Porter's pictures of Glen Canyon in the same way that ethnic Catholics put statues of the Virgin on the front lawn—as declarations of faith and reminders of what was important" (140). People also fill their homes with hockey and basketball paraphernalia; they decorate their cars and lawns with colors that match the local high school football team; they deck the halls and haunt the

house. These are not necessarily religious acts in Dunlap's analysis. But lest I be misunderstood, it is not Dunlap's suggestion that environmentalism might be usefully understood as a religion that I object to; it is his lack of consideration for the complexity of the issue. All of the above examples, including Dunlap's own, can be, have been, and should continue to be meaningfully explored. For example, Bellah's essay, "Civil Religion in America," would meaningfully contribute to Dunlap's analysis, supporting his suggestion that "movements" other than those traditionally labeled as religious might in fact be religious. This discussion would, however, complicate Dunlap's argument, because he would have to investigate the complicated relationships that exist between the various American and international civil religions, a problem thoroughly discussed by Mark Stoll in his review of *Faith in Nature*, titled "Thinking about Environmentalism as a Religion." Stoll points out that Dunlap's environmental religion is almost exclusively American, and fails to look at the intersections between environmentalism and other "denominations": women's rights, abolitionism, and the peace movement, for example.

Though Dunlap's history of environmentalism excludes a detailed analysis of civil religion in general, he does give Robinson Jeffers a place in his examination of environmentalism's "religious quest." This is no small task since Jeffers's work is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reconcile with an environmental ethic or religious quest of the kind Dunlap attempts to describe. Dunlap, as many before him, attempts to bridle Jeffers's worldview, reigning in his sprawling career with this summation: "Instead of the nobility of human thought, [Jeffers] wrote of 'the bitter weed / of consciousness.' The 'learned astronomer / Analyzing the light of most remote star swirls' found the stars fleeing. No doubt that was to escape 'the contagion / of consciousness that infects this corner of space' ('Margrave')" (83). Additionally, Dunlap ably describes how Jeffers's thinking came to infiltrate the environmental movement—particularly the Sierra Club. He traces Jeffers's influence from his inclusion in the Sierra Club's *Not Man Apart*, to his influence on the essayist and poet Loren Eiseley. Neither does he gloss over the irreconcilability of Jeffers's thought with the conservation movement: "[Jeffers] found the good in humans not in their reasoned appreciation of the world, but in their working within nature's systems and with its rhythms. Even here Jeffers ran against conservation sentiment, which accepted humans within the rhythms of nature but said nothing about earning one's living, in nature or out of it" (83). Not giving up the point, he concludes his primary discussion of Jeffers by saying, "Even bowdlerized, Jeffers remained a minor enthusiasm, for only the completely ignorant or perfectly enlightened could be fully

comfortable with his unblinking view of life's pain and the insignificance of the human race in an indifferent universe" (84). And it is, finally, this sort of summary that is a disservice to both Jeffers and Dunlap, for here, laid bare in Jeffers's work is a religious sensibility as old as *Ecclesiastes* and as vibrant within the modern political, and thus environmental, process as John Rawls and Aldo Leopold.

It was not only the "pain and the insignificance" of being human that Jeffers wrote of, but the beauty surrounding the human, the beauty crying out for itself, as it does in "Point Pinos and Point Lobos." Dunlap forgets the beauty; it was Jeffers's lack of compromise regarding beauty that is most difficult about his life and work, not the recognition of pain that Dunlap claims is irreconcilable for most. It is precisely the pain that makes Jeffers accessible, that is least radical about him. No creature, low or high, is a stranger to pain. Embodiment is many things, but it is also always pain and its welcome counterpart pleasure. Indeed, pain's reason is an integral tension involved in every religion's story of the world. The recognition of life's unavoidable pain is found in the Buddhist's first Noble Truth, and in the Christian cross, in Thomas Hobbes's formulation that the life of humankind is "nasty brutish and short," and more recently in John Rawls's re-formulation of the state of nature as a "veil of ignorance." Even the most secular of all explanations of the world and its origins, the scientific, finds a reason for pain in the preservation of life. No, we are no strangers to pain; most confront the enormity of life's pain without being fully ignorant or enlightened. Jeffers wrote, much more importantly for twentieth-century America, of suffering's beauty, savagery's sublimities, brutality's sweet angles of flight. For Jeffers, pain's reason is not a post-mortem salvation, nor the preservation of life: it is beauty. Without pain there can be no beauty, and without beauty, really, what's the point of salvation or longevity: "Point Pinos and Point Lobos," "Roan Stallion," "Cawdor." Jeffers celebrated the beauty that civilization's slow incision was attempting to amputate and replace with a stainless prosthesis. And in the proposed context of a "religious environmentalism," this is precisely when Jeffers becomes necessary. Civilization is, at a minimum, insulation against nature's brutal contingencies, but it is civilization that is clear-cutting and fishing the fauna to extinction. There are, of course, many benefits offered by civilization, but Jeffers would remind us that if, above all else, civilization is a story told against scarcity and cold, it is a story that will ultimately end ignobly if followed towards its mad conclusion. It will end because the pain of living is unlegislable. It cannot be paved, or reformed, or built over. The awful sublimity of life's black altar cannot be transmuted, only modernized.

If environmentalism is, in fact, a religious movement, it is precisely the Jeffersian vision that must be accounted for, not abandoned, a vision that is as close to the impersonal clockwork of the Newtonian universe as it is to the Emersonian Soul. Every religious movement must deal with the intractability of evil, and the endless tropes of spiritual if not material progress associated with mainstream environmentalism place it closer to the naive optimism of laissez faire capitalism than the deeper religious truths of Hinduism or Islam. To his credit Dunlap deals with these tropes of progress in his final chapter, but he does so after abandoning the view that defends against such naiveté: namely, Jeffers. It is, of course, too much to ask that Dunlap, a historian, deal with Jeffers on this level, but the gaps in his book beg to be filled, and Jeffers's work is one way to begin to fill them—bridging, for example, his simplified “Newtonian,” “Emersonian” binary. Ultimately, for Jeffers scholars, Dunlap's work is a worthwhile discussion of the history and inherent problems of placing Jeffers within the larger context of the environmental movement. He clearly has a place, but it is a difficult one. Dealing with this difficulty, however, lends the “environmental religious quest” the kind of intractable realism that is the requirement of all great religions: *Ecclesiastes* is, for example, a rather unforgiving meditation on life that grants no quarter to the niceties of Christian salvation. And though Dunlap's intuitions regarding the religious nature of the environmental movement seem plausible, his reliance on a too quick summary of major figures and lack of religious studies scholarship adversely impacts his overall analysis.

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NEWS AND NOTES

OBITUARY: JEFF NORMAN

On October 31, 2007, Jeff Norman died after a series of health setbacks. Jeff spoke frequently on Jeffers's poetry and characters. In 2004 he delivered the keynote address at the Robinson Jeffers Association



*Jeff Norman, Mal Paso
Canyon, August 2004.
Photo: Rob Kafka*

conference in Carmel on “The Historical Models of Some of Jeffers’s Characters,” and co-led the tour of Point Lobos with geologists Aaron Yoshinobu and Jean Grace. He also narrated a bus trip down the coast in 2000 for the Tor House Foundation Fall Festival, and spoke on Jeffers at a number of other venues, including the Harrison Library in Carmel. Those who heard some of Jeff’s presentations on Jeffers’s works, and others who are involved in the life of Big Sur, recognize the magnitude of this loss. Jeff embodied a unique constellation of specialties: USFS backcountry ranger; cultural historian; biologist; botanist; preservationist; and advocate for the region, its pioneer families, and those

who might be shut out by its gentrification. The following is a slightly abbreviated obituary, written by Jeff’s close friend Kathy MacKenzie, that ran in the *Monterey County Herald* for November 11, 2007.

BIG SUR, CA—Jeff Norman died too soon, at the age of 56, from complications following heart surgery. He was born in Oakland, CA and moved to Pebble Beach in 1962 with his parents. A naturalist from a very young age, at 14 he

discovered a fern unknown in Monterey County at Pico Blanco Boy Scout Camp, and at age 15 he was the youngest person hired as a lab technician at Hopkins Marine Station, launching his career in biology. He graduated from Pacific Grove High School in 1969. He attended UC Santa Cruz, where he was an avid student of Gandhi's teachings, studied Non-Violence for Social Change, and was prepared to declare himself a conscientious objector in the draft for the Vietnam war. Jeff's life work and passion was preserving the integrity of the Big Sur Coast. He lived in Palo Colorado and Bixby Canyons, and on the Post Ranch before acquiring his home, Alta Vista, a unique, handsplit redwood cabin that was built in the 1920's [sic] by the Overstroms, a homesteading couple. For 28 years Jeff lived in his beloved remote sanctuary on the South Coast of Big Sur, three miles above the highway with no road access. As a consulting biologist, cultural historian, and author, he was fiercely protective of both the biological habitat and the social culture unique to the region. His enthusiasm for gathering information, seeking answers, and solving puzzles was insatiable, whether in finding a new species of clover, or swapping wild tales with an old timer, or locating an historic photo in someone's family album revealing a piece of unknown history about the coast. His knowledge of the natural and cultural history of Monterey County was phenomenal.

He was an expert botanist, working for the U.S. Forest Service, State Parks, UC Santa Cruz, Big Sur Natural History Association, Esalen Institute, Monterey County Planning and Building Inspection Department and others. In 2002 he served as botany leader for the Peninsula Geology Society's trip in the Northern Santa Lucia Mountains. An active member of the California Native Plant Society, he was consultant for the Big Sur Land Trust and the Monterey Pine Forest Watch.

He was a friend and chronicler of the larger-than-life characters of Big Sur, including homesteader families such as the Posts, Harlans, Ewoldsens, Pfeiffers, and Trotters, artists and bohemians, including Jaime DeAngulo and Harry Dick Ross, intellectuals, conservationists, ranchers, and just plain folk. Jeff himself was one of the biggest characters of them all, living a feisty, vigorous life. He was in his element when he was lecturing on local history and natural history at libraries, museums, Pacific Valley School and Big Sur Elderhostel or presenting talks on Robinson Jeffers for the Tor House Foundation. He was a charter member of the Big Sur Historical Society and past president and member of the Friends of the Big Sur Library.

In 2004 Jeff co-authored *Images of America: Big Sur* with the Big Sur Historical Society, a book that traced the history of the coast from the days of the homesteaders with numerous never-before-seen photographs of the coast. He also co-authored *Big Sur Observed* with Kip Stewart in 1994, and was a major contributor to Donald Clark's *Monterey County Place Names* (1991), and to numerous newspapers, magazines, and local publications. At the time of his death he was energetically at work on a new book about the bohemians of Big Sur and Carmel.

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INDUCTION OF ROBINSON JEFFERS INTO THE POETS' CORNER
AT THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE,
NEW YORK CITY, OCTOBER 27–28, 2007

This October Jeffers received a posthumous honor that would have no doubt intrigued him, when he was inducted into The Poets' Corner at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The Poets' Corner was established in 1984 as an American cousin of the institution at Westminster Abbey, with the difference that it includes not only poets but also prose writers. Poets who have been honored with an inscribed stone in the corner include Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Hart Crane, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Langston Hughes, Robert Frost, W. H. Auden, Emma Lazarus, and others. There has, of course, been controversy, most notably over the nomination of Ezra Pound in 1999, who was eventually rejected because of his anti-Semitism.

The process of inducting a poet begins with nominations to a Board of Electors, guided by the Poet in Residence, who is currently Charles Martin. Current Electors include a number of well-known contemporary writers, among them David Mason, poet, essayist, Professor of English at the Colorado College, and this year's keynote speaker at the RJA's conference in Santa Cruz. Mason, who has recently published *Ludlow*, a book-length narrative poem set in Colorado, and who has long been an admirer of Jeffers, was instrumental in advancing Jeffers as a candidate. The final choice is approved by the Dean, currently the Very Reverend Dr. James A. Kowalski, who over the course of the weekend showed himself to be no mean student of Jeffers's work and a strong supporter of the Poets' Corner.

The induction included a number of events. On Saturday, October 27, there was a panel titled "A Celebration of Robinson Jeffers" that included Edward Hoagland, Tim Hunt, Mark Jarman, David J. Rothman, and Robert Zaller, with Michael Palma as Moderator. This was followed by the premiere of a song cycle of Jeffers's poems set to music by Jessica Hunt, Tim Hunt's daughter. This was in turn followed by a staged reading of a somewhat edited version of *Dear Judas* by Verse Theater Manhattan. Bad weather kept the turnout low, and the acoustics of the Cathedral proved to be a bit difficult for the panel and for the play. They were more appropriate for Jessica Hunt's music, which deserves further performances. All in all, however, the afternoon was lively and exciting.

On Sunday afternoon, Jeffers was formally inducted during a Choral Evensong service of great formality and beauty that was well attended. In the course of the service, which included prayers, music, and read-

ings from various sources, several of the Electors read selections from Jeffers or discussed his work: Phillis Levin read "Love the Wild Swan," Meena Alexander read "Calm and Full the Ocean," and Charles Martin read "To the Stone-Cutters" and dedicated the memorial stone with a brief essay that was also printed in the program. In his essay Martin characterized Jeffers as "a major voice in twentieth-century American poetry," and emphasized "his concern for our all-too-human temptations toward violence and evil, and his pioneering attempt to reorient us toward a new understanding of the obligations of our presence in the natural world." If memory serves, the words chosen for the inscription on Jeffers's stone are from the close of "To the Stone-Cutters": "Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained thoughts found / The honey of peace in old poems."

This solemn and inspiring event was followed by a reception in the Dean's residence that sparkled with good conversation. It seemed clear that many of the Electors had known relatively little of Jeffers beforehand but now came to it with new eyes. For this we have especially Charles Martin and David Mason to thank, along with the receptive Dean Kowalski.

In the end, the weekend was beautiful and compelling, yet a bit unsettling. To hear Jeffers—who would certainly qualify as a heretic in any Christian orthodoxy—praised for his spirituality in an Episcopal cathedral both honors him and yet also still has the power, as a ritual, to astonish. While those who discussed and presented his work at the event responded to it thoughtfully and interpreted it well, Jeffers certainly does not go gently into such a relationship. One imagines him nodding thoughtfully, smoking a cigarette, and then turning his gaze back to the ocean and the stars.—*David J. Rothman*

HONOR'S THESIS BY STEVEN J. ROSS,
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL,
SPRING 2007

"Emblems of Adversity: The Tower in Yeats and Jeffers," takes the form of parallel intellectual biographies of W. B. Yeats and Robinson Jeffers and seeks to foreground the various symbolic and literal expressions of the tower in their lives and works. The tower motif underpins a broader meditation on the poets' uneasiness as "moderns" in the post-war age of upheaval and dissolution. In its descent from Spenser's "Faerie Queene," Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso," and a variety of Shelley's works, including "Prince Athanase," "Alastor," and "The Witch of Atlas," the motif also suggests the poets' self-conscious identification with the English literary tradition. Much of the thesis is stat-

ed in the first sentences of the introduction: "In contrast to the visions of poetic and historical fragmentation implicit in high modernist showpieces like 'The Waste Land' and 'The Cantos,' W. B. Yeats and Robinson Jeffers distinguish themselves among the moderns for their visions of unity, their will not only to shore their fragments against their ruin but to reorganize the fragments into a new, enduring structure. Each, in his own way, fits Northrop Frye's type of the 'mythopoeic poet,' who 'accepts some myths as "true" and shapes his poetic structure accordingly.' Their 'poetic structures' are informed by a need to conceive and create permanent monuments of the self and soul, famously embodied by the towers each acquired and mythologized."

Steven's thesis was awarded highest honors and received both the Kimball King Award and the Whitfield Prize (for best senior honors thesis in English). Steven received travel grants to speak at the Tor House Festival in October 2006, and at the RJA 2007 Conference in Hawaii, where he was pleased to be slated for a presentation on the same panel as Robert Brophy, who did his doctoral work at Steven's alma mater.

PUBLICATION OF INTEREST

Artists at Continent's End: The Monterey Peninsula Art Colony, 1857-1907. Scott A. Shields. Berkeley: U of California P, 2006.

Catalog for the exhibition of the same name, organized by Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, February 17-May 21, 2006 (also exhibited at Laguna, Santa Barbara, and Monterey). Although it covers the artistic milieu prior to the Jefferses' arrival in Carmel, it mentions Jeffers in passing and quotes from his poem that provides the exhibit's title (211-12). Also includes a reproduction of an amusing caricature of George Sterling as "The Literary Craftsman of Carmel," dressed in a toga, sitting on the beach smoking a cigarette and writing a poem (85).

CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Chapman is director of the Foundation for Ecology and Culture, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable cultural values, environmental education, and community-based ecological restoration projects. He has published articles on environmental literary theory, the “Green Goethe,” and Gary Snyder.

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

Deborah Fleming is chair of the English Department at Ashland University and has published scholarship on Yeats, Jeffers, and Eamon Grennan.

C. Travis Webb served as editorial assistant for this issue of *Jeffers Studies*. He has an MA in Religious Studies, and is currently working on an MA thesis in English that focuses on the poetry of Robinson Jeffers and Wallace Stevens. He runs a Yoga and Martial Arts studio in Long Beach, CA.

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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.

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