

JEFFERS STUDIES

376-058.46

Jeffers | Eliot

Toxotrist

↙ Jeffers ↘

Toxotrist (Jefferies) Matter the ultimate reality. Annihilation not in the books. (Plataeo to Nirvana.) Toxotrist cannot be extinguished. Its lower stages less painful, simpler, more enduring, ~~the~~ more fundamental than its higher stages, consequently preferable. But, ^{the} restraining is even there. Prometheus Symbol. To endure the inevitable.

Peace beyond ^{desire} pain & bathing :- hazards Symbol; Earthquake Symbol
Aesthetics; Discovering
Endure : Flame

↓
Eliot

Toxotrist (Hermann) Beyond matter lies Nirvana. Annihilation possible. Turquoise Symbol.
 But beyond the Waste Land lies a possible new life. The Thunder
Hemmer
Da

Rebirth { Jeffers Eliot
 Fire Water
 Aqua nostra ignis est
 (Jb. Kimball Oct. Nov. 20, 1937)

A DOUBLE ISSUE WITH A SPECIAL SECTION:
JEFFERS IN TRANSLATION

A PUBLICATION OF
THE ROBINSON JEFFERS ASSOCIATION

JEFFERS STUDIES

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A DOUBLE ISSUE INCLUDING A SPECIAL SECTION:
JEFFERS IN TRANSLATION

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EDITOR'S NOTE

If this double-issue of *Jeffers Studies* has a theme or organizing principle, it would be "Jeffers and . . ."

Jeffers and Thoreau, Jeffers and Joseph Campbell, Jeffers and Yeats, Jeffers and contemporary poets, Jeffers and translation. Even Jeffers and Hitler, though that may be pushing it. In any case, this volume demonstrates the diversity of connections that can be made with a poet such as Jeffers—influence on and influence of, historical figures and events, international reputation and readership, and so on.

Our readers will find familiar voices in this volume: Robert Zaller, foremost, but also Deborah Fleming and Dr. Gere diZigerega, who have both previously published excellent work in these pages. We are glad to introduce a fresh perspective on our poet from J. Bradford Campbell. In addition, three poets who participated in last year's Robinson Jeffers Association conference in Long Beach have graciously allowed us to publish their responses to Jeffers as a precursor. Here you will find Patty Seyburn's poetic tribute to Jeffers, Kurt Brown's insightful commentaries on Jeffers's work, and John Ridland's amusing "dogroll" for Jeffers and Frost. As anyone who attended the conference would attest, their reading and discussion panel were both highlights of the conference.

Jeffers and Spanish, Jeffers and Italian—the special section included here on Jeffers in translation is a first for *Jeffers Studies*. We are pleased to offer three examples of Gustavo Adolfo Chavez's translations of Jeffers into Spanish. The three he chose for us are important early poems drawn from his selected translations, *Fin del Continente*, published in 2011. Chavez's collection includes translations of poems from throughout Jeffers's career, including "Roan Stallion," as well as a Spanish version of "Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years." The volume also includes a preface by Robert Brophy and translations of Robert Hass's and Czesław Miłosz's homages to Jeffers. As you will see, Ugo Gervasoni's

translations of Jeffers into Italian are works of art in themselves. Both of these translators have produced remarkable tributes to Jeffers's appeal across national and linguistic boundaries, and we are glad to bring this work to our readers' attention.

Rounding out this issue are reviews of two books that we think will be of interest. John Haines was a fine poet who responded deeply to Jeffers's work, and Jack Foley's massive survey, reviewed by my colleague Bill Mohr, provides an overview of post-Jeffers California poets. The dates on these publications, as readers will notice, are later than the date of this double-issue of *Jeffers Studies*. We continue to try to catch up in our publication schedule and hope that our subscribers will forgive our tardiness. As always, we are committed to publishing the best scholarly work on Jeffers and most interesting Jeffers-related material and sometimes that takes us longer than we anticipate.

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On the cover: Campbell's notes comparing archetypal themes in Jeffers and Eliot. See pp. 27–29 of this issue.

"Point Joe" is reprinted from *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, Volume 1, by Tim Hunt. Used with permission of Stanford University Press, <www.sup.org>.

DAVID J. ROTHMAN

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

With my term as President drawing to a close at the end of 2011, I am pleased to hand over the reins of the Robinson Jeffers Association to our next President, Ron Olowin (2012–15), and our incoming Executive Director, John Cusatis, in very good shape. Thanks to the hard work of many members, the organization is poised to take a major step in its development. With careful husbanding it will soon be able to fulfill its mission more widely and successfully than it ever has.

THANKS AND WELCOMES

First, I want to thank Erika Koss for her hard work as Executive Director in 2010–11. At the time she stepped in, no one in the organization had volunteered for the position despite repeated calls, and she did a superb job. Among other things, she worked with our web-mistress (who is now our newest board member) Malinda Miller, Treasurer Rob Kafka, me, and many others to coordinate the creation of our splendid new website <www.robinsonjeffersassociation.org>, helped to run our Second Annual Fund, and most importantly oversaw our successful conference at Long Beach in February 2011. We simply could not have accomplished all this without her, and I'm grateful for her hard work and her professionalism.

Our incoming President, Ron Olowin, is in the midst of an extraordinary career as a scientist and an educator. He will be the first RJA President who comes from outside the Humanities, which goes to show (not that we needed to be shown, but the rest of the world might . . .) that Jeffers is a poet who appeals far and wide across the rather artificial boundaries of academic discourse. In his own words: Ron joined the Saint Mary's College community in 1987 and is a Full Professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Though trained

in observational cosmology where he studies the Large-Scale Structure of the universe by a detailed mapping of nearby clusters of galaxies, his varied interests span a variety of topics from Archeo- and Ethno-Astronomy and Science and the Arts to aspects of the Science and Religion dialog. Dr. Olowin is a member of the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at Berkeley and also a Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union, also at Berkeley. He is a member of the International Organizing Board of the Science Secretariat of the International Federation of Catholic Universities (IFCU); the International Executive Committee of the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena (INSAP); and Ex-Executive Director of the Robinson Jeffers Association. The author of over 30 articles in scientific journals and popular publications, he is an internationally recognized scholar who has delivered papers in over a dozen countries and observed the heavens from all parts of the globe using some of the world's largest instruments.

I also want to welcome John Cusatis as Executive Director. John has been a member of RJA since 2001 and has presented papers at many conferences. He holds degrees from Pennsylvania State University, Millersville University, and the University of South Carolina. His latest books include *Post-War Literature, 1945-1970* (2010, Facts on File) and *Understanding Colum McCann* (2011, University of South Carolina Press). His work on Jeffers has appeared in *Jeffers Studies*, *The Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *The Waters of Hermes*, and *Restoring the Mystery of the Rainbow: Literature's Refraction of Science*. His current projects include editing a forthcoming edition of *Dictionary of Literary Biography* on 21st century American poets. John is also a singer/songwriter who performs widely throughout the southeast. He teaches at the School of the Arts in Charleston, South Carolina. RJA is fortunate to have him helping us to run the organization.

RESIGNATION OF ROB KAFKA AS TREASURER

As some of you know, Rob Kafka has announced he will be stepping down as Treasurer at the end of 2011. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of Rob's contributions to RJA (and to Jeffers studies in general!). He is the only Treasurer RJA has ever had, and he has done a superb job in every way, including work that goes far beyond his job description and comprises everything from supporting others in their research and leading hikes in Jeffers Country to arranging events at conferences from breakfast to cocktails. It is no exaggeration to say that he has given more to the organization than anyone else over the years. It probably wouldn't even exist without him. I'm sure I speak for

everyone in thanking him for his selfless service, which has made so much possible.

2012 CONFERENCE

Ron and John are working on setting up our forthcoming conference, which will be in the Carmel area over the Memorial Day weekend, Friday, May 25–Monday, May 28, in 2012. That conference is theirs to run and you will be hearing more about it from them in the weeks and months to come. They are currently looking at some very exciting potential keynote speakers and readers, and I am confident it will be excellent.

CREATION OF RJA TRAVEL AND RESEARCH FUND GRANTS

Over the past few months we have received a number of requests for funding support for projects that are clearly within our purview: travel funds to our conference and to others to present talks on Jeffers, funds to support book publication (fees for rights and permissions, etc.), support for translation of Jeffers into other languages, and more. As a result of Rob Kafka's careful management of our finances and the success of our recent annual funds, we are now in a position to offer moderate support to such projects, something we have long discussed. In fact, we have far more in the bank—about \$13,000 as of November 2011, according to Rob Kafka—than we have ever had. As a result, Rob and I have drawn up a grant application and a travel funds application for those who would like to receive these funds. Ron Olowin, John Cusatis, and all board members have had a chance to review these documents, and we have received only positive responses.

We propose to be quite careful in disbursing these funds. For our first year, we propose to offer up to three research/publication expense support grants of up to \$500, and two travel grants of up to \$500, meaning that the organization could not spend more than \$2,500. All grants would require an application (the applications, which are based closely on standard kinds of documents in the field, are visible on our website), and would be reviewed by the Executive Committee of the RJA Board. Only current RJA members are eligible for grants. The board will have the obligation, every fiscal year, to set the number of such grants as it sees fit for the coming year. As of now, we plan to offer grants on a rolling basis until we reach our limit for the year, and that application process is now open.

LOOKING FORWARD . . . BYLAWS REVIEW AND THE THIRD ANNUAL FUND

As my own duties as President wind down, I will be focusing on two things: setting up the committee to review the outdated RJA Bylaws, as approved at last February's conference, and running this year's annual fund.

You'll be hearing more about the Bylaws review from me in a few months via the RJA listserv and the website, but for now I want to close with an appeal to each one of you to contribute to the Annual Fund. As in the past, I encourage each of you to join me and our board in including the RJA in your charitable giving this year.

RJA is in good financial shape in part because of the success of our small annual funds over the last several years, and such campaigns are crucial for our success and vitality in the future. We have all sorts of opportunities that we are only able to take advantage of if we have enough funding to do so, including:

The development and maintenance of our website;

Support for *Jeffers Studies*;

Research and travel funds and grants for RJA members;

Appropriate fees for major speakers;

The support of special projects (e.g., musical performances, art exhibitions);

. . . and much more.

I myself have already given \$100 this year, and members of our board have already given or pledged well over \$500 in total. I hope that many of you will join us in supporting this wonderful organization that is doing so much not only to advance the study and discussion of Jeffers's work, life, and times, but also to sustain serious conversation about poetry and the other subjects Jeffers cared about so deeply and wrote about so profoundly. Any gift whatsoever that you can make—even \$10—is of tremendous help to a small organization such as ours. And thanks to the hard work of Malinda Miller and the others who built our new website, giving is easier than it has ever been. All you need to do is go to <www.robinsonjeffersassociation.org>, hit the orange "Donate" button and follow the prompts, and before you know it you'll be feeling wonderful about having supported RJA. I encourage you to take some time—a couple of minutes is all you need!—and do it now.

A SUMMING UP

Over the last three years RJA held well-attended annual conferences at the University of Colorado in Boulder, with Reg Saner as keynote

(2009); in Carmel, with Patricia Nelson Limerick as keynote (2010); and then at California State University Long Beach, with B. H. Fairchild as keynote (2011). In addition to scores of fine papers from long-time RJA members and many from new members, poets who read or spoke at these conferences—almost all of them new to our gatherings—included Chris Ransick, Virginia Patterson, David Yezzi, David Mason, Mark Irwin, Kurt Brown, John Ridland, and Patty Seyburn, all of them poets with national reputations who discussed Jeffers and read from him in their own performances. These readings strike me as particularly noteworthy, because they suggest that Jeffers's visibility continues to grow among contemporary poets, surely a sign of his larger influence. We also held members' readings featuring Lili Bitá, Edwin Cranston, Tim Hunt, and more.

There is much more to encourage those who wish to see Jeffers's work make its way in the world. In Boulder, Ben Makino gave a wonderful presentation, with singers, of excerpts from the late composer Benjamin Lees's setting of *Medea*. I hope that someday we can support Ben in mounting a full production of that extraordinary chamber opera. The last several years have seen this journal, *Jeffers Studies*, go from strength to strength under the capable leadership of George Hart. What Bob Brophy founded as a slender newsletter so many years ago has now become one of the preeminent juried periodicals on any American poet. The first volume of *The Collected Letters*, edited by Jim Karman, came out from Stanford last year, and the second has just been released. As I wrote in my review of Volume One in *The Sewanee Review*, Karman's project may well be the most significant archival work currently going on in American literature, and Stanford has done an excellent job of producing it. With Tim Hunt's *Collected Poetry* it will be the standard work for generations. Other major books about Jeffers by our members are in press or nearing completion. And all of this comes at a time when the RJA is growing and is in excellent financial health.

The RJA is only a small, human enterprise, yet it does good work and it has been an honor to lead it over the last three years. Jeffers repeatedly said that he wanted his poetry to be as timeless as possible, to address and appeal to eternity—yet that is what seems to make it always appear to be that much more timely, unlike so much that is flashy or stylish and is therefore but a passing fancy, whether in his time or in ours. Jeffers's tragic consciousness, his skepticism about human affairs coupled with great love of humanity, his profoundly original conception of the natural world, and his raw ability to tell a good story, to describe a rock, and to fashion words into graceful art are endlessly inspiring, refreshing, and instructive. Academics tend to think that they create taste, but of course it is the broader group of readers who do so, especially those readers who

are themselves also strong writers, and Jeffers's appeal to both of these groups means that his reputation is only likely to grow, no matter that many professors remain blind to his strengths.

Let's give the last word to Jeffers:

Natural Music

The old voice of the ocean, the bird-chatter of little rivers,
 (Winter has given them gold for silver
 To stain their water and bladed green for brown to line their banks)
 From different throats intone one language.
 So I believe if we were strong enough to listen without
 Divisions of desire and terror
 To the storm of the sick nations, the rage of the hunger-smitten cities,
 Those voices also would be found
 Clean as a child's; or like some girl's breathing who dances alone
 By the ocean-shore, dreaming of lovers. (*CP* 1: 6)

The poem at first appears to be simply a meditation on a beautiful natural scene, but even its title suggests something far more complex. Jeffers's music is not merely the human-made variety, but akin to the natural order itself, a reinvention of the music of the spheres. The beauty of the river is not an isolated phenomenon, but gains meaning through an extended, conditional simile in which we are encouraged to find the strength to reformulate our entire understanding of human life. Aware of our failures to hear the greater natural music of which humanity is but a part, Jeffers nonetheless suggests its possibility, opening the door to a sublime world in which even "the storm of the sick nations" might somehow be reconciled with the breath of a dancing girl on a beach who dreams of lovers. The poem is thus also an *ars poetica*, for Jeffers's vision of such unity is a manifestation of "voices." It is a monism, a vision of "one language," worthy of Milton. In our "divisions of desire and terror" we can simultaneously see their truth, yet dream of love and of peace.

RJA is thriving. I hope each of you will continue to be involved and to help the organization grow and remain vital and vibrant, as such organizations must do in order to fulfill their missions. I look forward to seeing all of you at our next conference.

SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

J. BRADFORD CAMPBELL

“EX OCCIDENTE FRUX”

JEFFERS, THOREAU, AND THE
STRANGE FRUIT OF THE WEST

Scholars of the American nineteenth century have traditionally organized their understanding of the era in terms of the great questions that preoccupied it. Debates over politics, ethics, and genetics—the Woman Question, the Slavery Question, the Evolution Question—dominated private and public discourse, serving as pillars of American conversation and consternation. But alongside these, and articulated at times with a commensurate sense of urgency and national consequence, was the question of the great national poet. Where was he (for it was always a “he”)? From where would he come? What would he be and do? Indeed, when not arguing about the merits of women’s suffrage, the possibilities of abolition, or the heresies of a certain English naturalist, America seemed concerned with nothing so much as imagining and conjuring its poets to come. Emerson, for one, called for a “man without impediment” (225) who would “revive and lead in a new age” (327), while Whitman sought to bring forth a modern, “native,” “continental” bard (“Poets to Come”), one “altogether our own, without a trace or taste of Europe’s soil” who would “justify” and, no doubt, do justice to the then-tenuously united States (“Democratic Vistas”). Only Thoreau, however, looked explicitly to the west for his model of poetic leadership and national salvation, envisioning and demanding an American “occidental” who would not simply bring light, but bear fruit. “Ex Oriente LUX,” he declared, but “Ex Occidente FRUX” (160): from the east, light, but from the west, fruit. Thoreau imagined a poet emerging from the western wilderness who would “impress the winds and streams into his service” (157) and speak a language “true and fresh and natural” (167). Certainly, this poet would possess a singular ability to give “expression to Nature” (167), but he would come not merely to sing the land, but also to “reform” it (165).

In broad form, I wish to propose here that Robinson Jeffers is the very poet Thoreau summons, though the fruit he ultimately bears would have no doubt impressed Thoreau as strange indeed. Of course, it may seem equally strange to suggest so substantial a connection between Jeffers and Thoreau, for conventional critical wisdom points toward the unlikelihood of any such thing. To be sure, scholars have no trouble accepting the idea that Jeffers's poetry finds a firm foundation in the American Renaissance. As Albert Gelpi has observed, "Jeffers' roots were in the nineteenth century" (*A Coherent Splendor* 437), and Gelpi, along with many others,¹ has performed important work tracing the manifold connections between Jeffers and the twin "titans of American Romanticism"—Emerson and Whitman ("Enskymment" 6). There is, however, a remarkable paucity of scholarship that pays similar attention to the nature of Jeffers's relationship with Thoreau, an absence which is at least initially understandable if we recall that Jeffers, in an oft-cited letter to Frederic Ives Carpenter, confessed to "never having read" any of Thoreau's work (*CL* 2: 269). Alan Brasher, whose essay on Jeffers and Thoreau is a welcome anomaly, nevertheless concludes that the letter "eliminates the possibility of an argument for direct influence" (152), and scholars seem generally to have followed this lead, taking the letter as a cue to dwell on other possibilities.²

While I am ultimately not interested here in establishing an argument for direct influence, I do think we have good reason to more thoroughly reconsider the supposed limits of Jeffers and Thoreau's relationship and the contours of their artistic exchange.³ After all, while Jeffers may very well have never read Thoreau, Thoreau seems to have anticipated Jeffers with uncanny prescience, and nowhere is this more apparent than in his essay "Walking" (1862). Though *Walden* is, of course, Thoreau's most popular work, we might say that "Walking" is his most "western," and certainly the one in which he most clearly and comprehensively conveys his vision of the great American poet. The essay has achieved something of a higher profile in recent decades for its declaration—adopted by conservationists, preservationists, and environmentalists—that "in Wildness is the preservation of the World" (162). But that quote out of context is, like the title of Thoreau's essay itself, a bit misleading. Because Thoreau's essay isn't really just about walking, and that quote isn't really just about wildness. They are both, in fact, about the west. That quote in full form actually reads: "The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the World" (162). Wildness, in short, is a synonym for the west, and so, using the simple principle of substitution which Thoreau himself allows, what we also hear him saying here is that "In the West is the preservation

of the World." The west, in short, is the great national—and the great *global*—hope. It will be the site of redemption for an East overrun by its cities;⁴ the locus of salvation for an America overburdened by its own nascent modernity.⁵ The west and only the west, Thoreau was certain, would provide the space, the "freedom," the "beauty," and indeed the veritable "soil" that would produce not just the great American poet, but a genuine "Reformer," emerging from the western wilds singing news of what's to come (165). This is the cornerstone of Thoreau's poetic call, one which conjures out of the then-nebulous west a bard who

could impress the winds and streams into his service, to speak for him; who nailed words to their primitive senses, as farmers drive down stakes in the spring, which the frost has heaved; who derived his words as often as he used them—transplanted them to his page with earth adhering to their roots; whose words were so true and fresh and natural that they would appear to expand like the buds at the approach of spring, though they lay half smothered between two musty leaves in a library—aye, to bloom and bear fruit there, after their kind, annually, for the faithful reader, in sympathy with surrounding Nature. (167)

This may not sound like anyone Thoreau knew—as he goes on to say, nowhere in the history of English-language literature could he find a poet who truly embodied this spirit of the west—but it is remarkably evocative of someone that we do.

It seems to me, then, that we need neither look for nor demand from Jeffers any authorial affirmation of Thoreau's influence. We may very well take Jeffers at his word when he says he never read a stitch of Thoreau's work, but we make a terrible mistake if we then accept this as cause or occasion to overlook the possibilities of significant commerce between these writers. For to do so—to privilege the confession of authorial intention (or the lack thereof) over the substance of the texts—would be to miss an important dimension of the interplay between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transcendentalism and modernism, and the poetics of the American east and west. By examining Jeffers's poetry as a response to Thoreau's "western" call, I suggest we find in it a consummation of Thoreau's own inhumanistic gestures and an elaboration of Thoreau's latent interest in life-after-America. In poems like "November Surf" and "Shine, Perishing Republic," Jeffers outlines a national eschatology which, while it affirms Thoreau's faith in the west as the site of national redemption, insists that such redemption is predicated upon an apocalyptic cleansing, emblemized by the irresistible advance of a tidal wave rolling out of the Pacific and toward the east, carrying with it the promise of violent renewal for both the nation and its city-centered, eastward-tilting aesthetics.

I think we see something like Jeffers's acceptance of a western poetic vocation as early as *Flagons and Apples* (1912), a volume often imagined to be little more than an abecedarian warm-up for the more mature verse of *Tamar* and the poetry beyond. William Everson, for example, politely dismissed these early lyrics as "immature" and observed that other readers had gone so far as to suggest they do a disservice to the poet's later reputation (vii). More recently, in his brilliantly edited collection of Jeffers's letters, James Karman assessed *Flagons* as a "self-indulgent trifle" (CL 1: 17)—a sentiment which is in fact not too far out of step with Jeffers's own appraisal of his early work. Writing in his foreword to 1938's *Selected Poetry*, Jeffers confessed, "In making the selection it was easy to eliminate the poems published in 1912 [*Flagons and Apples*] and 1916 [*Californians*], which were only preparatory exercises, to say the best for them" (CP 4: 390). Jeffers's exclusion of the poems notwithstanding, his characterization of them as merely "preparatory" is telling, for it speaks not only to his modesty, but also to his sense that they are part of—or at least a prelude to—a broader, uninterrupted poetic project. They may very well be examples of precocious juvenilia, but if we imagine them as *only* that—if we edit them out of our critical discourse as Jeffers eliminated them from *Selected Poetry*—then I think we jeopardize a more thorough appreciation of Jeffers's poetic evolution. For these poems are not, after all, merely exercises, but important inaugural gestures which record Jeffers's earliest articulations of a western poetic identity and his provisional acceptance of Thoreau's commission.

In his earliest volumes of poetry, we find Jeffers already expressing the "yearning" of which Thoreau spoke (167), anxious to affirm the west as his poetic seat and to commence his western work. In "Lamp of the West," for example, he imagines being "rooted like a broad oak on a Santa Lucian slope" and dreams of finding permanent "rest / In redwood shade . . . or on the last beach of the west" (CP 4: 229). In "Ode on Human Destinies," he reiterates that "Here in the beautiful peninsula / Most gladly would I rest," promising that if given such space and enough time, he "shall not fail to speak / In full . . . / News of danger and of hope" (CP 4: 207–08).

Nowhere, however, is Jeffers's early sense of geographical identity and poetic purpose more salient than in the remarkable "Epilogue" that serves as the capstone to *Flagons and Apples*. In it, Jeffers identifies himself as one who lives not just in the west, but "west of the west," and he goes on to say that the "westward sea" and the "warm west wind" are the forces which "wrought [his] rhyme" (CP 4: 51). Here, it seems, is a poet for Thoreau: an emphatically western bard who, from the start, has not simply "impressed the winds" into his service, but let the winds

impress him. Like an Aeolian harp, the poet is intimately in touch with the currents of Nature, figured here as both a feature of his poetry and a veritable collaborator in it—the source of the very stuff from which it is made: "the sea, and the sun, and the summer air" (CP 4: 51). As Thoreau said of the west, so, too, does Jeffers aver that this is a land "pregnant of dreams," and he is the bard who will give them poetic expression.

There is a striking seamlessness between *Flagon's* "Epilogue" and the "Invocation" that stands at the opening of his next volume of poetry, *Californians*. Picking up where he left off, Jeffers renews his commitment to the west, figured here more specifically as an "evening star deep in the deep west burning" (CP 4: 72). The poem is written in a very competent terza rima which sees Jeffers channeling the Shelley of "Ode to the West Wind," crafting a paean to an explicitly western star that burns with a new light.⁶ The syntax of that opening line requires a double take, the curious phrase "deep in the deep" jumping out as an odd but meaningful construction, one which reinforces the star's embeddedness in its particular geography: it is not just in the west, but deep in the deep west—at its center, its core, its very heart.⁷ Stealing the thunder from that great city on a hill in the East, Jeffers draws our attention to the star of the west as the natural beacon of both poetic and national destiny. It is variously figured in the poem as the "Lamp of the west" and a "guiding light," and it is above all superior to its lesser "sisters . . . out of the east." Jeffers, understanding himself as the "latest" in a long line of westward-reaching Americans, invokes the star and the west it represents as his muse. He writes,

Now I, the latest, in this solitude
Invoke thee from the verge extreme, and shoal
Of sand that ends the west. (CP 4: 73)

With an enthusiasm reminiscent of Thoreau's in "Walking," Jeffers ponders what further wonders await: "Where wilt thou lead us now?" he asks. Might there even be something "farther west"? A "west beyond west"? This poem illuminates for us a Jeffers who, still standing near the dawn of his poetic career, is open to whatever guidance the west will provide and is looking forward to where it will lead him—and the nation.

That the west might be a literally redemptive space of the sort that Thoreau imagined is a possibility Jeffers explicitly represents in his poem "Stephen Brown." Of course, the poem puts us at one degree of remove, offering us not the poet-speaker's words, but those of a character, a humble woodsman from the San Bernardino mountains who explains in the ottavia rima often reserved for poetic heroes:

I was consumptive, I came west, you'd say,
 With death holding my hand. So dry and lean,
 If I'd gone barefoot I'd have blown away.
 They gave me six months' life, but not another day.

 I'd always loved the mountains; I came here,
 [And] soon, instead of dying, I lived again. (CP 4: 76)

In Stephen Brown, we find an emblem for what happens when a sick easterner meets the vital west: illness abates, health is restored, life thrives again.⁸ But this poem also forecasts what Jeffers sees as the price required for a western cure, for as Stephen explains, the "hill" which he occupies "is far removed / From the sweet looks and kindly help of men" (CP 4: 76). These lines present a version of humanity which initially seems uncharacteristic of Jeffers: men are "sweet" and "kind." But this is coupled with the suggestion that the sort of vitality Stephen now embodies depends upon the removal of one's self from society; the renunciation of man, even when he is at his best. The west, as Thoreau hoped, may be redemptive, but there are strings attached.

A poem like "A Westward Beach" sees Jeffers contemplating more seriously just what kind of strings must ultimately be affixed. Though he continues to share Thoreau's faith in the west, his faith in humankind is wavering. We listen as the speaker asks, "Can man wash off humanity / And wed the unmarriageable sea?" (CP 4: 187)—a question that seems to betray Jeffers's own temptation to give up and turn his back on man. But in an extraordinary gesture which brings the nineteenth century very close—which sees Jeffers channeling the likes of Emerson and Whitman at their most exhortatory—he reaches out in the form of a desperate plea to his fellow humans to accept the gifts of mother earth:

O men, my brothers! Even you
 She would accept, unfetter.
 Look up into the free and blue:
 Have you no dreams of better
 And purer lives than those you lead
 About the market-place, and feed
 With endless labors endless greed?

You are strangers to the earth and sky,
 And all their wonders flung you
 Like pence to beggars: you, not I,
 Are exiles: from among you
 I am gone home: but follow me,

And we might live as brotherly
As the brown hills and the blue sea. (CP 4: 188-89)

In these lines, Jeffers still holds on—we sense perhaps for the last time—to a Thoreauvian optimism, a faith in the west as both the facilitator of and site for a new American fraternity.⁹ "Come west!" he urges his brothers (and presumably his sisters), as he works to shift the national center from right to left and turn the logic of east-coast exceptionalism on its head. Home is now where the *west* is. *You* are the exiles, he says, and I have gone home—home to the west, indeed.

Like Thoreau before him, Jeffers theorizes the west as the new national center toward which all things tend,¹⁰ an idea which he elaborates significantly in "Still the Mind Smiles." Here, Jeffers proposes the west as the new "norm." In the original untitled manuscript of this poem, the speaker explains that, "In order to value the world / One must know the normal" (CP 5: 528), and for Jeffers, the normal is embodied by the "unchanged / Lives of [mountain] herdsman" and western landscapes "Where men are few" (CP 2: 310). As he explains in the final line of the poem, in these spaces, one can hear the "sonorous / Antistrophe of desolation" sweetly overpowering the strident, "strophe multitude." The contrast here between "desolation" and the "multitude" certainly gestures toward the contest between west and east ("desolation" here imagined not as tragic solitude, but as a welcome western antidote to the fits and fevers of a multitudinous east). But this line, with its curious employment of "strophe" and "antistrophe," implies no simple, static dichotomy. It goes further to suggest a veritable movement; more specifically, the "turning back" from west to east literally denoted by "antistrophe" (a rather esoteric word which describes the part of a Greek ode sung by the chorus as it returns from west to east—the strophe, of course, being the part of the ode they sing on their way out). Here, that west-east movement is described rather benignly, as "sonorous"; elsewhere, that movement will be rendered in veritably apocalyptic terms.

"Shine, Perishing Republic" is one of the most compelling testaments to what we might call Jeffers's apocalyptic turn.¹¹ In it, we have, at last, run out of time; the possibility of a salvific brotherhood is no longer on the table. America, self-satisfied and "settled," has "hastened" unto itself an inexorable decay (CP 1: 15). The speaker's desperate pleas in "A Westward Beach" have been replaced by the "sad smile" of one who feels bad, but knows better; one who can now offer us only the impotent sympathy of he who told us so. Like other American writers of apocalypse, Jeffers refuses us too many details of the end-times: his reference to "meteors" in line 6 notwithstanding, we know only that we are rotting, that we lie at the feet of a "monster" who will show no mercy. And yet

all is not lost. As the second stanza reminds us, “The flower fades to make fruit”—but that fruit will taste like nothing Thoreau ever imagined. As Jeffers envisions it in this poem, the apocalypse will occur in the cities and salvation will be gained in the mountains.¹² He writes:

But for my children, I would have them keep their distance from the thickening
center; corruption
Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the monster’s feet there are
left the mountains. (*CP* 1: 15)

Admittedly, there is not a single reference to east or west in this poem and there would seem to be no reason to believe that the mountains of the east—however less magisterial—won’t provide as formidable a redoubt as the mountains of the west. But if we recall Thoreau’s formula, the “city” was always a byword for the east, as “mountains” was always a byword for the west. If we allow ourselves to map this onto Jeffers’s poem—and I think there are good reasons to do so—the implications are telling: the west once again becomes the geographical locus of national redemption, a place where the chosen will go not to create another city on a hill, but a diaspora in the mountains.

My allusion to Winthrop here isn’t entirely casual, for I do think we see a qualified Calvinism operating in the poem that complicates Thoreau’s optimistic vision of a redemptive west.¹³ Jeffers still allows for the possibility of a sort of salvation, but it seems it will be available only to a precious few who, it would appear, are not the products of divine election, but informed self-selection. This disconnected band of refugees will, like the Puritans who preceded them, retreat west to wait out an apocalyptic cleansing, but they will observe no Winthropian mandate to shine like a city on a hill.¹⁴ For what was once imagined as the site to which Americans might climb and show forth the nation’s glory is here refigured as a solitary stronghold; the hill is the place where what’s left of humanity will go not to shine together, but to lay low alone and plot what Jeffers elsewhere called the “agony of resurrection” (*CP* 4: 405).

This vision of apocalypse and limited redemption is most fully realized and elaborated in the final text I wish to consider—“November Surf”—a poem which I think offers the most radical riff on Thoreau’s original vision of the west. As he so often does, Jeffers begins this poem by turning seaward to observe the Pacific’s magnificent winter waves—here figured explicitly as a western force—pounding the edge of the continent. He writes:

Some lucky day each November great waves awake and are drawn
Like smoking mountains bright from the west (*CP* 2: 159)

Here, if only via simile, the mountains—those quintessential monuments of the west—and the waves are one. They roll in from the Pacific and perform the "washing off" of humanity that Jeffers pondered in "A Westward Beach" and elsewhere. The waves

. . . cover the cliff with white violent cleanness: then suddenly
The old granite forgets half a year's filth:
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: all the droppings of the
summer
Idlers washed off in a winter ecstasy: (CP 2: 159)

The ocean's dance with the dirty cliff here is couched in terms which suggest an almost erotic exchange: the references to the prophylactics for "light love" prepare us to understand the "winter ecstasy" as a sort of climax which leaves the remainder of the explicitly feminized continent wishing it, too, could participate. Jeffers writes, "I think this cumbered continent envies its cliff then," and he goes on to imagine it

. . . 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,
The rivers mouth to source pure; when the two-footed
Mammal, being someways one of the nobler animals, regains
The dignity of room, the value of rareness. (CP 2: 159)

These are gorgeous and terrifying lines, imagining as they do an apocalyptic cleansing of the continent that destroys cities and decimates populations. It is, I would suggest, a fantasy of western vitality, one that imagines a now inexorable, antistrophic movement that will not simply restore, but restart America. This is the west as ultimate apocalyptic redeemer; this is the service it is destined to perform, the fruit which it is bound to bear. And so it seems that Jeffers—in his own unpredictable and circuitous way—proves Thoreau right after all: in the west is the preservation of the world.¹⁵

Though Jeffers's vision of redemption may be considerably less expansive than Thoreau's, it is imperative to note here that this poem does not presage the extinction of humanity.¹⁶ It emphatically allows that humanity will thrive, albeit on a smaller scale. It prophesies not annihilation but proportion: not no man at all, but man as part rather than whole, newly "dignified" and appreciative of his own "value" (CP 2: 159). To be sure, poems like "Shine, Perishing Republic" and "November Surf" feature words of "ill-omen," but as Jeffers once

explained to an audience at the Library of Congress, words of ill-omen are not the same thing as “words of despair” (CP 4: 406).¹⁷ On the contrary, as he went on to say, “If we conjecture the decline and fall of this civilization, it is because we hope for a better one” (CP 4: 406). This, I would suggest, is precisely what Jeffers offers at the end of “November Surf”: the vision of a better civilization, redeemed through the natural and necessary violence of a vital west. Of course, salvation always requires a sacrifice, and this one demands a national reorientation, from crowded cities to open space, from communal living to solitude, from humanism to inhumanism—indeed, from east to west. The price to be paid is this paradigm shift; the gift is a redeemed “dignity” and the old forgotten pleasures of “rareness” (CP 2: 159).

CODA

Some time ago, Edmund Wilson, in an effort to explain why the west and, particularly, California had never produced a great writer, claimed that California suffers from a “remoteness from the East and the farther remoteness from Europe” while looking “out upon a wider ocean toward an Orient with which as yet any cultural communication is difficult” (513). For Wilson, the ocean of the west is a blank space, a mute nothingness remarkable only for an extraordinary vastness rather than any peculiar force. How ironic, then, that it is this very same ocean which Jeffers imagines rising up and sweeping over the continent. It makes me wonder if we might not be able to read this, after all, as a kind of allegory for the struggle between the aesthetics of the American east and west in the early twentieth century.

This, we know, was a contest in which Jeffers was deeply invested, and his reputation continues to be entwined with readers’ perceptions of his place in it. While he often had to be coaxed to provide formal declarations of his poetic stance, the ones he does offer suggest that he objected to many of the fashionable modernisms being cultivated in the American east and Europe. In “Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years,” he counseled younger poets to go in fear of poetry overly attentive to the “neon lights and tooth-paste advertising of this urban civilization” (CP 4: 423), while in his foreword to 1938’s *Selected Poetry*, he characterized much modern verse as “slight,” “abstract,” and “unreal” (CP 4: 391). He proposed and, as we have seen, proffered instead a kind of poetry that privileged “beauty” (CP 3: 369) and valued “physical reality” (CP 4: 391). With an echo of Thoreau, he insisted that great poetry should be a “work of nature” (CP 4: 425).

What a work of nature we find, then, in something like “November Surf.” To the “abstractions” of eastern verse, Jeffers counterposes the

"physical reality" of western waves which we might well imagine to be apt emblems of his poetry itself. Indeed, in more ways than one, Jeffers's poetry is like the ocean it so often represents, its cadences richly evocative of the steady, desultory wash of the tides,¹⁸ and its meaning elusive for inveterate easterners who, like Wilson (a literary critic, no less!), hardly suspect its latent power. If we do follow through on an allegorical reading of "November Surf," then the implication of it all would seem to be this: Jeffers and his poetry are the tidal wave, and America the poetic landscape, thinned of its "city"-based, self-styled leaders, and ripe for a new western poetic order. This, of course, supposes a more mischievous Jeffers than we are used to. But I like it. It offers us a poet who, far from content to mumble in the corner with Cassandra (CP 3: 121), roars with pelagic power. I wonder if Thoreau, even in his wildest western dreams, could have imagined the poet he ultimately conjured.

ENDNOTES

1. See, for example, Mackin, Everson, and Karman.
2. Loren Eiseley is another significant exception here. In his foreword to *Not Man Apart*, he, too, observes a significant affinity between Jeffers and Thoreau.
3. Though I hesitate to suggest that we simply disbelieve Jeffers's claims about Thoreau, there is at least some precedent for imagining that he may protest too much, for elsewhere he displays considerable anxiety over his debts to literary ancestors. In a letter addressing his literary influences, for example, Una Jeffers conveys in underscored prose her husband's insistence that "*he owes less to W[alt] W[hitman] than to most other poets of his era and sees no reason to link W.W. and R.J.*" (qtd. in Gelpi *Coherent* 436). As Gelpi pithily puts it, "such denials convinced no one" (436), and this should perhaps at least give us pause before dismissing outright the possibility of significant commerce between Jeffers and Thoreau.
4. Indeed, Thoreau shares with Jeffers a marked aversion to cities, which he always associates with the East. For Thoreau, the city (or town or village) is the antithesis of freedom and the cradle of "degeneracy" (154). For Jeffers, cities are simply and profoundly "odious" (CL 1: 342), and they operate in his life as personal and poetic kryptonite. A single trip to San Francisco in 1929, for example, "reduced Robin to utter misery" (CL 1: 806) and induced "nightmare[s]" and "gnash[ing]" of teeth (CL 1: 817). As Una suggests in a letter to Horace Liveright, Jeffers was only capable of artistic production "as long as I kept us away from cities and near . . . beautiful scenery" (CL 1: 913).
5. The emphasis on "redemption" and "salvation" in this essay may strike some readers of Thoreau as surprising. As Robert D. Richardson has averred, "Thoreau explicitly rejects the language of redemption" in his work, and even went so far in a letter to state simply, "we do not want redeemers" (289-90). Indeed, Thoreau is consistently careful in his work to avoid explicitly employing such language, but "Walking" sees him a bit more unguarded, clearly calling for a "Reformer" to "re-

fresh" the nation. His language is hardly messianic (though he gets close when, at one point, he figures the "Reformer" as a sort of John the Baptist [165]), but it does articulate a desire for a specifically vatic poet who will revitalize the nation.

6. Karman makes a very interesting observation in his introduction to the *Collected Letters*, noting that Jeffers had a "lifelong interest in the stars" which "may have been stimulated by the attention given astronomy in his hometown" (and, we might add, by having an astronomer for a brother) (*CL* 1: 4).

7. The phrase also curiously echoes the construction of "west of the west" in the previous poem, reinforcing the aforementioned seamlessness between the two volumes of poetry.

8. Thoreau also observed the palliative effects of the west in "Walking." Citing the words of the adventurer Sir Richard Francis Burton, he notes that in the wilderness, "Your *morale* improves" and life becomes a matter of "keen enjoyment" (165).

9. Certainly, the spirits of Emerson and Whitman are alive in these lines, but so, too, do we hear the echo of one of Jeffers's acknowledged poetic heroes, W. B. Yeats. The lines have in them something reminiscent of "September 1913"—written at about the same time as "A Westward Beach"—where Yeats laments, like Jeffers, the limited horizons of his countrymen's "market-place" mentality.

10. Thoreau prophesied something like this in "Walking," where he observed that westward is the "way the nation is moving" (158).

11. It's worth noting that this poem also marks the turn in this essay from Jeffers's early work to that of his more "mature" phase.

12. That Jeffers would look to the mountains, in particular, for an escape should not be surprising, for they are figured repeatedly in his poetry as a site of personal refuge and artistic inspiration. In a letter addressing his influences, Jeffers cited having "mountains to ramble over" in his youth and "many solitary trips into Southern California mountains" as some of the most important enabling conditions of his poetry (*CL* 1: 768, 769). More pointedly, in "He Has Fallen in Love with the Mountains," Jeffers insists that mountains offer the only sure repository for our faith, writing, "Put faith in friend or lover, / And hear the high Fates laugh," for it is only the "mountains [that] move not, fail not" (4: 65). It's worth noting that Thoreau, too, believed in the power of the mountains and considered them an especially fitting emblem of the west. In "Walking," he suggests that when we dream of the west, we think particularly of "mountain-ridges" (159), no doubt imagining the "mountain air that feeds the spirit and inspires" (161).

13. James Karman neatly summarizes Jeffers's Calvinist heritage in his introduction to the *Collected Letters*, and others have observed a Calvinist spirit elsewhere in his poetry (see, for example, Gelpi, *Coherent* 436).

14. Jeffers was no doubt aware of Winthrop's commission to the Puritans, and elsewhere it figures much more explicitly in his poetry. In "The Beginning of Decadence," for example, he writes, "We were chosen the world's lamp and set on the world's hill for a sign" (4: 367). But here, as in "Shine, Perishing Republic," he realizes that this "morning hope is hushed and the early miracle in decline," and here, too, the only remedy is in the mountains: "For myself I have the hills," he concludes.

15. Curiously, Thoreau briefly gestures toward the power of the Pacific in "Walking," where he imagines it as a new-world "Lethe" (158), capable of performing a kind of slate-cleaning similar to the one Jeffers envisions in "November Surf."

16. As ShaunAnne Tangney observes in her keen study of the apocalyptic in Jeffers's poetry, readers commonly misunderstand the meaning and possibilities of "apocalypse." As she explains, the word does not require or really even accommodate any idea of total extinction or irrevocable destruction. On the contrary, what is forgotten in many readings of "apocalypticism or Jeffers is the promise of a new earthly paradise" (33).

17. Indeed, it seems that Jeffers labored throughout his life to address the public's misconception of his inhumanist poetics. In Jeffers's own time—and too often in ours as well—readers mistook Jeffers's counsels of moderation and proportion as a sign of an unvarnished misanthropy. In a 1926 letter to Hal Sanders White, Jeffers was forced to explain that "I'm very far from any scorn of humanity" (CL 1: 616), while in 1929, he clarified for Arthur Davison Ficke that "I don't think about women as Cawdor did, nor I don't hate people neither" (CL 1: 787). As Patty Limerick suggested in her keynote address to the 16th annual Robinson Jeffers Association conference (2010), to read unmitigated misanthropy in Jeffers's poetry is simply to miss the point.

18. The ocean's ebb and flow is palpable in "November Surf," which sees Jeffers consistently alternating lines of 15 to 18 syllables with those of 9 to 12. Karman, too, observes that Jeffers's lines consistently display a meter that is "unforced and natural, like the steady breaking of waves upon the shore," and he reminds us that Jeffers explicitly sought to create rhythms inspired by the "tidal environments of life" (CL 1: 32).

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Joseph Campbell, date unknown.

GERE DIZERECA, M.D.

“THE PHANTOM RULERS OF HUMANITY”

THE INFLUENCE OF ROBINSON JEFFERS’S
ROAN STALLION, TAMAR, AND OTHER POEMS
ON JOSEPH CAMPBELL’S
THE MASKS OF GOD: CREATIVE MYTHOLOGY

Although it is not uncommon for a poet to influence the intellectual development and direction of arts and letters, the extent to which Robinson Jeffers influenced both the direction of Joseph Campbell’s work as well as the formulation of Campbell’s personal myths is often underappreciated. Copious primary source material points to Jeffers’s thought as a mainstay in Campbell’s development and communications, including his notes, journals, and lectures held in the OPUS Archives and Research Center on the campuses of Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, California.¹ Examination of these sources supports the thesis that Jeffers provided a foundational perspective for Campbell, from as early as 1932, and, further, that throughout Campbell’s fifty-year career, he never left Jeffers. This paper will argue that a longitudinal study of Campbell’s work underscores Jeffers’s pervasive influence. As a result, consideration of Campbell’s contribution to contemporary American thought provides evidence of how timely, compelling, and relevant an examination of Jeffers is today.

Jeffers is the poet Campbell quotes most frequently in the seven sets of books he alone authored during his eighty-three years. In each of these works, a Jeffers poem from *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems* occurs, typically setting the book’s tone or summarizing at book’s end. Campbell began his initial and still most popular book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, with a quote from “Roan Stallion” (CP 1: 179–98) and closed his last book, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, written some thirty-five years later, with the entire recitation of “Natural Music” (CP 1: 6). The last lecture Campbell gave prior to his rapid demise from cancer also began with a quote from “Natural Music,” his favorite Jeffers poem, and it was the only time he was known to start a lecture with a poem; the last lines he wrote that were published in his lifetime were also from “Natural Music.” In particular, this paper will review the

influence of *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar*, and *Other Poems* on Campbell's seminal four-volume work *The Masks of God*. The work is, in concept, a recitation and expansion of the lectures he gave to many of the senior class who attended the then-experimental women's college, Sarah Lawrence, in Bronxville, New York, from 1934 to 1972.

CAMPBELL'S EARLY CAREER

On March 26, 1904, Joseph Campbell was born in White Plains, New York, where he grew up in an Irish-Catholic upper-middle-class family. His early fascination with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show generated an interest in Native American Indians which lead to his reading, by the age of ten, all of the books in the Westchester library on Native American culture. He graduated from Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut, in 1921 and enrolled in Dartmouth College. Disillusioned by what he perceived as a lack of academic rigor, he transferred to Columbia University, where he earned a B.A. in 1925 and an M.A. in 1927 for his work in Arthurian studies—it is of some interest that both John Steinbeck and Campbell had an enduring interest in the adventures of King Arthur and his Round Table from the beginning of their literary careers. Campbell earned fellowships to continue his studies at the University of Paris (1927–1928) and the University of Munich (1928–1929). Like Jeffers, he was fluent in both French and German. It was during this period that Campbell first read Joyce, Mann, Freud, and Jung, leading him to theorize that 1) all myths are the creative products of the human psyche, 2) artists are culture's mythmakers, and 3) mythologies are creative manifestations of human-kind's universal need to explain psychological, social, cosmological, and spiritual realities.

In lieu of taking a Ph.D., he returned to the states and traveled to the west coast. While in Los Angeles he decided that all of his excitement in Native American culture could be developed in a career teaching English literature. Campbell wrote in his journal, "I am convinced now that no field but that of English literature would permit me the almost unlimited roaming about from this to that . . . If I want to justify my existence, and continue to be obsessed with the notion that I've got to do something for humanity—well, teaching ought to quell that obsession" (*Pathways* 188). Campbell was considering settling in Carmel to write medieval stories as he drove up the Salinas valley to the Monterey Peninsula.

In February of 1932, Joseph Campbell moved into a cottage, the house next door to Ed Rickett's house on Fourth Street in Pacific Grove, which began a twenty-three-year-long relationship between the two

men that ended only with Rickett's untimely death (*Breaking Through* 15). Idell Henning, a young woman Campbell had met aboard ship in 1925, introduced him to her sister, Carol Steinbeck, and her husband, John. Campbell's broad interest in symbolism and naturalism was useful background for his discussion with Steinbeck of the manuscript the novelist was working on, eventually published as *To a God Unknown*. Steinbeck's receipt of a contract for his novel as well as for his next two novels, sight unseen, "pitches me into a great enthusiasm for the art of words," Campbell wrote (qtd. in Larsen and Larsen 169). Twenty years before Steinbeck wrote *Cannery Row*, "Campbell made plans to write his own account of Monterey in the Great Depression. He called it 'The Grampus Adventure,' based on the lives and doings of his friends entwined with mythological themes and symbols" (Larsen and Larsen 171). Although unpublished during his lifetime, "The Grampus Adventure" may find publication soon by the Joseph Campbell Foundation.

In a letter to Ed Ricketts twelve years later, Campbell said, "Monterey Peninsula is the Earthly Paradise. . . . I have still a deep nostalgia for those wonderful days, when everything that has happened since was taking shape. That was, for me at least, the moment of the great death-and-rebirth that Jung is always talking about" (qtd. in Larsen and Larsen 162). And, in an earlier letter to Ricketts, he referred to 1932 as "our year of crazy beginnings" (qtd. in Shillinglaw 114). Of that time, Susan Shillinglaw writes, "Those days included nights, when the group would gather at the lab; Ricketts wrestling with the notion of breaking through physical sensations to some greater truth; Steinbeck revising *To a God Unknown*, his pantheistic novel, and Campbell seeking a 'synthesis of Spengler and Jung. . . . Joyce's new work *Finnegans Wake* is the closest thing I have found to a complete resolution of the problem'" (Shillinglaw 114).²

During this time, Campbell came across *Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler's unusual review of history and culture from ancient to modern times, from Chinese and Indian civilization through the classical cultures and into the contemporary West, recently published in the United States in 1928. Campbell stated that "this book was thunder for me . . . I was tremendously impressed by it" (Larsen and Larsen 176). He would read the book seven times and draw major inspiration from it. Having integrated the world of prehistory in his Native American studies, Campbell was still trying to make sense of recorded history—which he called the "nightmare from which we are struggling to awaken" (Larsen and Larsen 177). Campbell credited Spengler's insightful historical mythologizing with introducing him to the inner logic of cultural patterns over time which provided him background for his appreciation of Robinson Jeffers.

The discovery of Robinson Jeffers brought clarity, and subsequently focus, to the thinking of the twenty-eight-year-old Campbell. Carol Steinbeck, at that time working for Ed Ricketts in his lab, introduced Jeffers to Campbell, Steinbeck, and Ricketts. As Campbell related in an interview some years later, "I remember Carol coming in Ed's lab one day and saying, 'Really, I've got the message of Roan Stallion'—and she recited a passage that began about two-thirds of the way along":

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.

Tragedy that breaks man's face and a white fire flies out
 of it; vision that fools him
 Out of his limits, desire that fools him out of his limits . . . (Shillinglaw 136;
 Larsen and Larsen 179; CP 1: 189)

As Campbell continued, "Desire that fools him out of his limits. . . . It was a wonderful passage, and it was Carol who came in with the interpretation of that. Then we spent the evening chatting about it . . . Those discussions stay with me as having been very important for my own understanding of the life of art . . . Jeffers made a big impression on me. He's one of the few poets that have ever really influenced my own thinking and style" (Larsen and Larsen 180). It was "Roan Stallion" (CP 1: 179–98) that crystallized Campbell's own vision of God in nature, and the way toward Him—by seeing through the tragic side of life. Campbell took something home that night from Carol's gift of Robinson Jeffers that was to form a key piece in his own developing life-affirmative philosophy: learning to say "yea" to life's bittersweet offerings, searching for the genuine gift of spiritual awareness in the depths of suffering (Larsen and Larsen 181).

I have not found any direct reference to Ricketts in Campbell's published writings, a fact that is of some interest since Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, published in 1949, was derived, in part, from conversations Campbell and Ricketts shared while sailing together on the *Grampus* during their three-month trip to Alaska. Some have speculated that Ricketts may have provided the foundation for Campbell's concept of the hero (Larsen and Larsen 171). I found no documentary evidence regarding Jeffers's view of Ricketts, Campbell, or Steinbeck. Although Bennett Cerf introduced Steinbeck to Jeffers many years later, it may be that Ricketts and Campbell never met Jeffers (*Breaking Through* 6). Ricketts made the journey from Monterey to visit

Jeffers at Tor House only to find him "not at home," as indicated by a sign Jeffers made which was hung on the Tor House front gate during this period to specifically discourage visitors. However, Toni Jackson, Rickett's common-law wife at the time, interviewed Jeffers and Una in their home. Her story of this visit accompanied by photos of the Jefferses in Tor House appeared in a local Monterey-Carmel newspaper *What's Doing* in April of 1947.

BREAKING THROUGH

Of the themes brought forward in "Roan Stallion," the concept of breaking through became integral to the intellectual development and writings of all three men. Development of this theme continued, particularly between Ricketts and Campbell, over the next fifteen years, as documented by nearly a dozen letters between them through 1939–1940. "Roan Stallion" and "The Purse-Seine" (CP 2: 517–18) were also considered in this context by James Kelley in his chapter entitled "John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts: Understanding Life in the Great Tide Pool." In the section entitled "Transcendent Understanding, 'Breaking Through,'" Kelley recites the lines from "Roan Stallion" quoted above, then goes on to say,

It should be clear . . . in this part of the poem, that Jeffers expects science itself to break through. In his 1938 poem, "The Purse-Seine," in a mode very much like Ricketts's own, Jeffers breaks through from the description of sardine fishing to see the sardines in a seine net as symbolic of humans pressed together in cities, dependent on one another and the artificial life support systems that keep them trapped in the urban environment. (31)

Although Jeffers did not originate the breaking through theme (Plato, Lao Tse, Blake, Jung, and Nietzsche, among many others, preceded him) nor was he the first American poet to render it in verse (for example, Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" from *Sea-Drift*), the clarity provided by "Roan Stallion" (CP 1: 189–90, 194–95) facilitated its subsequent development in the oeuvre of Steinbeck (novel, plays, movies), Campbell (mythology, movies, TV), and Ricketts (marine ecology). Campbell's journal entry of May 10, 1932, reads: "I have radically revised my attitude toward a great many matters. . . . I have found the 'Eternal Yea' . . . the 'other side of my soul' and I know the difference between Life and Truth" (Larsen and Larsen 179). Or as Ricketts wrote, "But in some of Jeffers's poems, the thing is stated clearly, with full conscious recognition, and with that exact economy of words which we associate with scientific statements: Humanity is the mold to

break away from" (*Breaking Through* 94). In a letter on breaking out to Rudolph Gilbert, dated November 1929, Jeffers says in his fourth point, "In a civilization like ours, metropolitanism intensified by machinery, human nature (which was developed under very different conditions) becomes an anachronism. We can't turn back . . . to develop a new sort of nature—will have to 'break out of humanity'—or suffer considerably—probably both" (CL 1: 883).

In June 1932, Campbell, Ricketts, Jack Calvin, and his wife Sasha traveled to Seattle, where they set out on Calvin's thirty-three-foot boat, the *Grampus*, to Sitka, Alaska, for three months of specimen collection off the coast of British Columbia and southwest Alaska. Sasha's sister, Xenia, who later became the wife of John Cage, joined the voyage in Alaska. In addition to collecting, the group discussed books, philosophy, science as a way of life, religion, men, women, people, marine biology, Carl Jung; and when they were not talking, they were reading (Tamm 180–89; Hedgepath 1:14–15; *Renaissance Man of Cannery Row* xxvii–xxix). Campbell reminisced that he read and re-read lines from *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* on his 1932 collecting trip with Ricketts. Although Campbell left that summer to begin teaching at the Canterbury School in New Milford, Connecticut, he and Ricketts formed a deep connection that they maintained through their letters. Ricketts's last known letter tells of his disappointments professionally, financially, and personally. It was written to Joseph Campbell April 26, 1948 (*Renaissance Man of Cannery Row* 271–73). Twelve days later Ed Ricketts was struck by a train, the Del Monte Express, as he drove across the tracks at Drake Avenue in Cannery Row, and he died on May 11, 1948.

After the *Grampus* docked in Seattle, Campbell returned to the east coast in response to his family's financial crisis during the depression. Campbell endured an unhappy year as a Canterbury housemaster and sold his first short story ("Strictly Platonic") to *Liberty Magazine*. Then, in 1933, he moved to a cottage without running water on Maverick Road in Woodstock, New York, where he spent a year reading and writing. As the fall leaves were replaced by the bleakness of the New England winter, Campbell found himself descending into depression. He recorded in his journal that Robinson Jeffers was "keeping him in shape" (Larsen and Larsen 216). Campbell wrote at this time, "Western man need not struggle to find himself—he will be unable to do otherwise; himself will be only too present. What man must strive for is to break past any limitation—to the myth itself" (Larsen and Larsen 226). Campbell said later, "When I was shaping my own life-views, there were a number of authors that meant a great deal to me; but I don't know if they are still in the wind. . . . Robinson Jeffers here on the West Coast

and Walt Whitman on Long Island—these are people who continually refresh me" (*An Open Life* 123). In March 1934, Campbell joined the literature department of the fledgling experimental college for women, Sarah Lawrence College, in Bronxville, New York, a post he would retain for thirty-eight years.

JEFFERS IN CAMPBELL

Campbell's first full-length solo authorial endeavor, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, brought him awards and honors, including the National Institute of Arts and Letters Award for Contributions to Creative Literature. Campbell finished the final manuscript of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* in June 1948. The purpose of the book was to "uncover some of the truths disguised for us under the figures of religion and mythology by bringing together a multitude of not-too-difficult examples and letting the ancient meaning become apparent of itself" (*Hero* vii). In this study, Campbell proposes the existence of a monomyth (a word he borrowed from *Finnegans Wake*), a universal pattern that is the essence of, and common to, heroic tales in every culture. Early in *The Hero* Campbell sets the tone of what is to come when he writes, "The meditating mind is united. . . . not with the body that is shown to die, but with the principle of continuous life that for a time inhabited it—, the substratum into which our selves dissolve," and then he quotes Jeffers for the first time in print: "the tragedy that breaks man's face has split, shattered and dissolved our mortal frame" (*Hero* 26). The very next passage introduces the themes he developed in his lectures to the senior classes at Sarah Lawrence, which form the basis of his monumental *The Masks of God*, published twenty-five years later. Campbell goes on in *The Hero* to support his case for the universality of life, then towards the end of the book again quotes Jeffers—this time from *Cawdor*:

. . . the archetype

Body of life a beaked carnivorous desire
Self-upheld on storm-broad wings: but the eyes
Were spouts of blood; the eyes were gashed out; dark blood
Ran from the ruinous eye-pits to the hook of the beak
And rained on the waste spaces of empty heaven.
Yet the great Life continued; yet the great Life
Was beautiful, and she drank her defeat, and devoured
Her famine for food. (qtd. in *The Hero* 235; CP 1: 512–13).

In 1956 Campbell was invited to speak at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Working without notes, he gave two full days of lectures. His talks were so well received he was invited back

annually for the next seventeen years. Much of Campbell's approach to *The Masks of God* was developed in the FSI seminars during the 1950s and 1960s. Campbell sought to open the academic content of his classroom to a more general audience. These presentations were the forerunners of his lecture series at Cooper Union and then later the popular PBS series with Bill Moyers.

Between 1958 and 1971, Campbell delivered twenty-five presentations to an increasingly diverse audience of New Yorkers in the Great Hall of the Cooper Union Forum. Appreciation of the influence of *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar and Other Poems* on the development of Campbell's thought is provided by review of these lectures, given from the same podium where Abraham Lincoln became a serious candidate for president. "And so now, in conclusion, let me conjure into the final focus the prospect of unfathomed wonder to . . . the way . . . great poetry and art introduce and unite us, by quoting the eloquent lines of a brief poem that deeply inspired me when I first read it some forty years ago, and which has steadied me in my thinking ever since. It is by the California poet Robinson Jeffers, sent to us from his watchtower on the Pacific shore, whence he watched for years the sublime flights of pelicans winging down the coastline, heard the wet, friendly barking of the seals and behind him the encroaching purr of increasingly numerous motors" (*Myths to Live By* 60). The name of the poem is "Natural Music" (CP 1: 6).

In a later lecture, Campbell referred to "Roan Stallion":

[man] can play. . . in his life any one of any number of hugely differing destinies; and what he chooses to incarnate in this way will be determined finally neither by reason or even by common sense, but by infusions of excitement: "visions that fool him out of his limits," as the poet Robinson Jeffers calls them. "Humanity," Jeffers declares, "is the mold to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, the atom to be split." And what fools us out of our limits in this are [again from "Roan Stallion"], "wild loves that leap over the walls of Nature, the wild fence-vaulter science, / Useless intelligence of far stars, dim knowledge, / Of the spinning demons that make an atom. (*Myths to Live By* 242)

And then finally in closing his Cooper Union lecture series, "The mythologies, religions, philosophies, and modes of thought that came into being six thousand years ago and out of which all monumental cultures . . . derived their truths and lives, are dissolving from around us, and we are left, each on his own to follow the star and spirit of his own life. And I can think of no more appropriate . . . text on which to close . . . than the following lines from Robinson Jeffers's "Roan Stallion":

The atom bounds-breaking,
Nucleus to sun, electrons to planets, with recognition
Not praying, self-equaling, the whole to the whole, the microcosm
Not entering nor accepting entrance, more equally, more utterly, more incredibly
conjugate
With the other extreme and greatness; passionately perceptive of identity. . . .
(qtd. in *Myths to Live By* 249; *CP* 1: 194).

Campbell's preliminary sketch of what would become his four-volume history of mythological forms, *The Masks of God*, was presented as a paper to an academic audience in 1957. This thirty-page paper concludes with "let me simply cite the brief poem 'Natural Music,' of the California poet Robinson Jeffers, where the whole sense of my argument will be found epitomized. . . . to a realization of that joy at the still point of this turning world that is the informing will of all things, Joy" (*The Mythic Dimension* 246).

The Masks of God was conceptualized by Pascal Covici at Viking Press, who was also Steinbeck's editor. Covici suggested Campbell turn his Sarah Lawrence lectures into something for the lay press. Covici provided Campbell a small stipend allowing him to reduce his faculty commitments to allow time for writing. On February 1, 1958, Campbell began in earnest the task of transforming his Sarah Lawrence lectures into *The Masks of God*. The principal synthesis was presented in the final volume *The Masks of God: Creative Mythology*, published by Viking in 1968. Campbell summarized this work as "confirmation of a thought I have long and faithfully entertained: of the unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but also in its spiritual history" ("On Completion," *Masks of God* n. pag.). The importance Covici's and Campbell's mutual give-and-take played in the life of each other during these six to seven years is exemplified by Covici's funeral in 1964; there were only three invited speakers, John Steinbeck, Arthur Miller, and Joseph Campbell (Larsen and Larsen 461).

The title, *The Masks of God*, may well have been inspired from the *Sea of Cortez*—a book co-authored by Steinbeck and Ricketts describing not only what they found, saw, and collected during a three-week expedition to the Sea of California in 1940, but also what they thought and discussed. Chapter 14, the so-called "Easter Morning Chapter," is Ricketts's thesis on non-teleological thinking. It incorporates Jeffers's lines from "Roan Stallion": "the point of departure, the 'crust to break through'" (Steinbeck and Ricketts 147). It is the only publication of a Ricketts metaphysical monograph in his lifetime (*Breaking Through* 119). Campbell was well aware of these monographs prior to the Cortez trip and had provided editing as well as extensive development through discussion during his journey with Ricketts on the *Grampas* four years

earlier, and later on through a series of letters (*Breaking Through* 26; *Renaissance Man of Cannery Row* 52). After the publication of *The Sea of Cortez* in 1941, Campbell wrote of his admiration for the book to Ricketts: “the marvelous form of living which we met during those weeks on deck [referring to the *Grampas*]. . . . These little intertidal societies and the great human societies are manifestations of common principles” (Larsen and Larsen 203). Toward the end of *The Sea of Cortez*, Steinbeck and Ricketts write,

And it is a strange thing that most of the feeling we call religious, most of the mystical outcrying which is one of the most prized and used and desired reactions of our species, is really the understanding and the attempt to say that man is related to the whole thing, related inextricably to all reality, known and unknowable. . . . It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again. (*Sea of Cortez* 216)

Then, as the narrative closes, “Why do we so dread to think of our species as a species? Can it be that we are afraid of what we may find? That human self-love would suffer too much and that the image of God might prove to be a mask?” (*Sea of Cortez* 264).

Building on the lines from “Roan Stallion” that he first heard four years earlier, “Desire that fools him [man] out of his limits” (CP 1: 189), Campbell uses *The Masks of God* to establish death and desire as prime creators of human experience: “Desire is the force that, throughout the world and through all time, has deluded the clearest eyes. . . . no blindness blinds as dangerously and frighteningly as desire and appetite” (*Masks* 250). And he also writes, “death itself, however it may come, being of the essence, part and parcel, of each man’s life, to which he must be reconciled if he is to penetrate beyond the monstrous show of things to what the poet Robinson Jeffers termed the ‘Tower Beyond Tragedy’” (*Masks* 219). Campbell goes on to introduce two aspects of art: 1) art is often a result of desire and 2) art can mitigate desire (*Masks* 351). This use of art to mitigate the desire-death dialectic prevalent in mythology is a principal thesis in *The Masks of God*. Campbell then quotes in its entirety “Natural Music” as the poetic example of proper art, where the subject, in Schopenhauer’s words, “is beheld and recognized as no longer that thing as commonly known, but the Idea, the timeless Form, an immediate, self-standing objectification of the will. . . . And by the same token, the person absorbed in this mode is no longer an individual—the individual has lost himself in the perception—but is a pure, will-less, painless, timeless, Subject of Apprehension” (qtd. in *Masks* 351–52). Campbell continues: “And there is, too, the poem ‘Natural Music’ of our own Californian poet Robinson Jeffers”:

The old voice of the ocean, the bird-chatter of little rivers,
 (Winter has given them gold for silver
 To stain their water and bladed green for brown to line their banks)
 From different throats intone one language.
 So I believe if we were strong enough to listen without
 Divisions of desire and terror
 To the storm of the sick nations, the rage of the hunger-smitten cities,
 Those voices also would be found
 Clean as a child's; or like some girl's breathing who dances alone
 By the ocean-shore, dreaming of lovers. (qtd. in *Masks* 352; CP 1: 6)

Campbell wrote that mythology renders a cosmology, an image of the universe. Campbell's treatment of this theme was to change over the years until his final publication, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, where he concluded that man is simply a part of all life, ending what was his last book published during his lifetime with Jeffers's "Natural Music." In the concluding volume of *The Masks of God*, "Creative Mythology," Campbell again quotes the following lines from "Roan Stallion":

The atom bounds-breaking,
 Nucleus to sun, electrons to planets, with recognition
 Not praying, self-equaling, the whole to the whole, the microcosm
 Not entering nor accepting entrance, more equally, more utterly, more incredibly
 conjugate
 With the other extreme and greatness; passionately perceptive of identity. . . .
 (*Masks* 613; CP 1: 194).

He then concludes *The Masks of God* with a final section entitled "The Earthly Paradise." The balance of desires manifested as myths is, in Campbell's view, tipped in favor of human love. Campbell quotes Thomas Mann using the thoughts of Hans Castrop in the snow scene from *The Magic Mountain*: "It is Man, Hans thought, *Homo Dei*, who is the lord of both life and death: he alone is noble, not they. More noble than life is the piety of his heart; more noble than death, the freedom of his thought. And love, not reason, is stronger than death" (*Masks* 645). However, it is through the lens of Jeffers, again from "Roan Stallion," that Campbell focuses his conclusions. After a four-volume, three-thousand page narrative, he writes,

Our pages, chapters, and volumes . . . have been devoted to a systematic survey of the changes throughout space and time of these protean, timeless "forms," which the poet Robinson Jeffers termed "the phantom rules [*sic*] of humanity / That without being are yet more real than what they are born of, and without shape, shape that which makes them:

The nerves and the flesh go by shadowlike, the limbs and the lives shadowlike, these shadows remain, these shadows
 To whom temples, to whom churches, to whom labors and wars, visions and dreams are dedicate['] (Masks 653).

Campbell writes later, "And if we are to match their [scientists'] courage, and thus participate joyfully in their world without meaning, we must allow our own spirits to become, like theirs, wild ganders, and fly in timeless, spaceless flight . . . not to any fixed heaven beyond the firmament (for there is no heaven out there), but to that seat of experience . . . where . . . the meaninglessness of the sense of existence and the meaninglessness of the meanings of the world . . . are one" (*Flight* 192). And, just before this statement, Campbell cites Jeffers: "As the Californian poet Robinson Jeffers has declared":

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. (qtd. in *Flight* 191; CP 1: 189)

CAMPBELL'S *POWER OF MYTH* AND JEFFERS'S TRANSCENDING RELEVANCE

In 1956, Jeffers prepared the following summation in *Themes in My Poetry*: "Another theme that has much engaged my verses is the [. . .] feeling . . . I will say the certainty . . . that the universe is one being, a single organism, one great life that includes all life and all things; and is so beautiful that it must be loved and revered; and in moments of mystical vision we identify ourselves with it" (CP 4: 411-12). He goes on to define beauty as "the shining forth—of truth" (CP 4: 413) and concludes:

It seems to me that *great poetry* gathers and expresses the whole of things, as prose *never can*. Prose can be very great, but the business of poetry is to contain a whole world at once, the physical and sensuous, the intellectual, the spiritual, the imaginative, all in one passionate solution. . . . Thus it becomes a means of discovery, as well as a means of expression.

Science usually takes things to pieces in order to discover them; it dissects and analyzes; poetry puts things together, producing equally valid discovery, and actual creation. Something new is found out, something that the author himself did not know before he wrote it; and something new is made. (CP 4: 416)

Brophy points out that "Each of these things whether it be science, wild loves, or tragedy, breaks down walls and makes participation in the

greater world possible. Such things pierce eye-holes in the blind mask men wear in life's ritual" (Brophy 89). And "[t]his is the thrust of all Jeffers' poetry—to aid in experiencing a beauty so absorbing that one becomes indifferent to the cost of suffering" (Brophy 106). Campbell said during an interview that took place one year before his death: "it's the work of poets and artists to know what the world-image of today is, and to render it as the old seers did theirs. The prophets rendered it as a manifestation of the transcendent principle. But the other function of the poet—that of opening the mystery dimension—has been, with few great exceptions, forgotten. I think that what we lack, really, isn't science but poetry that reveals what the heart is ready to recognize" (Campbell and Toms 102).

Joseph Campbell died in 1987 after a brief struggle with cancer. In 1988 the contribution of Jeffers to American thought was brought into the living rooms of millions by the broadcast on PBS of *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth with Bill Moyers*, six hours of an electrifying conversation that the two men had videotaped between August 1985 and March 1987 (Larsen and Larsen 551). *Newsweek* magazine noted that "Campbell has become one of the rarest of intellectuals in American life: a serious thinker who has been embraced by the popular culture" (*Pathways to Bliss* 191). The interviews were later published by Doubleday, at the insistence of senior editor Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. When asked to explain why this series remains, to this day, the most watched program of its type on PBS, Moyers said, "Joe Campbell helped me know what I knew. . . . To me, and to many people, the transformational moment of those interviews was when I said, 'Joe, you're talking about the meaning of faith.' 'No,' he said, 'I'm talking about the experience of being alive'" (Larsen and Larsen 551).

ENDNOTES

1. The OPUS Archives and Research Center on the campuses of Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara, California, contains many of the original office files of Joseph Campbell, including his handwritten notes used in preparation for his class presentations at Sarah Lawrence College as well as for background and reference material for his writing. Transcribed below are Joseph Campbell's notes on Jeffers which appear in a folder Campbell titled "Amer Lit 1925" and dated "to 1936-7" (OPUS Archives and Research Center, Box 128, Document Numbers 376-056 to 376-060). The notes are transcribed as Campbell wrote them. Capitalization and spacing as represented here are his. The list is formatted per Campbell's convention, i.e., by book title (publication year) and selected poem title (page numbers has been converted to the page numbers corresponding to *Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*).

Jeffers: Carmel, Nature, Aestheticism, Terror

Roan Stallion (1925)
 Divinely Superfluous Beauty (CP 1: 4)
 Natural Music (CP 1: 6)
 Point Joe (CP 1: 90)
 Night (CP 1: 114)
 Boats in a Fog (CP 1: 110)

Humanity is the start (CP 1: 189)
 Tower Beyond Tragedy (CP 1: 119)

Women at Point Sur (1927)
 Cawdor (1928)
 Dear Judas (1929)
 The Broken Balance III (CP 2: 373)
 Thurso's Landing (1932)
 The Place for No Story (CP 2: 157)

New Mexican Mountain (CP 2: 158)

Give Your Heart to the Hawks (1934)

Solstice 1935
 Sign-Post (CP 2: 418)
 Rock and Hawk (CP 2: 416)
 At the birth of an age gudrum-power vs love
 (race) (hord)
 (wotan) (Christ)
 All prometheus figure (CP 2: 472)

Art{Natural Music (CP 1: 6) Point Joe (CP 1: 90) Boats in a Fog (CP 1: 110)
 Tamar Science (CP 1: 113)

Humanity is the start (CP 1: 189)
 The atom bounds breaking (CP 1: 194)
 Tower beyond tragedy (CP 1: 119)

Women at Point Sur (1927)
 Prelude (CP 1: 240)
 [Apology (CP 1: 208)]

Jeffers/Eliot

Jeffers: Matter the ultimate reality. Annihilation not in the books (obstacle to

Nirvana). Its lower stages less painful, simpler, more enduring, more fundamental than its higher stages, consequently preferable. But the straining is even there. Prometheus Symbol. To endure the inevitable.

Peace beyond desire and loathing: Lazarus Symbol: Earthquake Symbol

Aestheticism: Discovery

Endure: Flame

Rebirth: Jeffers: Fire; Eliot: Water

Give Your Heart to the Hawks (1933)

Hawk [presumably CP 2: 311 as there is no page number in Campbell's notes]

Still the Mind Smiles (CP 2: 310)

Intellectuals (CP 2: 283)

Crumbs or the loaf (CP 2: 281)

Descent to the Dead

Inscription for a gravestone (CP 2: 125)

Resurrection {World War Earthquake

[At the fall of an age

The Myrmidons: (CP 2: 301)

Margrave: Thuro (CP 2: 160)

Roan Stallion

Humanity is the . . . atom to be split (CP 1: 189) [here all of the intervening lines of the poem Campbell has transcribed by hand]

The atom bound breaking, . . . to whom labors and wars, visions and dreams are dedicate (CP 1: 194) [here all of the intervening lines of the poem Campbell has transcribed by hand]

Point Pinos and Point Lobos

I have spoken on. . . whom you blame.

For the essence and the end* of his. . . it to the people.

{*the essence and the end, so far as they can be apprehended by man. The "actual" essence and end—if there is anything such!—are still question marks!!! (CP 1: 97–98)

2. Robert DeMott provides an informative review of these events, including his perspective on the influence of Jeffers on Campbell and Steinbeck, in his Intro-

duction to *To a God Unknown* (vii–xxxvii). Included in his essay is a reference to “Roan Stallion” (xxvii–xxxii) and Steinbeck’s statement to Lawrence Clark Powell that “Jeffers should be awarded the Nobel Prize—‘I don’t know any American who can compete with him for it’” (xxxi).

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DEBORAH FLEMING

SOLITARY HERO VERSUS SOCIAL MAN
IN JEFFERS'S *DEAR JUDAS*
AND YEATS'S *CALVARY*

In "Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years" Robinson Jeffers imagines a great poet whose work endures because it transcends the temporal and mundane, and if the poet were to write "a great poetic play he would probably never see it staged" (CP 4: 426). Yet if the play is "fierce enough" it may transcend layers of civilization and reach the primitive instincts and permanent values that Jeffers maintains are needful in great art (425–427). In the same essay Jeffers identifies W. B. Yeats as a great poet who "sought in the theater his liberation from mediocrity" and claims that although Yeats was not "a first-rate playwright . . . he had an insuperable will" (426) and transformed himself by returning to Ireland at the time it was becoming a nation. Yeats's play *Calvary* (1920), which was not staged in his lifetime, may have inspired or influenced Jeffers's *Dear Judas* (1928), since both treatments of the Easter story are concerned not only with betrayal and redemption, but also archetypes of betrayer and savior, solitary hero and communal man. As Yeats did, Jeffers examined the psychology of the participants in order to evoke the meaning of the events and their importance in western culture.

One style of drama which could examine these themes ritualistically was the Japanese *Noh*. In his introductory note to the play, Jeffers writes, "The Japanese *Noh* plays, in which the action is performed by ghosts revisiting the scenes of their passions, no doubt influenced my conception" (CP 5: 451). Robert Zaller writes that Jeffers sets *Dear Judas* in the "suspended time" of *Noh* drama so that the protagonists could enact passions in the form of ritual ("Spheral Eternity" 259). *Dear Judas*, he writes in *The Cliffs of Solitude*, is a verse drama in the strictest and most stylized of all conventions, the *Noh* theatre of Japan (131). Terence Diggory also discusses Yeats's influence on *Dear Judas* as a *Noh* play, going so far as to assert that Jeffers borrowed the form from Yeats (Yeats

and *American Poetry* 125). Jeffers wrote that the producer of his play had been attracted by “the fascination of what’s difficult,” thus quoting Yeats’s poem of that name (125). The allusion to the title of Yeats’s poem about the difficulty of theatre work, Diggory argues, indicates that *Dear Judas* was modeled on the Japanese *Noh*; Jeffers acknowledged in private correspondence that he particularly had in mind the *Noh* as interpreted by Yeats and Pound (SL 369). Diggory also suggests that the theme of consciousness after death may have come to Jeffers from Yeats’s 1919 play *The Dreaming of the Bones* (125) which, like *Calvary*, is concerned with places haunted by ghosts (and hence, haunted by history and memory) who return to re-enact their passions. Jeffers subtitles his play “The Dreaming Dead” and opens it with an unnamed speaker intoning that “three remnant images of three passions too violent to vanish / Still haunt the garden” (CP 2: 5). In *Calvary* the First Musician introduces the action with “Good Friday’s come, / The day whereon Christ dreams His passion through. / He climbs up hither but as a dreamer climbs” (*Collected Works* 2: 330, hereafter CW).

Yeats conceived of his play as an illustration of a basic distinction in his visionary psychology between objective men, who—however personally alone they may be—exist in relation to others, and subjective men, who exist for themselves “seeking always that which is unique or personal” (CW 2: 696). Diggory explains that for Jeffers, communal man, absorbed in humankind, was subjective, while solitary man, open to the natural world, could be objective (126). Yeats’s subjective man was thus Jeffers’s objective man. Diggory explains their contrasting conceptions of betrayer and savior:

In *Dear Judas*, the contrast between pitying love and possessive love that Jeffers intended to represent in the conflict between Judas and Jesus can be better understood in terms of the distinction between solitary and communal man. Judas, who betrays Jesus because he pities the masses who might submit to Jesus’ rule, is communal man; Jesus, who seeks to separate himself from humanity by becoming a god, is solitary. Yeats’s Judas responds to Jesus’ communal pity with the rebellion of the solitary, betraying Jesus in order to free himself, not others. (126)

In *A Vision* Yeats describes his understanding of Christian love and pity, which are not the same and may help to explain his characterization of the antagonists in *Calvary*:

We say of Him because His sacrifice was voluntary that He was love itself, and yet that part of Him which made Christendom was not love but pity, and not pity for intellectual despair, though the man in Him, being *antithetical* like His age, knew it in the Garden, but *primary* pity, that for the common lot, man’s

death, seeing that He raised Lazarus, sickness, seeing that He healed many, sin, seeing that He died. (275; italics in original)

Yeats's Judas possesses the Nietzschean will to power in creating himself entirely by himself, defying God and fate. Jeffers on the other hand reverses the orientation of the two principal characters, making Judas the one filled with pitying love of mankind and Jesus the one who creates himself by virtue of the will because he believes it is his destiny. Certainly Judas tries to free himself of tormenting pity:

. . . I am in prison of my pity; the moaning of men and beasts torments me; the pain is not my own pain
From which I come praying for deliverance. (CP 2: 7)

When the time comes for betrayal, he justifies himself in terms of his concern for the followers of Jesus who Judas believes will be deluded into suicidally challenging the Roman soldiers. Yeats's Judas on the other hand betrays Christ in order to assure his own damnation which, he believes, assures triumph of will. Jeffers's Judas wants to be saved but knows Jesus has no power to save him (CP 2: 7). He, not Jesus, makes the salvific sacrifice, yet his action results not in making him one with the people but isolating him from both his master and the people.

Jeffers declares throughout his work—especially in “Sign-Post” and *Roan Stallion*—that the ultimate salvation for humankind lies in transcendence of self, in turning outward from humanity toward God and nature, not in introspection. Robert Zaller writes regarding *Dear Judas* that “It is not Jesus who is sacrificed for all mankind but mankind that is sacrificed to Jesus, including the human body of Jesus himself” (*Cliffs of Solitude* 141). The only character in the play who realizes the full implication of the necessary sacrifice is Judas, but Judas does not want Jesus to die and hopes to save him by betraying him. Not the least of Jeffers's accomplishments is to render the archetypal villain of western culture a sympathetic and tragic figure (142). In Jesus, on the other hand, Jeffers suggests the tormented personality, vulnerability and mastery, delusion and truth, fear of maternal encroachment, and quest for the idealized father (143). “Meditation on Saviors” and “Theory of Truth” also suggest that Jesus represents not a man of compassion but of power. Jeffers's Jesus in “Meditation” as well as in *Dear Judas* loves aggressively; the poet contrasts his complicity in violence with the Buddha's persuasion by virtuous example (CP 1: 396–401). In “Theory of Truth” the tormented savior engenders a tormented age in which the savior's finding the truth brings insanity:

. . . Too loving to curse his mother, desert-
 driven, devil-haunted,
 The beautiful young poet found truth in the desert, but found also
 Fantastic solution of hopeless anguish. The carpenter was not his father?
 Because God was his father,
 Not a man sinning, but the pure holiness and power of god. His personal anguish
 and insane solution
 Have stained an age; nearly two thousand years are one vast poem drunk with
 the wine of his blood. (CP 2: 609)

Arthur B. Coffin compares *Dear Judas* with *The Loving Shepherdess*, where the protagonist, Clare Walker, is also a tormented would-be savior who ends her life in the spring: "Thus the pastoral image moving toward sacrifice at Easter is the first correspondence between the story of Clare and that of Jesus in the preceding poem" (112). Jesus and Judas in *Dear Judas* both know the crucifixion is wrong (110), and Jesus knows that people will misunderstand his teachings. Clare Walker is also misunderstood, and her sacrifice is inefficacious, unnecessary, and destructive of more than herself. Although her choice has moral significance, nothing can be redeemed by her death. Her sheep are lost through her sacrifice of her body to the unborn child which can never survive because of the choice she makes—to reject the operation that would enable it to enter a world she considers to be hopelessly full of sorrow.

Investigating the psychology of power, love, pity, and ambition, Jeffers in *Dear Judas* creates archetypes but also fully realized people with complex motivations: Mary (who is at first ominously called "The Woman") wants to keep secret her sin of adultery but also see her son triumphant; Judas wants to prevent a blood bath but see Christ's mission fulfilled; Lazarus wants to escape his tortured life. In this play Jeffers includes the same characters as those Yeats brings into *Calvary*—Jesus, Judas, and Lazarus—but also includes Mary, who Diggory refers to as the source of the tragedy (125), and excludes Yeats's three Roman soldiers and musicians. Mary articulates her own confusion and blames herself for all the trouble; nevertheless, it is through her descriptions of the ragged people and the half-caste Greeks she sees on her way to find Jesus that the old city comes alive (CP 2: 40). As in Yeats's play, unnamed figures in the drama wear masks, and their movements suggest a dumb show. Nineteen hundred years have passed, and Jesus admonishes, "Dear Judas be comforted at last" (CP 2: 5). Judas claims at the outset, "I have done the worst thing I can imagine. Oh yes: for the money" (CP 2: 5), but later admits that pity for mankind moved him to commit the betrayal (CP 2: 19, 23). Jeffers's Judas wants to restrain Jesus's will but finds himself caught in the prison of his pity. Judas laments that the rock

is happy and the shepherd (traditional biblical metaphor for Christ) does not think of the sheep's pain before he knifes him (CP 2: 6). Jesus possesses no power to save him (Judas), and the others' joy is not his, only their pain (CP 2: 7).

Judas, however, wants to save the people—from Christ's overweening "love." Even though Jesus declares that he is building a kingdom on compassion, Judas believes Jesus is in fact leading his people to "bloody destruction" (CP 2: 16). Having found the key to the people's hearts, Jesus has become terrible in his power (CP 2: 19) and cries out in a voice unlike his own but like the gulls over the fishing boats (CP 2: 18) who are hunting their prey. Judas, believing that Christ's kingdom dwells on earth, equates the people with birds charmed by a serpent (Jesus) who will incite them to riot (CP 2: 21, 23); Jesus seems to fulfill Judas's expectations of him since he declares that two thousand years are laid in his hands like grains of corn (CP 2: 28). Mary's revelations on the other hand suggest that Jesus's kingdom is neither of this world nor the next but is only his delusion. Although she rejoices that he has come into his power, she reveals that she has lied about the conception, covering her adultery with glory (CP 2: 35). Jesus declares that Judas lacks faith and is the fool of pity (CP 2: 30), with which Judas agrees, calling mercy a fool and pity a murderer (CP 2: 40). Judas further declares that by doing the worst he should be free of tormenting pity (CP 2: 42), but he is not. He is horrified by love from which pity is absent and love tainted by need for power. He chooses the many over the one, taking the guilt for Jesus's death and the sacrificial role Jesus has reserved for himself, but he has not achieved communion with the people. His describing himself as dwelling in the "prison" of his pity is another term indicating isolation (CP 2: 7). The pity he feels may also be temptation to power although he does not realize it. Jesus replies that the root of forgiveness is that all creatures do exactly what they must do (CP 2: 30–31) and that it is men's honor to be the dupes of god (CP 2: 30). All power, including love and mercy, Jesus declares, crushes its object (CP 2: 33).

The familiar religious iconography of light and darkness underscores the tropes Jeffers creates, the light here not suggestive of holiness, purity, or understanding, but of delusion, the darkness not of evil but of secrecy, betrayal, and misdirected love. Jesus's association with light is unsurprising until we realize that Jeffers employs it to emphasize the irony of Jesus's lack of understanding although his "vision" enables the creation of the "poem" of two thousand years ("Theory of Truth"). Mary, usually represented as incarnate purity, here is an adulterous liar related to darkness. Judas, associated with shadow, represents not the evil of the betrayer but the confusion of people of ostensible good will in times that

demand compromise and understanding. Jesus looks to the city shining in the morning like a jewel (CP 2: 10); Judas by contrast claims "I dread the shining like the shining of paradise" (CP 2: 10). When Mary states that Jesus walks at night, Judas insists it is the pearl of morning (CP 2: 10). Mary praises Jesus as "The shining that came forth from between my thighs" (CP 2: 8). Judas describes Jesus, saying "He went up shining" and was like a flame (CP 2: 18); he possesses "the shining power" (CP 2: 19) and is "white burning noon" and "white beauty / Above them like the mastlight over a boat" (CP 2: 22). Jesus claims "My sun has risen" (CP 2: 15) and "I am making a power weaponed with love not violence; a white / Dominion; a smokeless lamp; a pure light" (CP 2: 16) and later declares "I hold the shining triumph" (CP 2: 27) and "I know / Beyond illusion the enormous beauty of the torch in which our agonies and all are particles of fire" (CP 2: 34). Judas on the other hand walks in the shadow of doubt. He recognizes the threat from Jerusalem: "Our black shadows that move / Immeasurably stretched on the white road, they seem to reach even to Jerusalem, trouble my soul" (CP 2: 10). Even when the dawn comes he notices "all the long clear shadows lying toward Jerusalem" (CP 2: 13). Mary advises him to follow his shadow back to Nazareth. That Jeffers uses the image of brightness and shining as symbolic of impending decline from the pinnacle of power is clear from his use of "shine" as imperative in the titles of poems foretelling the destruction of America—"Shine, Perishing Republic," "Shine, Republic," and "Shine, Empire"—and the beautiful shining fish caught in the net in "The Purse Seine." In *Dear Judas* the woman (Mary), identified with "incarnate Night" (CP 2: 11), says "I Night am your mother" (CP 2: 11), calls herself "I Night the Mother" (CP 2: 12), and declares "I was the mother Night" (CP 2: 17). Judas also describes her as "the Mother/ Night" (CP 2: 43). When she begins to fear for Jesus and herself, she looks for refuge in darkness: "I wish the night of darkness would cover me" (CP 2: 36). She tells Judas "I am the first that betrayed him" (CP 2: 42) and "The mothers, we do it" (CP 2: 42) while to herself she admits that she lied to "cover" her sin (CP 2: 25). For all her bitterness and weakness, Mary becomes convinced that Jesus will redeem her earthly life. After the betrayal she voices her faith:

They have brought me words that shine like new stars. . . . Oh omnipotent God,
 with whom through delusion he is joined in truth,
 How marvelously thou hast made my secret sin the glory of the world. I saw his
 triumph in his eyes
 Before they told me. Without my sin he'd not have been born, nor yet without
 my falsehood have triumphed,

For that exalted his deceived heart to the height of his destiny. Now they have
told me that to-day
Is the set day, and he enters his kingdom. (CP 2: 35)

Mary believes the kingdom to be earthly, that both Herod and Pilate will kneel before her son who will issue decrees (CP 2: 35), although earlier she wished for Jesus to give up his ambition. We never learn why she considers herself a betrayer other than the fact that she bears him and falsifies his parentage. That she is fated to relive the passion every night suggests that she is a necessary part of the whole and does not act freely, contradicting the possibility of choice and intentional betrayal on her part or Judas's. Mary learns that Jesus's courage stems from her telling him he is the son of God (CP 2: 25) and tries to convince him not to sacrifice himself for Jerusalem, that he is better as a prophet of the fishermen and villagers than as a great leader who scorns both danger and wisdom (CP 2: 25–26). She appears too weak to tell him the truth—that his conception was the result of her adultery—although she does not appear to be afraid of public opinion now that Jesus is grown, and her concern is not for herself but for Jesus's triumph and safety. Her ambivalence alone would give the truth away if Jesus were not so confident of his divinity—"the faith that is the fountain of my life," he calls it (CP 2: 26). Although troubled about his paternity, Jesus will not relinquish his claim to divinity.

Through Mary's dialogue Jeffers also introduces into the poem the imagery of the fishing net employed throughout his poetic career to show that fate or history circumscribes all people, including Jesus. All the characters invoke the imagery of the net, but especially Mary, who tells the fishermen that a net catches all men, that no one is free (CP 2: 8) and that even Jesus will go where the net draws him (CP 2: 12). Jesus too testifies that he was taken in a net which drove him to wander in the desert (CP 2: 9). Judas describes the net of cruelty (CP 2: 13), that God's will is a net (CP 2: 31). Nor can Jesus escape: "I am in the net, and this deliberately sought / Torture on the cross is the only real thing" (CP 2: 34). Jesus, in telling Judas of the violence which will follow his crucifixion, sings part of the song Mary has sung to the fishermen earlier:

I bid you beware of the net, fishermen.
You see men walking and they seem to be free but look at the faces, they're
caught.
There was never a man cut himself loose. (CP 2: 31)

Mary sang

I bid you beware of the net, fishermen.
 You never can see it,
 It flies through the white air and we are all snapped in it.
 No, but look round you.
 You see men walking and they seem to be free,
 But look at the faces, they're caught.
 There was never a man cut himself loose. (CP 2: 8)

Only Lazarus escapes capture and confinement: "No, Mary, I am out of that net," he declares to her; "I would to God that you were out of that net" (CP 2: 38). Unlike that of "The Purse-Seine," which represents the indomitable power of civilization drawing its cords around people, here the image suggests religion and the will of Jesus to change the course of history. God's will, or man interpreting God's will, draws in its victims. Even Jesus declares the dangerous power of religion: "All power crushes its object, there is none innocent. / Religion is the most tyrannous, worming its way through the ears and eyes to the cup of spirit, overgrowing / The life in its pool with alien and stronger life . . ." (CP 2: 33). He then pronounces ominously: "no man shall live / As if I had not lived" (CP 2: 33) and declares that he will sacrifice to that end all the hopes of the villagers, his mother, his own flesh, and Judas himself (CP 2: 33).

Jesus is the maniacal self-absorbed leader who began with ideals of love and mercy but who has sacrificed all to his vision; "My soul is all towers" (CP 2: 15) he answers when Judas tries to convince him to return to his loyal followers in Galilee (CP 2: 14). Judas pities people and cannot keep from compromising his love of Jesus in order to try to save people he does not know. Judas, whose love is pure but whose pity for mankind interferes with his resolve, represents the doubt born of the conflict of two loyalties. He must act, but he cannot act without betraying someone—either Jesus or the people who will be led to their deaths. Judas knows that Jesus's philosophy of love has become ambition. He warns Jesus, "Dear Master, / Too many have made rebellions before; they are drowned in blood" (CP 2: 12). Remembering Jesus's driving the merchants from the temple, Judas describes not moral resolve but heedless cruelty:

. . . He

twisted a rope out of hard cords
 And drove them, and made a screaming riot in the temple. . . .

 One poor old man

Had fallen and cut his forehead on the brass edge of the tray, and lay weeping
 among the crushed candies,
 His white hair matted with watery blood.
 We lifted him up. I cannot tell whether Jesus has gone mad, or has indeed
 grown
 Too near the power that makes falcons and lions, earthquakes and Rome . . .
 (CP 2: 19)

Faced with the necessity of having to betray his master in order to save people, Judas rationalizes his intention to turn Jesus over to the authorities:

. . . What harm

can they do him, but keep him
 Three or four days for the city peace and dismiss him?
 He has made no insurrection till now (from hour to hour he may do it—who
 knows his mind?—to captain
 A river of blood) they'll only keep him quiet and dismiss him home. There he'll
 not dream of towers,
 But the sweet and passionate mind walk humbly. (CP 2: 23–24)

Judas wants him to return to Nazareth to become a prophet of rural people, as Mary has also asked. Later, he begs Jesus to be merciful as he has taught others (CP 2: 30), but of course Jesus will not listen.

Lazarus is the only one to find peace and truth—in the oblivion of death. He declares that the great passions for which life is not wide enough are not so easily exhausted but echo in the wood for years or millennia (CP 2: 37). There lies one pathway to peace for a great passion—truth, which is that life, not death, should be conquered (CP 2: 39). Although Jesus enjoins Judas to remember the “lion-colored hills,” the lake, the locusts (CP 2: 6), it is Lazarus who throughout the play voices Jeffers’s conviction about the centrality of the natural world. Having felt oblivion, he knows that freedom is found in being part of nature and losing the individuation of consciousness. Dismissing Jesus and “the other at the poles of the wood” who praise God “after the monstrous manner of mankind” (CP 2: 44), Lazarus articulates the most lyrical appreciation of nature to be found in the play: “While the white moon glides from this garden; the glory of darkness returns a moment, on the cliffs of dawn” (CP 2: 44).

Jeffers’s Judas declares that he knows Jesus is “neither God nor God’s son” yet “you are *my* God” (CP 2: 5). Yeats’s Judas in *Calvary*, unlike Jeffers’s character, never doubts Christ’s identity, yet wants to be free not of his own pity but of Christ’s power, knowing that only the one who betrays God can be stronger than God. His action is thus based on

desire for Nietzschean freedom of the will. Christ cannot save Judas in spite of Judas's belief in him; Judas's faith, not his doubt, allows him to think he can free himself through betrayal.

The introductory verse embodies the idea that the individual mesmerized by a vision cannot act. Standing in a pool abundant with prey, the white heron, under the spell of the moon and entranced by his own image in the water, is unable to fish:

First musician. Motionless under the moon-beam,
 Up to his feathers in the stream;
 Although fish leap, the white heron
 Shivers in a dumbfounded dream.

Second musician. God has not died for the white heron.

Third musician. Although half famished he'll not dare
 Dip or do anything but stare
 Upon the glittering image of a heron,
 That now is lost and now is there.

Second musician. God has not died for the white heron. (CW 2: 329–30)

The heron, "moon-crazed," is not the object of God's pity, for nature has no need of salvation. The white heron afraid of its own shadow may represent not only the loneliness of Christ but also the loneliness of those who have rejected him in the quest for freedom. *Calvary* begins with the heron because the play is about loneliness: on the cross, Christ suffers exclusion ("Why hast thou forsaken me?") from both God and human beings; Yeats's Judas, who has rejected Christ, feels the loneliness of the Nietzschean hero. The heron may be an attitude of divinity which must endure loneliness, separated as it is from all others, or narcissism that paralyses the will; it may also represent Owen Aherne, whose name suggests "a heron," and in "The Tables of the Law" says "I am not among those for whom Christ died" (*Mythologies* 305). Aherne, like Yeats's Judas, glimpses a vision of the eternal and cannot accept God's forgiveness.¹ Yeats's note to *Calvary* indicates that he uses birds as symbols of what he calls the subjective life, that birds such as herons, hawks, eagles, and swans represent subjectivity. He employs his bird-symbolism to intensify his portrayal of the "objective loneliness of Christ" and surrounds him with subjective men such as Judas and Lazarus who possess intellectual despair beyond Christ's sympathy and objective men such as the Roman soldiers who are beyond his help (CW 2: 695–97). Yeats's Christ has few speeches, none long, in a play less than a quarter the length of Jeffers's.

Like a chorus the musicians interpret the action but take no part in it. After establishing the scene as "The road to Calvary, and I beside it / Upon an ancient stone" (CW 2: 330)² and the time as shortly after the full moon on Good Friday,³ "The day whereon Christ dreams his passion through," the First Musician affirms that Christ carries the cross only because he dreams it:

He climbs up hither but as a dreamer climbs.
The cross that but exists because He dreams it
Shortens His breath and wears away His strength.

The musician sings

O, but the mockers' cry
Makes my heart afraid,
As though a flute of bone
Taken from a heron's thigh,
A heron crazed by the moon,
Were cleverly, softly played. (330)

Christ, like the white heron, is entranced by the role he must play.

Immediately the First Musician relates that the crowd shrinks before the spectre of Lazarus, emblem of Christ's power:

He has a deathly face, and yet he moves
Like a young foal that sees the hunt go by
And races in the field (331)

That is, he is excited, drawn by some longing that stirs in his blood, and which he cannot pursue. Christ asserts that Lazarus will not mock him because he raised Lazarus from the dead, yet Lazarus mocks Jesus more severely than the unnamed ones by saying, "You took my death, give me your death instead" (331). When Christ asserts, "I gave you life," Lazarus answers

But death is what I ask.
Alive I never could escape your love,
.....
You dragged me to the light as boys drag out
A rabbit when they have dug its hole away;
And now with all the shouting at your heels
You travel towards the death I am denied.
.....
... now you will blind with light the solitude
That death has made; you will disturb that corner
When I had thought I might lie safe for ever. (331-32)

As Jeffers will do in his play, Yeats associates Christ with the traditional imagery of light and includes characters who blame Christ for willfully imposing his love.⁴ Lazarus in both plays hates the light and longs for death which brings solitude and ends care and unhappiness; for him death means solace while life must be overcome. The opposite of Judas, Yeats's Lazarus does not want to assert will but to negate it. Jeffers's Lazarus is more passive and reserved like the musicians in *Calvary*.

Although the three Marys do not appear on stage in *Calvary*, their images are evoked by the First Musician who explains that they "live but in His love" and are gathered around him. Yet, the musician continues

Take but His love away,
 Their love becomes a feather
 Of eagle, swan, or gull,
 Or a drowned heron's feather
 Tossed hither and thither
 Upon the bitter spray
 And the moon at the full. (332)

They cannot love fully unless he loves them first, which withdraws from their love any act of will.

While people step back before Lazarus, even the devoted women run from Judas. Christ declares that Judas has witnessed all the miracles and still doubts, yet Judas answers, Faustus-like,

I have not doubted;
 I knew it at the first moment that I saw you;
 I had no need of miracles to prove it.

 I have betrayed you
 Because you seemed all-powerful. (333)

When Christ declares that God has put all men into his (Christ's) power, Judas explains his action:

That was the very thought that drove me wild.
 I could not bear to think you had but to whistle
 And I must do; but after that I thought,
 'Whatever man betrays him will be free';
 And life grew bearable again. And now
 Is there a secret left I do not know,
 Knowing that if a man betrays a God
 He is the stronger of the two? (333)

Christ supplies the doctrinal answer, that God in fact planned everything, even the betrayal: "But my betrayal was decreed that hour / When the foundations of the world were laid" (333), meaning that Judas's actions fulfill God's intentions, that thus no act is committed entirely from free will. Judas responds that although the betrayal was foreordained, the identity of the betrayer was not, nor the exact manner of the deed,

Nor that I'd go with my old coat upon me
To the High Priest, and chuckle to myself
As people chuckle when alone . . . (334)

recalling the image of sorcerer, trickster, witch, or scarecrow. His repetition of the word "chuckle" quotes Lazarus, who in his speech abjuring Christ's gift of life says, "when I sickened toward my death I thought, / 'I'll to the desert, or chuckle in a corner, / Mere ghost, a solitary thing'" (331). Intent upon affirming his own freedom of choice, like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, Judas declares

I did it,
I, Judas, and no other man, and now
You cannot even save me. (334)

Jeffers's Judas says "I knew that you had no power to save me" (CP 2: 7) almost resignedly and sadly, while Yeats's Judas gleefully celebrates not assurance of salvation but assurance of damnation. He would rather forfeit any possibility of salvation than forfeit his individual will, yet the fact that he is "chosen" (the First Roman soldier tells him) to hold up the cross in the final tableau-like scene refutes his idea that he possesses perfect freedom. Unlike Jeffers's solitary heroes (Orestes, California, Fayne Frazier), Yeats's Judas does not achieve transpersonal redemption or understanding of his place in the cosmos but remains defiantly locked in his own will. The betrayal in *Calvary* represents combative self-assertion since Judas's perception of Jesus—as powerful rival whose will challenges Judas's own—subjects him to Christ's power more than it frees Judas.

The Soldiers' dialogue reveals a fundamental irony: they need nothing from Jesus, even salvation. Unlike Judas, they talk of Chance, not Choice,⁵ and accept the fate of gamblers at dice or at life:

First Roman Soldier. Although but one of us can win the cloak
That will not make us quarrel; what does it matter?
One day one loses and the next day wins.

Second Roman Soldier. Whatever happens is the best, we say,
So that it's unexpected. (334)

The opposite of the traditional view of the Roman Soldiers, these are good-humored and compassionate, assuring themselves that

Third Roman Soldier. Had you sent
A crier through the world you had not found
More comfortable companions for a death-bed
Than three old gamblers that have asked for nothing.
(334-35)

In order to entertain Jesus in his last moments, they perform the dance of the dice-throwers in which they wheel around the cross, suggesting Yeats's system of whirling gyres of time into which the individual soul is thrown. Both Musicians and Soldiers speak in patterns representing variations on repetition and turning: opening and closing the play, the First Musician speaks, then the Second, followed by the Third, who speaks only once in each sequence; the Third is followed by the Second, then the First, and the cycle half-turns again with the Second followed by the First. The Second in fact utters only the refrains "God has not died for the white heron" at the beginning and "God has not appeared to the birds" at the end. The Soldiers' speeches are at first more regular, with First, Second, and Third speaking followed by Third, Second, and First, like an age unwinding what the previous one has wound; later their speeches fall into a different, though still regular, pattern: 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2.⁶ One Soldier, believing all things to be endowed with a spirit, comments that he (Jesus) is not the God of dice. The First Roman Soldier declares, "To know that he has nothing that we need / Must be a comfort to him" (335), enhancing the irony, for a dying person does not need to fear being robbed. Their drawing lots for the cloak merely increases Christ's isolation and loneliness. He is no communal man because his solicitude for the masses does not make him one with them but does make him one of Yeats's "objective" men because his thoughts are turned toward humankind. The final verses re-affirm the theme of self-destruction in the quest to achieve self-affirmation or freedom of the will. Judas explains that when he planned the betrayal there was nothing near him but a heron "So full of itself that it seemed terrified" (333). The heron crazed by the moon suggests both betrayer and betrayed (Judas and Christ) who are turned inward upon themselves so that they are bent even on their own self-destruction, affirming both as solitary men, neither possessing freedom of will.

"Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years" asserts that poetry which endures appeals to the primitive instincts and concerns itself with permanent things or things forever renewed "like the grass and human passions" (CP 4: 427). *Dear Judas* examines the destructive power of love, pity, and self-sacrifice as well as archetypes of betrayer and savior, isolated hero and communal man as they re-enact passions too strong to be forgotten even in death. In this play both Jesus and Judas are far more complex, nuanced, and humanly vulnerable than the archetypes Yeats puts on stage. In the end Lazarus points the audience toward that which truly will endure—inhuman nature, the "white moon" and the "cliffs of dawn" (CP 2: 44). *Calvary* concludes with the image of the empty lake from which the cygnets have flown, like the swans in "The Wild Swans at Coole" needing only other swans, and the ger-eagle (its name suggesting the cycles of history)⁷ rising "In blue deep of the upper air / Where one-eyed day can meet his stare," unconscious of itself and content with its "savage heart" (CW 2: 335). Only human beings seek God for their own self-affirmation, but, according to these dramatic works, they do so in vain.

ENDNOTES

1. Aherne continues: "I am not among those for whom Christ died, and this is why I must be hidden. I have a leprosy that even eternity cannot cure. I have seen the whole, and how can I come again to believe that a part is the whole? I have lost my soul because I have looked out of the eyes of the angels" (*Mythologies* 305–06).

2. In *Dear Judas* after two lines of introduction Jesus describes "trees like columns of knobbed stone" and "the round white stone" in the garden (CP 2: 5) where the foreordained betrayal is the first action. At the beginning of *Calvary* the betrayal has already occurred.

3. In *A Vision* (1937) Yeats claims that while most of Christendom commemorated Easter on the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox, those using the Julian calendar celebrated it on the fifteenth day of the solar March rather than the more traditional lunar March, the sacrifice of Passover being observed on the fourteenth day of the lunar moon. He describes March as the month of "victims and of saviours" (245). In his *Great Wheel* he associates the full moon with Phase Fifteen, the phase of complete subjectivity (81).

4. In *Autobiographies* Yeats cites a story by Oscar Wilde (CW 3: 224) of those Christ saved leaving them unfulfilled and hopeless. Wilde had earlier praised a story in Yeats's *Mythologies* called "The Crucifixion of the Outcast" in which monks crucify a poet (147–56).

5. Yeats's note to the play deals in part with a view he ascribes to an "old Arab," a follower of Kusta Ben Luki, who tells Michael Robartes that all things in the world vanish into Chance and Choice, that it is easy to worship God's Choice, but that "moment when I understand the immensity of His Chance is the moment when I am nearest to Him" (CW 2: 697).

6. Janis Haswell outlines her theory of the soldiers dancing around Christ on the cross in patterns of the Great Wheel in her article "Resurrecting *Calvary*."

7. Here Yeats uses the term "ger-eagle" to represent "gerfalcon," a large northern falcon. Yeats may have been influenced by the etymology suggested by Giraldu Cambrensis that the Latin *gyro-falco* is derived from *gyrus*, referring to the circling movements of the birds in the air (CW 2: 880).

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ROBERT ZALLER

JEFFERS'S HITLER

John Lukacs, the distinguished historian of the Second World War, writes the following about Adolf Hitler:

Somewhere, in the middle heart of Europe . . . a lonely sullen boy came into this world, his heart bitten with rage and ambition, desperately alone as he grew more and more conscious of his destiny of being a German. And then discovering—relatively late, in his thirtieth year—that his bitterness and rage and hate were there in the hearts and minds of thousands of other people around him; that God (*a* God of history? or *the* God of Germandom?) had given him a power to speak, a talent to touch their minds and hearts, for the sake of something large and hard. And then this odd and uneasy young man, surer of his ideas than of himself, became the solitary leader of a small party. And then of a larger party. And then of a veritable movement. And then of the largest national party athwart Germany. By then he was convinced that he could—democratically, legally, and inevitably—step over all obstacles to become the chancellor of Germany. And then, when he was the unquestioned and unquestionable head of a great nation, largely united behind him, his Germany would become the strongest and greatest power in Europe, as he subdued and silenced each of his opponents, older men of an older world. And then, if necessary, forced his will on them through wars that he and his Germans must win and go on winning. Ah! he was not one fortunate person riding atop a great wave; he was more than the figurehead of a nation; more even than a standard dictator. A strange phenomenon, breaking through myth and mist on occasion with hoarse cries, unfathomable by many of his enemies, matching them with the force of his hatreds, with his instincts that were powerful enough to make him a master of war and even a statesman of a kind, on occasion. And thus he and his Germans withstood the greatest empires of the world, the British and the Russian and the American empires, perhaps as many as five hundred million people ranged against a Germany of eighty million—until the very end, and there even for a few days and nights after his immolation of himself under the ruins of his capital city Berlin. (Lukacs 6–8)

Lukacs is no apologist for Hitler, nor is he an admirer in any sense but the most literal, as someone struck wondering at an awesome and in this case appalling phenomenon. We look at Hitler through the lens of the most destructive war in history, a war for which, as Lukacs says, he bore sole responsibility; through the purposed enslavement of whole nations; and of course through the attempted extermination of an entire people. These things have made Hitler's name a byword for evil, and justly so. But it must also be said that Hitler was a world conqueror on a scale achieved only by Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon. All of these figures have their admirers too. And history might have remembered him quite differently had his life been five years shorter. Had he died in the full flush of his victory over France in 1940, he would have been the obscure corporal of the Great War who had achieved in weeks what the Imperial General Staff had been unable to accomplish in four years; who had conquered or reduced to servility the whole of continental Europe, with Russia neutralized and Britain isolated; who had taken Germany from the depths of humiliation and despair and made it the master of the Old World. His methods, it would have been noted, were frequently brutal, but not more so than those of other dictators of his period, and his record far less censurable than Stalin's. At this point, the Final Solution had not yet been determined and few Jews had actually perished, whereas millions of Ukrainians had starved to death in the enforced famine of the early 1930s, and the Russian intelligentsia had been decimated in the Great Terror. Germans would likely have remembered Hitler as a national hero akin to Bismarck, the man who had singlehandedly regenerated a broken nation and brought it to almost undreamt-of glory. Even his detractors would have had to concede him genius. The sentiment expressed by King Leopold III of Belgium in 1940 would, for many, have stood: "Only once in a thousand years is a man of this stature born" (Lukacs 108).

It is in this context that we must consider Jeffers's own construction of Hitler. Jeffers had portrayed historical figures before, notably Attila in his verse drama "At the Birth of an Age" (CP 2: 420–84), and contemporary ones as well, for example Woodrow Wilson ("Woodrow Wilson," CP 1: 106–07). He was convinced that the West had entered into an era of Caesarism, and although he adhered strongly to democracy, he was pessimistic about its prospects. This sentiment was shared by many.¹ It had been only a generation since Wilson had proclaimed a world to be made "safe for democracy," yet by 1939 every democratic state set up at the end of World War I had been replaced by one form or another of dictatorship, with fascism as the leading model.

Jeffers's Attila might be seen as the prototype of the modern Caesar—a barbarian, to be sure, but a man weighed down by care and responsibility,

and no crueller than circumstances compelled him to be. His Attila is almost a rational despot, the servant rather than the master of the peoples who demand of him order, clarity, and certainty. Jeffers saw something different in Hitler, however, a grand but catastrophic figure who from the very first presaged ruin. This is how he characterized him in "The Day Is a Poem" (CP 3: 16), which was dated September 19, 1939, eighteen days after the invasion of Poland, sixteen days after the Franco-British declaration of war against Hitler, and the day after Stalin's prearranged entry into eastern Poland:

This morning Hitler spoke in Danzig, we heard his voice.
A man of genius, that is, of amazing
Ability, courage, devotion, cored on a sick child's soul,
Heard clearly through the dog-wrath, a sick child
Wailing in Danzig; invoking destruction and wailing at it.

Jeffers's German was good, and he would have been able to understand as much as was broadcast; but what he heard through the rhetoric was something both pathetic and terrible: the "wailing" of a "sick child" and the "dog-wrath" of a snarling animal. This was the frightening contradiction that lay beneath the extraordinary gifts of "genius," "ability," "courage," and "devotion" that had raised Hitler to the command of a great nation. The rest of the poem is prophetically descriptive, and brief enough to be quoted in full:

Here, the day was extremely hot; about noon
A south wind like a blast from hell's mouth spilled a slight rain
On the parched land, and at five a light earthquake
Danced the house, no harm done. To-night I have been amusing myself
Watching the blood-red moon droop slowly
Into black sea through bursts of dry lightning and distant thunder.
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.

The vivid description of an unsettling day is, of course, the forecast of a war that, only just begun, has reached Jeffers's faraway coast in the form of auguries and omens, lightly shaking it as yet. Playfully but ominously, Jeffers likens the effect—and that of his own verse—to a barbaric totem that issues, finally, in the inhuman "hawk's cry" of the poem's last image. The war, the poet's own imaginings, and the predator's cry all fuse in a sense of universal disturbance; but at the same time, the "cry" returns us to the voice of Hitler himself, both "invoking destruction" and "wailing" at it. This war, as Jeffers understands, is Hitler's; his

"wrath" is its author, although something deeper and more mysterious speaks through it. Lukacs caught the same sense of Hitler as an objectified force, "A strange phenomenon, breaking through myths and mists . . . with hoarse cries."

Jeffers did not mean that Hitler alone had caused the war, of course,² and in the many monitory poems he wrote in anticipation of it, he saw its ground in the Old World's ancient blood feuds, and, beyond that, in an age racing toward its "fall":

The age darkens, Europe mixes her cups of death, all the little Caesars fidget on
their thrones,
The old wound opens its clotted mouth to ask for new wounds. ("Hellenistics,"
CP 2: 527)

The Caesars were not all equal, however, nor was one of them "little." Jeffers would remember Stalin as one of the time's "chiefs of massacre" ("Skunks," CP 3: 406), but Stalin was an opaque personality to him, nor did he wage war abroad except defensively. Hitler was not only the animating force of his age, but the most deeply expressive one as well, a curiously histrionic figure in whom it found fatal voice. Indeed, he seemed to be indistinguishable from his oratory, a man whose war cry welled up from an inner trauma both his own and that of the epoch.

In short, Jeffers saw in Hitler a world-historical figure, the kind of man who appeared at crucial junctures to embody the deepest impulses of an age and to drive them to crisis. Hardy had found such a man in Napoleon, and the poem he had written around him, "Dynasts," deeply influenced the young Jeffers.³ For many others in the nineteenth century, Napoleon had represented the titanic energies of the French Revolution. Hitler's destructiveness—and self-destructiveness—was that of his time. To some, he appeared as a profound aberration; but Jeffers had long been convinced that his was an age of incipient decline, and Hitler's appearance fit this conception. As a "phenomenon," to quote Lukacs's phrase, he was well worth observing; as a character, he was dramatically fascinating.

The result of this was Jeffers's masque, "The Bowl of Blood" (CP 3: 81–100), which he wrote in 1940 and included in the volume *Be Angry at the Sun*. The poem is set in April of that year, when Hitler, not yet the conqueror of anything but half of Poland, made his first unassisted attack, invading Denmark and Norway. Victory was had, but at some cost. The attack on France, a much riskier enterprise, was only weeks off. Although Hitler projected an air of supreme confidence, he was known to be intensely superstitious, and, as we have seen in "The Day Is a Poem," Jeffers had already taken the measure of his insecurities. He

imagined him at this critical juncture semi-skeptically participating in a séance, as Jeffers recalled himself having done a quarter century earlier in "Come, Little Birds," a poem also published in *Be Angry at the Sun* (CP 3: 5–9). Both poems take place by the sea, "Come, Little Birds" at the mouth of the Sur River and "The Bowl of Blood" on the Schleswig shore of the North Sea; both are set at twilight; both involve blood ritual. Hitler is referred to throughout as "The Leader," although his identity is unmistakable, and at one point the second of the Three Maskers who preside over the scene steps forward to address the poem's implicit audience and, in a prose passage, specifies "Hitler" as its subject (CP 3: 89).

The Maskers are unseen by the Leader and his adjutants. They comment on the action, plant suggestive thoughts in the Leader's mind, and then embody themselves as historical personages whom he responds to as authentic visions. They are, in short, Fates, who like the witches in *Macbeth* seem partly to arise in the Leader's mind and partly to be external forces who act upon it. One of them fleetingly takes the form of Ernst Rohm, the SA leader whom Hitler had assassinated in the notorious Night of the Long Knives; but the Leader banishes this ghost at once. The next apparition is Frederick the Great, the founding figure of Prussian might. This interview goes no better. When Hitler introduces himself as "the chief and Leader of the Prussians and all other Germans," Frederick sneeringly responds, "Their Leader . . . toward what?" Hitler is, as he scoffs, an "Austrian," and like the Austrians of his own Seven Years' War, he has made the mistake of making England an enemy instead of an ally. The Leader indignantly responds that he will restore German honor, bringing "Vengeance and victory." But "Vengeance" too is a petty ambition, and Frederick, rolling it about multilingually on his tongue—"Rache . . . revanche"—takes his leave, shaking his head at "This damned human race" (CP 3: 86–87).

The next phantom is still more unwelcome; he is Napoleon, the conqueror who spent his last days as England's prisoner. The Leader finds his appearance "ominous"; but he will not, he assures his men, repeat his predecessor's error:

A man who embroiled himself in Russia before he had settled with the English: what madness! That mistake I shall not commit. And there will be no St. Helena for me, while my finger can twitch a trigger. (CP 3: 87)

This brief interjection, written before Hitler had invaded Russia, is itself prophetic, for Hitler would make precisely the mistake anticipated here, and would indeed commit suicide to forestall capture in the ruins of Berlin.

The Maskers find a more pleasing companion for Hitler in the person of his World War I comrade Ernst Friedenau.⁴ Friedenau brings him the news of his impending victory over France, and the debacle of the English army at Dunkirk. With France fallen and a broken England at his feet, world mastery will be shortly within reach. The Leader is incredulous at this; surely victory is not so cheaply to be had. But Friedenau insists, describing in detail the events that would shortly transpire, and which would make Hitler not only the avenger of Germany's defeat in the Great War but would open vistas of conquest that bid fair to make him a figure unequaled in history. He cautions only, however, that Hitler must rest his armies and wait until September, "or if later, better," before striking at England.

Why Hitler did not in fact destroy the British army he had surrounded at Dunkirk, a blow that might have forced even Churchill to consider terms, remains one of the unresolved controversies of World War II.⁵ This delay would be fatal, for Britain was still in the field when Hitler invaded Russia. The Battle of Britain was not fully joined until September 1940, and Jeffers would have known its outcome, though not its sequel, while writing "The Bowl of Blood."

The Maskers are the agents and emissaries of fate, not its masters. The Second Masker is shocked at Friedenau's deception, and asks his colleague why the phantom has given "false advice" along with true prophecy. The latter replies:

Because a prompt invasion would catch England in anguish and end the war this year, which is not intended. The war must grind on, and grind small. It must not end when France falls, nor when England is beaten. It must not end when the ends of the earth are drawn in. God is less humane than Hitler, and has larger views. (CP 3: 94)

The Second Masker replies to this, "[Is God] a liar like Hitler?", to which the response is, "God's spokesmen are often liars. / God remains silent." (CP 3: 94) The "God" of which the Maskers speak is not to be confused with the mature conception of the deity in Jeffers's middle period, whose purposes are ineffable and transcendent; their understanding, although superior to that of the human actors of the masque, is limited. As for the Leader, his sense of destiny has led him thus far, and his torment is whether glory or ruin lies at the end. He knows that from the peak he has ascended only one or the other is possible; there is no middle term: "This is my Gethsemane night," he soliloquizes, "Christ's agony in the garden: only to great artists / Come these dark hours" (CP 3: 88).

The Christological reference may seem gratuitous if not absurd, and Hitler's self-depiction as a "great artist," with its echoes of Nero, is plainly intended to show his self-pitying vanity and conceit. Yet there is in fact no small affinity between his theatricalized doubts and the intuition of Jeffers's Jesus in "Dear Judas" that he may perhaps only be the "dupe" of the God he hopes to join through the cross. In both cases, there is a sense that tragic delusion in the protagonist—in the instance of Jesus, a gospel of love that is inextricably bound up with a self-justifying will to power; in that of Hitler, an appeal to "blood and soil" that, transformed by megalomania, becomes a project of world conquest—serves obscure purposes that are but dimly perceived, and fatally misconstrued. In each case, ambition is propelled by deep-rooted insecurity: Jesus fears that he is a bastard "among the people / That more than any in the world valued race-purity" and aspires to restore "the prophetic splendors of the house of David" ("Theory of Truth," CP 2: 609); Hitler, the petty-bourgeois Austrian, is determined to command the German nation and its aristocratic elites, and to vindicate it as the master race. There is, too, a similar theme of blood sacrifice in the two stories. Jesus is himself the voluntary sacrifice, and Jeffers notes in "Theory of Truth" that "nearly two thousand years [have been] one vast poem drunk with the wine of his blood" (CP 2: 609), while the Leader, although depicted as personally squeamish at the sight of blood (CP 3: 85), is set upon drenching the world in it.

The similarities are, of course, limited. Christianity was an essential basis of what Jeffers regarded as the world's greatest civilization, that of the West,⁶ whereas Hitler was merely the symptom and agent of its decline. The First Masker observes that "[Hitler] is slightly a poet" (CP 3: 89), but one whose perception signified the degenerate phase of a genuine value. Hitler speaks of "blood and soil," a resonant phrase but one finally void of content; the Masker invokes instead "freedom," always a prime value in Jeffers. It is this, he suggests, that the West fight for in opposing fascism, and the Second Masker, I think here clearly speaking for Jeffers, asks rhetorically, "For freedom and a piece of land / Who would not fight to the death?" (CP 3: 95). The copula is deliberate: ever the Jeffersonian liberal, Jeffers links freedom causally with private ownership, property rights. It is this, and not Hitler's collectivized notion of "soil," that is the only guarantor of economic and hence political independence. The difference, for Jeffers, was crucial.

Toward the end of the poem, Hitler becomes aware of the Maskers as voices of doom, exhorting him not to victory but tragic defeat. He realizes that these voices are the truth, and curses his birth (CP 3: 98). It is too late for retreat, however, and impossible to abandon hope. As the voices lead him on, resounding with mockery as they address him as

"Leader," he leaves the stage like blind Oedipus to the accompaniment of their final chorus:

Watch this man, half conscious of the future,
Pass to his tragic destiny.

.....
We must not wake him. Sleepwalker, dream,
While the storm roars in the tree. (CP 3: 99–100)

That Hitler was doomed was by no means clear to observers in late 1940. Stalin feared himself lost in the summer of 1941,⁷ and in the months after Pearl Harbor a German-Japanese condominium appeared entirely possible, not to say likely. Jeffers would say after the war that he had never had "one moment's doubt" about its outcome ("We Are Those People," CP 3: 201), and he seems almost clairvoyant in singling out Hamburg in "The Bowl of Blood" as the first German city to be destroyed (CP 3: 95).

By 1943, German defeat was far more apparent, and Jeffers correctly predicted the duration of the war in "Historical Choice": "Two bloody summers from now (I suppose) we shall have to take up the corrupting burden and curse of victory" (CP 3: 122). It was then that he addressed "Tragedy Has Obligations" to Hitler:

If you had thrown a little more boldly in the flood of fortune
You'd have had England; or in the slackening
Less boldly, you'd not have sunk your right hand in Russia: these
Are the two ghosts; they stand by the bed
And make a man tear his flesh. The rest is fatal; each day
A new disaster, and at last *vae Victis*,
It means *Weh den Gesiegten*. This is the essence of tragedy,
To have meant well and made woe, and watch Fate,
All stone, approach.

But tragedy has obligations. A choice
Comes to each man when his days darken:
To be tragic or to be pitiful. You must do nothing pitiful.
Suicide, which no doubt you contemplate,
Is not enough, suicide is for bankrupt shopkeepers.
You should be Samson, blind Samson, crushing
All his foes, that's Europe, America, half Asia, in his fall.
But you are not able; and the tale is Hebrew.

I have seen a wing-broken hawk, standing in her own dirt,
Helpless, a caged captive, with cold
Indomitable eyes of disdain, meet death. There was nothing pitiful,

No degradation, but eternal defiance.
 Or a sheepfold harrier, a grim, grey wolf, hunted all day,
 Wounded, struck down at the turn of twilight,
 How grandly he dies. The pack whines in a ring and not closes,
 The head lifts, the great fangs grin, the hunters
 Admire their victim. That is how you should end—for they prophesied
 You would die like a dog—like a wolf, war-loser. (*Double Axe* 158–59; cf. *CP* 4:
 525)

Jeffers still sees Hitler as a tragic figure: the more so, given the scale of the conflict he had unleashed, and the magnitude of the catastrophe that awaited him. There is neither praise nor blame here, but merely a sense of epic. Hitler has lost his war, whether through miscalculation or some deeper weakness it hardly boots to say; but it is not a defeat he can shorten or quit. The forces in play are too great, the stakes too irrevocable. This is not the sort of struggle that ends in a negotiated peace or armistice; this is Troy, where the last battlement must be burned, the last stone thrown to the ground. “Unconditional surrender” is the term that will be given for it, but surrender is not what is expected. The Allies know that Hitler will fight to the end, and Jeffers approves this knowledge. He does so not because he wishes the war to continue, but because he knows that, given its nature and the nature of its author, it must. Wars are about nations, not about men, and only the very greatest of men—an Alexander, a Napoleon, a Hitler—can make their wars revolve around themselves. Troy was not about Achilles or Hector or Priam; World War I was not about the Kaiser or the Tsar, let alone elected politicians or appointed ministers. But this war, the greatest in history, was finally about one man,⁸ and as Hitler was the enemy, so in the end he would be the quarry. Jeffers was interested—intensely, but in the final sense *disinterestedly*—in how Hitler would meet his destiny, a destiny the poet had foreseen in “The Bowl of Blood” and intuited even earlier in “The Day Is a Poem.” The only question that remained at this point was how he would die, as a “dog” or a “wolf.” The hyphenated phrase that ends the poem, “war-loser,” is the only judgment Jeffers permits himself, but it is all the more telling for that. Tragic or not, the end of the story is defeat, and victory or defeat is the only judgment that history, too, deals in.

Jeffers had little further comment on Hitler, but he recalled him in a postwar poem, “Time of Disturbance”:

. . . Fight as needs must; hate

no one. Do as God does,
 Or the tragic poets: they crush their man without hating him, their Lear or
 Hitler, and often save without love. (*CP* 3: 365)

Lear is an ambiguous figure, perhaps; he does many foolish and some wicked things before he comes to tragic wisdom. Jeffers offers a further comment on him in another poem of the period: "The uses of tragedy: Lear becomes as tall as the storm he crawls in; and a tortured Jew became God" ("The World's Wonders," CP 3: 371).

Here, Lear has tragic stature indeed, and the figure of comparison is this time Jesus. If we connect the series as Hitler-Lear-Jesus, Hitler stands in august company indeed. I think that without question Jeffers regarded Hitler as the greatest figure of his time, although prior to his rise he seemed to have given the palm to Lenin. John Lukacs and the King of Belgium also agreed. There is, again, no valorization or praise in this, merely the acknowledgment of a capacity to move the world for good or ill. Even that, as "The Bowl of Blood" suggests, is only the working of fate. As one of the Maskers says:

Listen: power is a great hollow spirit
That needs a center.
It chooses one man almost at random
And clouds him and clots around him and it possesses him.
Listen: the man does not have power,
Power has the man. (CP 3: 82)

It may still startle, though, not to say offend, to connect Jesus of Nazareth, for many millions the essential and ultimate embodiment of good, with Hitler, by common consensus the very incarnation of evil. Of course, Jeffers's Jesus is a far more nuanced character, not only in "Dear Judas" but elsewhere: incontestably a great figure, but also a tragically flawed one, whose power is inseparable from his flaw. Jeffers invites us to consider Hitler similarly, and he remarks provocatively in "The Bowl of Blood" that "Whoever thinks this man is more wicked / Than other men knows not himself" (CP 3: 88). Again, one must note that Jeffers wrote this before Hitler's greatest crimes had been committed and perhaps fully envisioned; but it is true too that it was a judgment he never retracted. Perhaps we should construe it thusly, that the capacity for wickedness, or to put it in religious terms sin, is universal, and that what few are capable of acting out on any level of great consequence is present in all.

One more factor must be considered in evaluating Jeffers's response to Hitler. Jeffers, as is well known, was opposed to American involvement in any new European war, a position he shared with the great majority of his fellow countrymen through the 1930s and with a good many of them even down to Pearl Harbor.⁹ This did not mean that he was indifferent to the conflict in Europe, or without a preference in it. He clearly saw Hitler as a prototype of the Caesarean despot whose rise he

had foretold since "Shine, Perishing Republic" (1923), and, had there been any doubt of it, he made his commitment to political and social democracy explicit in his Library of Congress lecture, "The Poet in a Democracy" (1941; CP 4: 399-406). He had earlier said that he would "fight [fascism] in this country" (SL 267); what he did not think worth doing was to embroil America in the fight against it abroad. It was thus a part of his rejection of partisanship that he refused to demonize Hitler, and even after it became clear that Hitler *was* morally demonic he pointed out that Stalin's crimes were no less horrific, and that the Allied powers had much blood on their hands too ("Ethical Note," CP 4: 527). This was in no sense a defense of Hitler. Jeffers hated self-righteousness and moral triumphalism, from whichever quarter it issued and for whatever purpose. The war was tragic, and its tragic instigator was a fateful personality. It was useful to understand him and important to situate him; but to abuse him was ignoble, and trivialized the war itself. This was, and is, a difficult position to explicate, but it is not a morally insensitive one.

The question that remains is whether Jeffers should have rethought his characterization of Hitler in the light of the Holocaust. But this is to read present-day views of the Final Solution back into Jeffers's time. World War II killed perhaps sixty million people, some as horribly, if few as systematically, as the six million Jews among them. The sixty million were naturally foremost in the war's aftermath; they represented very concrete losses to families and communities, and each nation mourned its dead. The particular losses suffered by the Jews of Europe only slowly acquired special standing, and the very concept of the Holocaust as a unique event did not take hold until after Jeffers's death. Today, the six million have come to symbolize the sixty, and even in a certain sense to obscure them. But we must reverse our lens if we are to properly evaluate the responses of the immediate postwar period. Apart from the works of Holocaust survivors themselves, we will find very little literary mention of the fate of the Jews. Czesław Miłosz is an honorable exception, but then he was an eyewitness of the Warsaw Ghetto.¹⁰ The first significant reference in American verse may be Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," in which Plath conflates her perfectly respectable German-American father with an SS officer—perhaps not the most elegant introduction to the subject.

If we consider not the six but the sixty million, however, does that not call even more strongly for reconsideration? The question misconstrues Jeffers's own project in dealing with Hitler. Jeffers took him not merely as an actual figure but a representative one, the prototype of the modern Caesar. In short, his portrait was a fiction, albeit based on a living individual and his circumstances. He could have chosen to

portray Lenin or Stalin, or even, as Pound did in *The Pisan Cantos*, Mussolini.¹¹ The forces at work in Hitler, however, seemed of a different order of magnitude, as they did to Jeffers's contemporaries. In 1940, Stalin had accounted for far more deaths than Hitler; in "Ethical Note" (1944), Jeffers attributed twenty million deaths to his induced famine, and counted a further ten million in the gulags.¹² This made him a monster, but not necessarily, from the dramatist's point of view, a subject of interest. What Jeffers saw in Hitler was an even greater, indeed a limitless capacity for destruction: destruction not for the sake of power or policy, but for its own sake. Lear, in his rage, wants to pull the whole world down around him; Hitler appears to Jeffers the same sort of person, but equipped, as Lear was not, to accomplish this in very considerable part. When in "The Bowl of Blood" the Maskers persuade Hitler that his destiny is tragic, he responds by affirming destruction as his goal:

Win

or lose I shall lose.
 I'll pull some down with me. I would have been Europe's savior: now come
 destruction. The beautiful cities
 That watch themselves in their waters will be burnt rubble
 And homeless mounds. (CP 3: 98–99)

Hitler's fascination for Jeffers was as an embodiment of nihilistic destruction;¹³ at the same time, however, he depicted him as humanly fallible and vulnerable—a "sick child" as he had said in "The Day Is a Poem," or, as he put it in "The Bowl of Blood," a receptive vacancy, a vehicle for "the great hollow spirit" of power itself. This was tragedy in its classical sense—a man possessed by powers or purposes greater than himself, leading him to personal and perhaps communal disaster. Such a man the ancients had called a hero, and the term in this precise sense fit Hitler, even as a negative exemplum, as it did none of his contemporaries.

Jeffers continued to see Hitler in this light in "Tragedy Has Obligations," only closer to his doom. He reinforced this conception by invoking Samson, the champion whose strength is turned against him and who wreaks havoc in revenge. Unlike Lear, Samson's rage is efficacious, although it involves his own destruction. Jeffers says that Hitler *should* imitate Samson; that is, fulfill his nature and his desire: "But you are not able; and the tale is Hebrew." Many will die, of course, but this is no longer in Hitler's hands: power has used him, and now abandoned him. The only death he must look to, as Jeffers suggests, is his own.

The reader will note the terrible irony of the phrase I have quoted: *and the tale is Hebrew*. Might this in fact have been a reference to the

unfolding destruction of Europe's Jews? Jeffers followed events in Europe closely, and by the time he wrote "Tragedy Has Obligations," it was well enough known, at least to those with an interest in the subject, that an unprecedented calamity had befallen the Jews. A mass rally at Madison Square Garden in July 1942, addressed by Churchill, protested Jewish deportations and deaths, and in November, Rabbi Steven Wise, the head of the American Jewish Congress, announced that two million Jews in Nazi-occupied territories had been killed (Laqueur 51, 164). Whether he had heard these pronouncements, Jeffers was certainly aware of Hitler's obsessive antisemitism, and quoted him to this effect in "The Bowl of Blood."¹⁴ Nor would the reference to Samson have been casual; Milton's *Samson Agonistes* had clearly been a source for Jeffers's own "masque." We must leave the point conjectural, but in light of the Holocaust Jeffers's phrase seems, again, prescient. Samson's tale was indeed Hebrew; but so, in a sense that could hardly have been comprehended at the time, was that of Hitler and his war.

If this analysis is correct, it should go a good way toward explaining why Jeffers saw no reason to modify or withdraw his wartime characterizations of Hitler. He had genuinely taken the measure of the man, both as an individual and a symbol. He had predicted all that Hitler could and would do, and the fate that awaited him. This was enough. Hitler's tragedy was not merely his own but that of the West, and to have denied him his humanity, to have declared him merely a monster, would have been to deny the lesson he represented: "Whoever thinks this man is more wicked / Than other men knows not himself."

ENDNOTES

1. Zaller, "Jeffers's Isolationism," 29–30. On Jeffers's skepticism about the prospects for democracy, see, particularly, "Shine, Perishing Republic" (CP 1: 15); "The Broken Balance" (372–76); "Shine, Republic" (CP 2: 417); "Ave, Caesar" (486); "Rearmament" (515); "The Purse-Seine" (517–18); "Blind Horses" (519); "The Coast-Road" (522–23); "Hellenistics" (526–28); "Thebaid" (532–33); "Night Without Sleep" (558–59); "Prescription of Painful Ends" (CP 3: 14); "Shine, Empire" (17–18).

2. Lukacs is far more unequivocal in assigning Hitler responsibility for the war: "He alone began the Second World War. It also ended with him. Not only in Europe. Had he not conquered Western Europe there would have been no Japanese thrust against the French and Dutch in the Far East, had there been no Atlantic war between Germany and Britain there would have been no Pacific war of Japan against the British Empire and the United States, surely not in 1941. Four years later the defeat of Japan was inevitably consequent to the disappearance of its great German ally. The Second World War was Hitler's war." (Lukacs 8). I think Jeffers would have regarded this as overstated, and, without entering on historiographical

questions outside the scope of this essay, so do I. It is true that the diplomatic tensions between the U.S. and Japan were influenced by the European war. Roosevelt tried to keep the Japanese from attacking French and Dutch possessions, and he had serious concerns about British interests in the Far East as well. The Japanese-American rivalry in East Asia was, however, of long standing, and would almost certainly have resulted in war at some point. Nor was Japan's defeat tied up with Germany's, except insofar as it prospectively freed some American forces (which were never deployed in combat). That said, however, Lukacs is on firmer ground about Europe. The war there *was* Hitler's war, in the sense that the Allied powers would (and did) make substantial security concessions to avoid it, and that these concessions would almost certainly have satisfied any other German leader. Jeffers, in contrast, took a longer civilizational perspective (see the above-cited poems in n. 1), from which Hitler himself seemed the embodiment of a fatal historical tendency rather than simply an overreaching politician who exceeded the tolerance limits of the international state system in which he operated. The exclusive focus on Hitler, including his personal psychopathology, ignores of course not only the actual political playing field of the late 1930s, but (as Jeffers did not) the ideological appeal of fascism itself, including its militaristic component. There is "truth," in short, in a multitude of approaches to the causal chain that resulted in World War II, although these truths are an overlapping rather than a fully congruent whole. On Jeffers's general approach to history and the situation of his tragic protagonists in it, see Zaller, "Robinson Jeffers and the Uses of History."

3. Everson, 156–60.

4. I have been unable to find any historical reference to this character. Other characters in the poem are fictional, as is of course the incident it describes itself.

5. Panzer commander Heinz Guderian was poised to occupy Dunkirk on 21 May 1940, a move that would have cut off the British Expeditionary Forces's last evacuation point. A halt order was issued by General Gerd von Rundstedt, to whom Hitler had delegated operational control of the battlefield, and a second one on 23 May. Rundstedt's concern, which was shared by Fourth Army Commander Hans-Gunther Kluge, was that Guderian's tanks would get too far out in front of their infantry. Hitler's deference to his field commanders was uncharacteristic, but not of course unusual for a civilian head of state. For a discussion of the halt orders, see Sebag-Montefiore, 245–47 and n. 30.

Hitler's second great mistake was in diverting the Luftwaffe from its assault on RAF bases in England to attack London and other cities in August 1941. The gamble here was that civilian morale would break—the same costly and futile gamble the Allies would make against German cities, and the U.S. Air Force against Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Hitler's error was at least not yet contradicted by the evidence.

Jeffers's own attribution of Hitler's misjudgments to the workings of a superintendant destiny is reasonable enough on its own explanatory level, and he is careful not to make any causal connection between Friedenau's misleading counsel and the Leader's actual choices. His depiction of Hitler in "The Bowl of Blood" as hesitant and conflicted is enough to lend dramatic credibility to those choices.

6. "The world's as the world is . . . / The greatest civilization that has ever existed builds itself higher towers on breaking foundations" ("Night Without Sleep," CP 2: 558).

7. On Stalin's momentary paralysis of will at the beginning of Hitler's invasion, see Ulam, 536–40. He soon recovered, and began shooting his generals again.

8. Hitler was certainly of this opinion about himself; on the eve of attacking Poland, he addressed the senior Nazi leadership thusly: "All depends on me, on my existence, because of my political talent. Probably no one will ever again have the confidence of the whole German people as I have. There will probably never again be a man with more authority than I have" (Amis 89).

9. "Jeffers's Isolationism," op. cit. The standard historical study of the period is Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935–1941*.

10. "A Poor Christian Looks at the Ghetto," in Milosz, *New and Collected Poems*.

11. Pound described Hitler as "a Jeanne d'Arc, a saint" in an interview shortly after his arrest and detention in May 1945: Pound xi. Pound's mental condition at this time has of course been questioned, but it is worth noting that, even under the acute stress of his confinement a month later near Pisa, the army psychiatrists who first examined him found him lucid (xiv).

12. Jeffers's numbers were, in gross, not far off the calculations subsequently made by Robert Conquest, the first scholarly investigator of Stalin's Great Terror: "... we get a figure of 20 million dead [from all sources, exclusive of World War II], which is almost certainly too low, and might bear an increase of 50 per cent or so, as the debit balance of the Stalinist regime for twenty-three years" (Conquest 533). Since "Ethical Note" was written some nine years before Stalin's death, 20 million might be a fairly precise estimate of the death toll based on Conquest's projections. These, however, have been revised sharply downward in the light of research into Soviet archives that have only recently become available. According to Timothy Snyder, the overall figure for civilian deaths under Stalin is probably on the order of six million. Snyder does corroborate Conquest's figures for the Ukrainian collectivization campaign of 1932–33. At the height of the Terror in 1937–38, Conquest estimates the number of those jailed or in camps at 12 million (532), a figure also similar to Jeffers's.

13. Hermann Rauschning, a Nazi who broke with Hitler and hoped for a restoration of the monarchy, was an early critic from the conservative side who in *The Revolution of Nihilism* recognized the radical nature of Hitler's movement and the "berserker" quality of Hitler himself. Viktor Ullmann, the Czech composer, viewed Hitler from a similarly radical perspective in his opera, *The Emperor of Atlantis*, in which the allegorical figure representing Hitler is depicted as bent on destroying the human race. Ullmann himself was executed in Auschwitz on October 18, 1944.

14. "... and Jewry / Worked its black magic" (CP 3: 96).

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THREE POETS ON JEFFERS
FROM THE 2011 RJA
CONFERENCE

PATRICIA SEYBURN

FIRE AND EARTH

I do not see how you could have a child

and not love the world a little, Jeffers.
Not nature alone—rock, tide, hawk, stone, sky—
humanity, the motley syndicate
you joined when you emerged, all riled

up from having been all cooped up. *Get me
out of this cage*, you bawled, regretfully
no part of aerie, cast or kettle.
Your kind mother, despite your rage, beguiled

by your squalling charms. Myself, I am not
immune to your angular look and out-
look. Nor was the singular Una
(the wondrous hubris of her name)—no mild

flora for you, Mr. Crusoe. The girl
you wooed already spoken for—so what?
A bullet-wound to prove her fealty—
passion demands near-miss. You exiled

yourselves to the edge, the solitude
of beauty, because in beauty (tough word,
“the sole business of poetry,” you wrote
but you like those weighty ideas piled

up like the boulders near your tower's heels)
one is always alone. That is its pull,
the hawk stealing your gaze toward erasure
in its firmamental sweep, undefiled

as the land found by Carmelite friars,
"haunted country," home to Father Serra's
mission, then "an austere colony of
prayerful virgins." Wright's disciples styled

homes seamless with nature while you
planted two-thousand trees and quarried
stone, built your Tor, attempts at permanence
writ large. I do not know where the wild

starts and ends, what boundaries lie within
the heart. In a city built on motion,
I was born the year you died. Will you teach
me how to be Californian? I've compiled

strategies and reasons to avoid it
though the surf's pulse consoles me. Do I need
a dungeon, turret, oriel window,
a porthole from Napoleon's bark, tiles

from missions and castles, a piece of Thoor
Ballylee to live on this ledge? To embrace
the vast abstractions of a landscape tamed
and untameable? The progress you reviled

in lieu of that romantic return brought
me and mine here, please you or not. Full of
bombast and ire, poems indicate you capable
of great joy, Robin—your words reconciled

to fate of page and ear, occidental
prophet, Ezekiel's wheel. Still, I
believe the species held some appeal. When
you saw your granddaughter's red hair, you smiled.

KURT BROWN

COMMENTARIES ON “POINT JOE”
AND JEFFERS’S THEMES

Implicitly, critics might find a great deal here to talk about regarding the disrupted balance that Jeffers is suggesting between nature and human civilization, and the need to restore that balance. But as “Point Joe” is *explicitly* about poetry, I want to talk about it in terms of what Jeffers might have to teach contemporary poets (not only of the present moment, but all moments). Jeffers warns of the poet turning his or her attention to “fashionable and momentary things” (CP 1: 90). We may think the work of our favorite contemporary poet may last forever, but will it last as long as Homer, or Sappho, Aeschylus or Virgil? Probably not. But why? Jeffers hints at the answer in the preceding couplet: “Permanent things are what is needful in a poem,” he says, “things temporally / Of great dimension, things continually renewed or always present.” Even the simplest example might suggest what Jeffers means: when the so-called New York School of poetry began to import pop cultural images and references into its work, it may have damned itself to artistic obsolescence. Even in fifty years, such poems may be incomprehensible to readers and may need to be footnoted extensively to be understood. I’m not speaking of language, here, which is always changing and evolving over time, but of the subjects poetry addresses and the materials it incorporates into itself. Unlike Whitman, Jeffers does *not* want to accommodate the modern and the new—which to him is little more than a “trick of nature” like those glowing flowers creating a beautiful, but brief, sensation, a transitory phenomenon that cannot last. What is always present, then, is the natural world, its objects and processes, its eternal cycles and enduring materials, AND—this is most important for poetry—the invariable facts of human nature. Human nature does not, and cannot change, no matter how many centuries pass, how many millennia. Greed, love, fear, ambition, contempt, longing, hatred, grief, all of these are the same for all people in all ages,

and cannot change unless *we* change, at which point we will not be human anymore. This is why we understand the passions that move the men and women of ancient Greek drama. Their personalities may be heightened for art, but they are just like us, and we recognize what motivates them instantly. "There is no progress in art," said Walter Pater, and who can argue with that? Is a sculpture by Brancusi a thousand times better than that of Praxiteles because a millennium has passed between the lives of these two? Jeffers warns poets to turn their attention to elemental things, enduring things, and to make poems out of that rather than what lasts for an instant, then vanishes. If you make your poems out of what endures, he suggests, your poems will endure as well. Moreover, poets ought to write about things "of great dimension," instead of trifles. Small, unimportant, trivial subjects are unworthy of a poet's attention and can only ensure inferior work, second and third rate work, in the end. The history of literature, I am sure Jeffers would agree, is filled with the effusions of earnest but minor poets. Sometimes I like to speculate about what Jeffers might think of the thousands and thousands of self-conscious, self-confessional poems that have flooded our contemporary journals; or the new tide of subjectless, nonsensical, disjointed post-modernist lyrics that have turned strenuously away from any attempt to address the enduring and fundamental things he prescribes in "Point Joe," no matter how witty, intelligent, and subtly graceful they may appear at first glance. We may be wandering "through a weird country" just now in our literature, but the mountains are still there, and will remain (good day to you, Emily; hello Thoreau!), and the ocean with its vast shipwrecks (ahoy, Melville!), and the old Chinaman gathering food in the most primitive, timeless way. Only by such means, Jeffers asserts, can we write poems of a "fierce and solitary beauty" that will last until poetry itself disappears.

There are, of course, serious problems with the kind of aesthetic Jeffers proposes here, but I have no time to go into them now.

* * *

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. ("Roan Stallion," CP 1: 189)

I want to say that here is a "poem" that reflects all of Jeffers's fundamental themes, that it is typically Jeffers in its form, content, and tone—but Jeffers is typically Jeffers in every poem he has ever written. He has a signature style, and a single obsessive theme which informs everything

he writes: human beings are negligible in the great scheme of things; whenever we think differently, we are guilty of hubris; we are as deluded as Faust, and our self-satisfied pride will bring us down in the end; tragedy is our true nature, and our fate. These ideas are borrowed from the Greeks, of course, as is Jeffers's style and tone. Viewed from a trans-human perspective, humanity is "the last least taint of a trace in the dregs of the solution." Jeffers is at pains here to nullify any pretensions to grandeur or importance human beings may entertain about themselves. On the contrary, we are as insignificant to any God as bacteria are to us. Even less: "the last least taint of a trace . . ." One could hardly express the idea any more emphatically, or with greater contempt. One of our pretensions, Jeffers asserts, is that we have been made in the image of God, or that God somehow resembles us in form and character. Certainly, this is one of religion's most cherished beliefs, but Jeffers demolishes it by depicting God as non-human as lightning flashing above the ocean. In other Jeffers poems, God is figured in other ways, through creatures or elements, but never in human shape. God, for Jeffers, is the faceless, indifferent, infinite, unimaginable power behind "the mask" of nature. We try to understand this power through the tenets of religion, on the one hand, or the theories and experiments of science on the other. Both fail, and are doomed to fail. The human mind is severely limited (in this, at least, he is in perfect harmony with the teachings of religion). Our minds can never apprehend the nature of God, or the ultimate workings of the cosmos. Any attempt to do so will result in "unnatural crime." We have only a dim knowledge of things, as if we were trying to examine everything in a vast, darkened cathedral by the light of a single candle. In another poem he describes the brain as merely "pith" inside the skull, no more impressive than the dry, gnarled meat inside a walnut shell. And *this*, he seems to imply, is where all the big ideas come from? Like atoms, people are no more than a kind of fuel to be used up in the fission of existence. In the end, only their residue will be left—and that for a flicker of an instant of cosmic time.

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JOHN RIDLAND

DOGROLLS¹ FOR
ROBINSON JEFFERS AND ROBERT FROST

Composing Dogrolls for Robinson Jeffers
Seems misconstruing bulls as heifers—
The last thing anyone should do,
Yet I in Dogrolls will construe
Poets of towering magnitude 5
And raging, roaring amplitude.
I rolled them once for Robert Frost
Without respect or awe being lost,
And Frost is Jeffers' counterpart,
In subject if not style and art, 10
And each acknowledged in the other
A cousin-poet, nearly brother.²

¹ "Dogrolls" are doggerel written by a person who can do better, but who chooses to look worse, for some explicable reason. "Doggerel" is incompetent verse, usually in meter and rhyme, written by a person who cannot do any better.

² Frost once said of Jeffers:

He never felt called by necessity to leave California and rush off to New York. He has just kept working his vein of poetry—good poetry. Stayed on in the west and succeeded. Good poetry isn't dependent on geography. (Louis Mertins. *Robert Frost: Life and Talks-Walking*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1965, 259–61.)

And Stanley Burnshaw, one of his editors, records Frost saying shortly after Jeffers died on January 20, 1962, and a year before his own death (on January 29, 1963):

Nobody talks of Jeffers, and now he's gone. We should *do* something. He just kept working his vein. Stayed in the West—succeeded. Good poetry isn't dependent on geography. (Stanley Burnshaw, *Robert Frost Himself*. New York: George Braziller, 1986. 187.)

Frost's "North of Boston" meant "in the sticks"
 Where lonely folk get up to tricks
 They wouldn't, closer to the city— 15
 Like Big Sur, then, though not as pretty.
 Both poets followed Huck's example—
 Head for "the Territory," it's ample,
 And intellectual friends, or foes,
 Won't constantly intrude their nose 20
 Into your writings, or your *thought*—
 Which Rob, and Robin, also, brought
 Foremost to our alert attention,
 Insisting on full comprehension,
 Not merely sighs and groans of awe. 25
 They swore allegiance to one Law
 Of Poetry: *Be serious*,
 Whether by means mysterious,

And what Jeffers thought of Frost was made public on March 23, 1947, when Frost's 72nd birthday was celebrated with a large dinner party in the Golden Room of the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco. The invitation was signed by Robinson Jeffers and four others. "Greetings from notables all over the world" were read out, including a letter from Jeffers (qtd. by Mertins, 260-61):

Tor House, Carmel, Calif.,
 March, 1947

Dear Louis Mertins:

This is a note of admiration for Robert Frost, and of regret that I cannot be present at this birthday party in San Francisco. Will you show it to him, please? Or read it to him, and to the fortunate celebrants.

Certainly this party marks a memorable occasion. San Francisco and all California may be proud to have seen at least the inarticulate beginning of New England's poet; and though he went east—"against the course of heaven and doom," as Shelley says [in *Hellas: A Lyrical Drama* written in 1821 in support of the cause of Greek independence]—and prefers the shrewd and kindly idiom that grows north of Boston, yet he belongs to the whole country and speaks for it, the east and the west. I think of Frost as a worthy successor of Emerson and Thoreau,—to name my most admired New Englanders,—and as a man who expresses the universal through the particular, a regional poet who is also universal, like Wordsworth for instance. I wish him many future years and poems, for his own sake and ours.

Good luck to you, Robert Frost.

Sincerely,
 Robinson Jeffers

Violent, passionate—or calm,
 Reading the rivulets on a palm— 30
 Or comic, yet with serious aims.
 Comedy, Tragedy, are names
 We give to modes which seem at odds,
 But both are gifts from God, or gods,
 And so constructed they can switch 35
 Places and purposes, till which
 Is which may be quite hard to tell—oh,
 One early critic called *Othello*
 “The Tragedy of a Handkerchief”³—
 A comic error? Tragic grief? 40

Both Robs thought matters of belief
 Of ultimate importance. Both
 Had, as if sworn a solemn oath,
 To find out what they *did* believe
 And work out forms that could conceive, 45
 Gestate, and give it life, and breath
 To stay alive after their death—
 Which both have done: in evidence,
 On this Coast, see this conference,
 While Back East, by the Atlantic water 50
 There’s one convened by Frost’s grand-daughter,
 Lesley Lee Francis, every year—
 Not on the scale that we have here,
 As their Atlantic, though terrific,
 Is not as grand as our Pacific. 55

Both poets having passed Centennials,
 Their poems flowering still, perennials
 Gathered for more and more anthologies,
 Are now being issued without apologies,
 Or demonstrations or petitions, 60
 In hefty scholarly editions
 From university presses—Frost’s
 From Harvard; Jeffers’, Stanford. Lost’s
 The spontaneity of their first
 Slenderer spines, in which they burst 65
 Onto the literary scene,

³ Thomas Rymer in *A Short View of Tragedy* . . . (1697).

And heedlessness—being unobservant, 105
 Treating the Earth as our bond-servant.
 So Frost loved and observed wildflowers,
 Jeffers, the clouds and heavenly powers.
 The star-bright night sky both knew well,
 Tracking the constellations' spell. 110
 Both put a firm, restrained reliance
 On what was provable in Science,
 Not swept away by Scientism
 But letting telescope and prism
 Lend keener insights to their vision: 115
 Both were repelled by imprecision.
 As for Religion, Frost was foxy;
 Jeffers decried all orthodoxy.

Frost handled rocks to mend a wall
 That needed mending, if at all, 120
 To mark a boundary. And he bought
 A farm on which to farm his thought,
 Called *The Stone Cottage*! Some coin-
 cidences seem worth turning in-
 to metaphors. Thus Jeffers built 125
 Stone house and tower above the silt
 And sand of ordinary life
 And lived devoted to his wife,
 As Frost to his: she was one half
 Of all he wrote—more than the calf 130
 That tottered by the spring—his Muse.⁵
 Which was loved more is hard to choose,
 Una or Elinor? Both died
 Before their husbands, who then plied
 Their craft through rougher, harsher waters, 135
 With sons or grandsons and grand-daughters.

know enough of hate / To say that for destruction ice / Is also great, / And would suffice." Robert Frost, "Fire and Ice."

⁵ "I'm going out to clean the pasture spring; / I'll only stop to rake the leaves away / (And wait to watch the water clear, I may): / I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too. / I'm going out to fetch the little calf / That's standing by the mother. It's so young / It totters when she licks it with her tongue. / I sha'n't be gone long.—You come too." Robert Frost, "The Pasture."

Both disapproved the avatar Of Liberalism, FDR, Yet joined in no-one's campaign song, Too independent to belong In any politician's pocket: Light bulbs screwed into no-one's socket. Exception: Frost liked JFK, A Boston boy, and tried to say Fresh doggerel for his Inauguration, But flamed out, to the consternation Of millions watching: his parachute Popped open; cynics said, "That coot, He had that poem up his sleeve,"— A poem in which he could believe, "The Gift Outright"—not fulsome praise For Kennedy's coming, glorious days, And not foreseeing assassination Would murder innocence in the nation.	140
A late Frost poem's epigraph— "Shine, Perishing Republic"—half Connected Jeffers with himself: They're neighbors on the poetry shelf. One's Nature's rural, one's more wild, But both wished Nature reconciled With Humankind, yet feared the rift Between us made it no "free gift," One that can kill us ⁶ if we fail To bridge the gap, or quiver and quail Before the enormity of the task. <i>Try harder</i> , wouldn't both men ask?	155 160 165

Conclusion

So Dogrolls don't turn bulls to heifers, At least with Robert Frost and Jeffers. And couplets are adapted to Comparisons: this/that, one/two,	170
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⁶ Cf. Hurricane Katrina; the Haitian and Christchurch, New Zealand, earthquakes; the Queensland, Australia, floods; the British Petroleum oil well blowout; the thousands of miners killed each year in underground explosions; etc., etc., etc.

As when the optometrist tests your sight:

“Which one is clearer? Left or right?”

Jeffers? Or Frost? I would be loath

To say one cannot like them both,

Which some I know would not endorse.

175

To each his own (or hers, of course).

Dogrolls are very like a dog—

They run wild, pee on stone and log,

Sniffing in under, keeping nose

To ground. The problem's how to close

180

The run: “Here, boy! Come, Rover, come!

Time to go back where we came from.”

Maybe for once he will obey?

At any rate, *I'll* call it a day.

SPECIAL SECTION
JEFFERS IN TRANSLATION

THREE TRANSLATIONS BY
GUSTAVO ADOLFO CHAVES

A LOS CANTEROS

Canteros que combaten al tiempo con el mármol, retadores del olvido
Vencidos de antemano:
Traguen sus cínicas ganancias, y sepan que la roca se deshace, que
caen los anales,
Que las cuadradas letras romanas
Se borran con el deshielo, se desgastan con la lluvia. También el poeta
Edifica burlonamente sus monumentos;
Pues el hombre será borrado, morirá la jovial tierra, el bravo sol
Morirá ciego y ennegrecido hasta las entrañas:
Y aun así las piedras se han erguido por miles de años, y los más
compungidos pensamientos hallan
La miel de la paz en viejos poemas.

LA CASA

Estoy apilando los huesos de la vieja madre
Para construirnos una guarida contra las huestes del viento;
El calor de sangre de su juventud es granito
Fundido en la oscuridad caliente contra el corazón
Endurecido para templarse bajo los pies
De la caballería del océano con sus crines de nieve
Y para marchar desde el más remoto Oeste.
Esta es la piedra primitiva, aquí en la húmeda
Cantera a la sombra de las olas,
Cuyos orificios declaman el amanecer. Pequeña casa: la secreta tierra
Y cada piedra bautizada en esa fuente abismal que es el mar
Me dieron los lazos para afirmarte.

PESCA DEL SALMÓN

Los días se acortan, el Sur sopla a sus anchas pidiendo lluvia,
El viento del sur le grita a los ríos,
Los ríos abren sus bocas y el salmón de sal
Se dispara hacia la riada.
En el mes de la Navidad, contra el rescoldo y la amenaza
De una larga y furiosa puesta de sol,
Roja ceniza del oscuro solsticio, mirás a los pescadores con sus cañas,
Compasivos, crueles, prístinos,
Como los sacerdotes del pueblo que edificó Stonehenge,
Silenciosas formas oscuras que ejecutan
Remotas solemnidades en los rojos bajíos
Del estero a la vuelta del año,
Y traen a tierra su vivo lingote, las bocas ensangrentadas
Y las escamas llenas del ocaso
Se crispan en las rocas, para ya no vagar más a voluntad
Por la impetuosa dehesa del Pacífico, ni retozar desovando
Y disparándose hacia el agua fresca.

BOOK REVIEWS

John Haines. *Descent: Selected Essays, Reviews, and Letters*. Fort Lee, NJ: CavanKerry Press, 2010.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT ZALLER

It is fitting to review the work of another author in these pages because there have been few poets of the Pacific Coast region who have not been defined in some important way by their response to Robinson Jeffers, whether of discipleship or admiration (William Everson, Gary Snyder, Charles Bukowski) or by declared antipathy (Yvor Winters, Kenneth Rexroth). John Haines is a generous admirer, and the present collection includes his invited keynote address to the Robinson Jeffers Association in 2002 as well as a comment on his contemporary relevance. In the talk he described how, as a young man just out of art school, he and his wife had been drawn to the Big Sur region, whose topography was, as he noted, “suffused for us with Jeffers and his writing” (24). Haines did not stay, perhaps from a sense that he could not find his own voice in a landscape so thoroughly claimed by another, but sought his own terrain in Alaska, where he had spent the immediate postwar years homesteading. Here, too, he says, the example of Jeffers “lay in the back of my mind.” Haines’s homesteading was far more rigorous than Jeffers’s, and in the memoir “A Night on Cabin Creek” he vividly describes killing the bull moose that would provide his sustenance over a snowed-in winter. What he took from Jeffers was the need to deeply inhabit a chosen space, to tend its ecology, and to orient himself to the whole of nature through it.

Such a move ran counter to the suburbanizing thrust of postwar American culture, with its tract housing and its superhighways. It also ran counter to the increasing trend of poets to pursue their careers

within the academy. Haines has maintained an uneasy relationship with the latter, adversarial in part, and best exemplified in his brief memoir of an unexpected visit from Yevgeny Yevtushenko that provoked the envy of the local English Department. Like his younger contemporaries Gary Snyder and Wendell Berry, Haines has chosen to live for the most part off the grid, or at least at arm's length from it.

Haines's own poetry is responsive to place in a way that partly resembles Jeffers's, and partly differs from it. As a topographical zone, the Big Sur region is a pocket fenced in by medium-sized ranges and end-stopped by coastal declivities. It's wild and isolated even to the present day, but also cozily circumscribed. Haines's homestead was a more open terrain, and farther, certainly, from urban contact. He seems almost to have imagined it before finding it:

There is a land known to but a little sun,
the night has a way with it,
and the cold. There are rivers
there, not of water

and voices other than of life. Torrents hang
suspended as in a spell and
glitter with the starlight of their
eternal falling
through an endless space. ("Landscapes," *At the End* 61)

There is a kind of abstraction in this passage that suggests the desire for the impossible territory of death, yet there is a density to Haines's invocation of the cold as a hard, palpable thing, and a sharpness to the glitter of his stars that is both vivid and vivifying. In "Poem of the Forgotten," he describes his first settlement:

I came to this place,
a young man green and lonely.

Well quit of the world,
I framed a house of moss and timber,
called it a home,
and sat in the warm evenings
singing to myself as a man sings
when he knows there is no one to hear. (*The Owl* 10)

Though "young" and "green"—i.e., inexperienced—the poem's speaker already regards himself as "Well quit of the world," implying a personal crisis severe enough to drive him to a remote wilderness, and even to suggest being "quit of the world" altogether. The tasks of survival

energize him, however; he makes a “home” of his solitude, and celebrates it (or keeps its terrors at bay) by singing alone to himself. The poem holds these tensions in suspension in its final quatrain:

I made my bed under the shadow
of leaves, and awoke
in the first snow of autumn,
filled with silence.

The speaker survives his night—it may be many nights, indeed years—and wakes to “silence,” that is (in the poem’s terms) to a plenitude that refuses to express itself further. The wisdom and subtlety of these lines, the ability to describe a spiritual crisis in the simplest of words and images and with the utmost economy of means, bears the stamp of a major poet. The embrace of solitude and seclusion is certainly Jeffersian (none of Thoreau’s insistent chatter here), but the sparseness of line is not, owing more, as Haines himself suggests, to Eliot, Pound, and Williams. This suggests an interesting marriage of Modernist means and Jeffersian ends, although the point should not be pushed too far. Haines is his own man, and the particular sonorities and silences of his verse are distinctive and unmistakable.

Descent is mostly a book of prose, and the poetry it quotes is chiefly that of others. The reader will nonetheless find specimens of Haines’s own work in it, with accompanying commentary. When a major poet who is also a first-rate critic talks about his own work, attention is well repaid. In “The Story of a Poem,” Haines describes the evolution of “A Poem Without Meaning” over nearly thirty years from its original eleven-line version (two stanzas of five lines each, and a concluding line set off by a dash) to its final, thirty-seven-line form (twelve triplets with an epigraph by Gongora, and with a final line, its first word capitalized, set off by an ellipsis). The original version is a perfectly realized work on its own. It needed no improvement, but with the years it opened up for Haines, and gathered in new particulars—the famous photograph of the Horse Head Nebula; a postcard photograph of St. Luke from a church in France; the quotation from Gongora; some lines from Dante. It is perhaps my own imagination, but I hear echoes of Jeffers too:

History is now undone, on a field
where red giants and white

dwarfs oppose each other, clash
and bestride the dust.
.....

The next chapter of the world
 Hangs between the foreheads of two strong bulls ranging
 one field. Hi, Red! Hi, Whitey!
 ("What Odd Expedients")

All speeches of pith and grandeur
 put away with weights and measures
 in the deep mind of God.

 Life's norm is lost: no doubt it is put away with Plato's
 Weights and measures in the deep mind of God.
 ("What of It?")

Jeffersian, too, is the sense of stellar reality unfolding above the passing phases of civilization and the ultimate emptiness it reveals. The emergent image of Orion that dominates the first version of the poem ("a man, primitive, / with a cluster of stars / at his shoulder") yields to that of the great nebular stallion ("an immense horse / . . . / riderless // in the great cloud of himself"), as the more anthropomorphic image is replaced by one of unbridlable natural strength from which the human is purposively excluded. This too, of course, is not without its Jeffersian antecedents; but the poem and its accents—both poems, one may really say—are finally Haines's. For Jeffers, cosmic value, even in the succession of its cycles, is unimpeachable. Haines is not so sure, and not so willing to depart from the Modernist idea of thought as in some sense constitutive of reality. As he comments:

As important to anything in the *thought* of the poem is the intuition that we citizens of this planet may be passing into a new phase of existence, whether for good or ill we cannot know, and which carries with it the possibility of a world devoid of spiritual meaning as we have known it in the past, with the ancient symbols cast into doubt and the constellations merely numbers in a void. (53)

This remark represents, among other things, the fifty-year distance that separates Haines from Jeffers, the four billion human inhabitants we have added to the planet since then, and the troubling changes we have brought to its environment and ecology. It is difficult under any circumstances, however, to imagine Jeffers referring to constellations as "merely numbers in a void." Haines is of course referring to the human conception of them in a scientized, reductionist age; but it seems a little unclear whether, in fact, they do not somehow wax and wane with our imagination of them. This is the heart of the Modernist conundrum, which Jeffers breached by main force but Haines finds more difficult to escape.

A large section of *Descent* is taken up with reviews of younger poets, mostly published in the *Hudson Review* between 1996 and 2001. The criticism is careful and exacting, qualities rare in contemporary letters. Haines's own generation, that of the poets who came to maturity in the 1950s and 1960s, was the last to stand directly in the shadow of the great Modernists, and the standard they hold him to is high. He is generous with praise when he feels it is called for, but there is also no masking of censure and dismay for work that falls, or, worse, simply aims short. He is not content with being agreeably amused, taken on family holidays, or invited to the confessionals of small sinners:

Of any book of contemporary poetry I would ask at least two questions: To whom is the poet speaking? Who is the audience here, actual or imagined? And secondly, what have I learned in reading this book? Has our common existence become broadened, deepened, and am I somehow changed by this reading? (113)

What Haines is looking for is a poetry of address, a poetry that reaches outward and speaks to, if not common experience, then to our common condition. The poet need not be facing his public directly, and indeed his poetry will often draw upon his most intimate privacies, but it must be brought in contact with our shared world, and it must be vital and not trivial. By this standard, what passes for poetry in turn-of-the-century America is mostly flat and banal. It is not the poetry of navel-gazers so much as that of suburban mortgage-holders, fixed on quotidian life and with no further horizon. Imagine, Haines says, Keats or Wordsworth writing about bad plumbing or scratchy underwear, or William Carlos Williams about stubbing his toe. It is not that domestic incidents have no place in poetry; it is only when they are taken as a value in themselves that the trouble begins. We don't face or imagine the Simplon Pass every day, but it belongs in our mind somewhere, or else we never pass the front gate.

Travel as such does not necessarily broaden. Haines considers Richard Tillinghast's *The Stonecutter's Hand*, a book with a suitably Jeffersonian title that comes laden with encomnia of the sort to which we have all become accustomed: "wonderfully gifted," "distinctive, bold and satisfying," and so on. Tillinghast is well-enough traveled, presumably on academic sabbaticals, and his verse, Haines says, exhibits "a certain competence" that is, likewise, of academic provenance. The tone, however, is too often merely prosaic, and when it seeks to rise (or fall) beneath this level, strained and unconvincing. It is not that Tillinghast is a bad poet for Haines, but simply an insufficiently ambitious one; he mostly plays it safe. There are such poets in every age, and the modest

pleasures they convey are not necessarily to be scorned. The problem for Haines arises when their merits are inflated, and the standard they should be measured against is thereby debased. We see this, of course, in places other than poetry book jackets; it is the replacement of criticism by advertising. If Richard Tillinghast is “wonderfully gifted” (and I have read his work with some pleasure myself), what description is left for Keats?

What makes Haines convincing—apart from the simple experiment any reader can make of comparing the best contemporary verse with that of the Modernist generation—is that he is a naturally generous and sympathetic reader who looks rather for what he can praise than what he must condemn. His inclination is thus because he wants, as a reader, to be nourished and enlarged, and he is hungry enough to acknowledge even thin gruel. He knows, however, when his belly has been left empty, and language has not been raised.

Haines is never merely dismissive; he sifts poems one by one, always the hopeful voyager. His praise is measured and just; his rejection is tinged with regret. You must disappoint him consistently and wilfully, as Dave Smith or C. K. Williams do, to draw his sting. But he will not abandon his standard or make obeisances to reputation. This applies to his own contemporaries as well as more recent poets. A volume of Anthony Hecht is “entertaining in the best sense of the word,” i.e., unfulfilling in any higher sense; Donald Justice is a poet of early mastery who never quite achieved ripened growth; Allen Ginsburg all too often rants rather than writes, and seems finally jejune. The poets are not alone in falling short, for the critics too have failed their duty. Haines singles out Helen Vendler in particular, as effusive in her praise of minor poets as she was vitriolic in dismissing the achievement of Jeffers. Haines does not say so, but the reciprocal exchange of compliments that characterizes much of contemporary criticism is to a considerable extent the function of academic back-slapping, in which favors are bestowed (tenure and grant applications, readings and residencies) and patronage dispensed.

Other sections of the book deal with the land and literature of Alaska, and memoirs of Haines’s youth. The most striking of the latter deals with his service as a naval sonarman in World War II, which took him to most of the principal engagements of the last two years of the war: the Marshalls, the Marianas, Saipan, Tinian, the Philippines, and Okinawa. Off the Philippines, he survived the great typhoon of December 1944 that did far more damage to the fleet than any of the battles, and at Okinawa he was in the thick of the kamikaze assaults. Brief and modest as the account is, it is a valuable addition to the literature of the war. Haines is candid about the shared community and

enforced intimacies of shipboard life, and the unique focus of energy that comes from life-endangering situations. War, as he suggests, both isolates and joins men with their fellows as does no other human activity. The atomic bombs that ended his war also ended war as men had known it, for in an age of such weapons no major war could henceforth be fought "from which any nation or people could conceivably emerge victorious" (187). In that sense, the bombs were a climactic event in human history. Until then, war had developed simultaneously with civilization, and both had reached their apogee together. The containment of warfare rather than its expansion was now the task of human society. This had been apparent to some even before the First World War; it was now obvious to all. Yet civilization was still wedded to violence, and its integration on a global scale made human competition and struggle all the wider and more consequential. As Haines remarks, "How we resolve, or fail to resolve, the tensions in this predicament, seems certain to determine the future of humanity on this planet" (187).

Haines found his own posture of retreat (and his own staged encounter with danger) in the Alaskan wilderness, as Jeffers had on the spur of the California coast, where he too sought to ritually "magic horror away from the house." Jeffers, too, brooded on the implications of atomic warfare, and the entire trajectory of his career can be read as a sustained meditation on the nature of violence, personal and political. It is in this large stance that Haines sees him, for, as he says, "if any writer of our time can be said to embody in his work the theme of apocalypse, it is he" (24).

In discussing Jeffers, Haines notes that in the postwar period he was still one of the poets everyone read, a part of the literary climate. He was also, and uniquely, a poet men followed. As we have seen, Haines moved to Monterey in 1952 because it was Jeffers country. It was a pilgrimage that many made, physically or spiritually, as I have documented in *The Tribute of His Peers*. Some still do. Tor House is a magnetic site rivaled only by Walden Pond on the literary map of America, and what draws people to it, now as more than half a century ago, is the sense of a vitalizing force that emanates from it. Haines identifies it as prophetic, and it is that note that makes Jeffers an iconic figure for him:

What concerns me most immediately at this moment is the voice of the poet as prophet and teacher; the poet as social critic, as speaker to the people. And what I find so insistent in Jeffers' work, from beginning to end, is that prophetic note that can on occasion become monotonous, perhaps repetitious, but that also embodies a truth of our times to be found nowhere else. (25)

These words come from Haines's 2001 keynote address to the Robinson Jeffers Association, a talk reprinted here and one which seems to have stimulated him to ponder not only Jeffers's legacy but his contemporary significance in a time of renewed war and jingoism. These reflections were further extended in a brief meditation on the "The Purse-Seine" that serves as a kind of pendant to it. Haines takes issue in this piece with Michael Lind's call in the *Hudson Review* for poets to rally to the colors in the wake of 9/11, and his dismissal of those such as Jeffers who withheld support for World War II after Pearl Harbor. Jeffers paid, and pays, a large price for refusing to succumb to the idea of the war as a noble cause, still the principal view of it in this country. Haines himself, in his wartime memoir, gives no indication of having entertained misgivings about his service at the time. The years though brought him a different perspective, from which Jeffers's principled isolationism appeared as an act of courage, and dissent in general as an essential corrective to consensus politics. In the rush to war in Afghanistan and the rising pressure to attack Iraq, Haines reflected, "a poet like Jeffers stands clear as a representative figure, one now needed as perhaps never before" (34).

This does not mean that Haines would have shared Jeffers's politics, even retrospectively, or that he would have taken a pacifist position such as that of William Everson, William Stafford, or Robert Lowell. It suggests rather an appreciation of Jeffers as someone who came to his oppositional stance from wide and deep reflection, and with a tragic sense of the inevitable consequences of history's greatest war both for his own country and for civilization as such. Such a figure—the man who brings prophetic clarity to great events—is indispensable, whether he affects those events directly or simply bears heroic witness to them.

Haines shows a subtle grasp of the quality of Jeffers's verse cadences and the immersion in classical and biblical tradition that gives them their distinctive stamp. But the "representative figure" he sees in him is not that of the Eliotic poet of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," nudging forward the inherited wisdom of his tribe, but as a truth-speaker often at odds with it. As Haines puts it, "To speak the truth as we see it: Nothing else can justify our claims to art, and the art of poetry" (26). As *we see it*: Haines's poet does not see truth, but makes it out of his deepest sensibility and conviction. There is no question here of being right or wrong, but only serious or trivial. The poet who does not take the risk of truth, Haines asserts, is a mere purveyor of "entertainment." Dante, Milton, Wordsworth: these men all took the risk. To their company, Haines adds Jeffers.

Perhaps Haines's truth-speaker should really be called a truth seeker, for no man's truth can be definitive and prescriptive for all. But the

poet's vocation, more than any other, demands that he address his fellows, and share what he has found. It may be that this knowledge is rebarbative, and will be rejected. It may be that its value will only be appreciated with the passage of time. The essential point is that the private quest for truth is inseparable from the public responsibility to communicate it. Haines points to other truth seekers in his time: Wallace Stevens, Edwin Muir, Hayden Carruth, Thomas McGrath, Adam Zagajewski. But it is Jeffers who is finally emblematic for him, not because his truth overrides these others, but because his commitment to speaking it shapes a verse of exemplary integrity. Haines quotes the famous line from "Self-Criticism in February," "I can tell lies in prose," only to respond that he "cannot imagine Jeffers lying even in prose!," and to cite his essay, "Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years" as a model of critical honesty and lucidity.

It is certain that John Haines has been a truth seeker, and a truth teller, in our own time. I think he would ask no higher praise, nor have I any to offer. His strictures on contemporary poetry find echo in Jeffers's comment in "The Purse-Seine" about "the recent young men" with their "hysteria, splintered gleams, [and] crackled laughter" (CP 2: 518). Jeffers was suggesting a poetry that was buckling under the strain of a terrible time and the imminence of a new war. Sixty years later, Haines lamented one that was too often settling for mere "entertainment," a phrase into which much both of censure and regret was distilled.

As for Haines himself, I would leave him the final word, in conversation with John A. Murray:

The only ambition I now have, if it can be called that, is to finish the work I still have to do, both in prose and verse, that remains unfinished, and perhaps to clarify for myself and my readers what my hopes for poetry are in the years to come. Whether poetry, as we now have it, is up to this is a question not to be decided by me but by those to come who can return poetry to something like its ancient authority: as a voice for humanity in that larger sense we seem to have lost. (109)

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REVIEWED BY BILL MOHR

In the decades immediately following World War II, literary regionalism took hold on the West Coast as a viable context for aspiring poets to embed themselves within; both Northern and Southern California served as radical fountainheads for several newly empowered self-proclaimed, antinomian communities. By the early 1970s, the San Francisco Renaissance seemed to have passed its peak and Venice West was a long mourned memory, but if so, it was only because the full measure of what I have termed the West Coast Poetry Renaissance was yet to begin the most important stage of its trajectory. Language writing and post-beat scenes were coalescing with remarkable intensity on the West Coast in the years leading up to and following America's defeat in the Vietnam War. By 1985, small presses in both San Francisco and Los Angeles had combined to produce more poetry from the independent press movement than any other region in the United States, including New York. Given the enormity of this poetic insurgency, Jack Foley has exercised considerable skill and assiduous devotion in editing a two-volume "timeline" compendium of California's contemporary poets in which he surveys, records, and documents the incremental growth of an extraordinary number of diverse artistic scenes during the past seven decades, some of which still linger as alternative literary organizations or in informal, renitent clusters of coffeehouses and used bookstores.

If Robinson Jeffers serves as a representative, in fact, almost paradigmatic, figure within any roll call of poets whose preference for solitude and isolation marks their poetic achievement, then most of the poets in *Visions and Affiliations* serve as all too willing volunteers of a stark contrast. Even poets who deeply admired Jeffers and his aura of social antipathy, such as Charles Bukowski, were themselves equally adamant about residing within easy reach of urban mobility. Indeed, California's two largest concentrations of people, Los Angeles and the Bay Area (San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley), are the primary generators of almost all the affiliations annotated in Foley's comprehensive, diachronic tour of a complex period in American arts and literature. Given the year-by-year progression of the book's survey, Foley's decision of when to introduce any particular poet becomes the editorial chronotope that shapes the overall feel and pace of his narrative. Under the listings

for 1958, for example, Philip Levine gets an extended listing that includes quotations from a book, *They Feed They Lion*, which was published fourteen years later. Since, in 1958, Levine was barely known outside of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, it would have been far more succinct to have introduced him ten years later, when Wesleyan University Press published *Not This Pig*, and to have urged readers to take a quick look at the nearby entry under 1970 for *Waiting at the Station*, an anthology that marked the coalescence in Fresno, California, of one of the first enduring contemporary communities of academic poets.

Sometimes the "collage" quality of the sequence of poets actually works in favor of missing configurations. For instance, on pages 63–64, Foley makes use of James Shebl's *In This Wild Water: The Suppressed Poems of Robinson Jeffers* (Ward Ritchie Press, 1976) to describe Jeffers's stand-off with Random House over the publication of *The Double Axe and Other Poems*. The page facing the start of this entry (page 62) includes details from William Everson's life, and the juxtaposition of Everson's life and of Jeffers's vociferous objections to Roosevelt's foreign policy roused me enough to start searching for the work of scholars who have beveled Jeffers's poetry into a consideration of the pacifist movement during World War II. Foley does, in fact, point to the influence of Jeffers on William Everson (Brother Antonius)'s *River-Root* (page 146), especially in terms of Jeffers's use of narrative; additionally, on page 446 Foley quotes Albert Gelpi's description of William Everson's edition of a selection of Robinson Jeffers's poems, *Granite & Cypress*. This is to say that links between Jeffers and other important West Coast poets of this period are present in Foley's historical mosaic, but all of this, however, is for a reader to assemble on her or his own. A single, interwoven index of both volumes would have been a massive undertaking, and yet it would have multiplied the usefulness of the books fourfold as the hidden rhizomes of intermingled connections were made visible.

Foley rarely pauses to consider possible rubrics under which poets could be brought into surprising contiguities. Instead, he concentrates on documenting the careers and projects of poets rather than analyzing them in any consistent fashion. Foley's books in some ways seem like a combination of a literary version of a Ken Burns documentary and an affable, very knowledgeable docent at a major museum, with the important difference that this "docent" is himself a practicing painter who knows first-hand the landscape depicted in the museum's collection. Several of the poets who receive substantial, if intermittent, attention in these two volumes will be familiar figures to anyone who began their study of contemporary poetry with Donald Allen's *New American Poetry* and Ron Silliman's *In the American Tree*. Both Robert Duncan and Michael McClure, for instance, have comprehensive accounts of their

careers amplified by considerable detail. In that regard, Foley shows himself at times to be an insatiable researcher. At Bancroft Library, he retrieved an album of Jess reading and singing his work. According to Foley, Jess had completely forgotten about the recording. This is the kind of book that one can peruse with confidence that it will make your next trip to the library be one devoted to a search for some book acknowledged in it. Foley's citation of Ron Silliman's affection for Ron Loewinsohn's *Against the Silence to Come* has certainly whetted my desire to get hold of a copy.

Foley himself admits at the end of the second volume that he is all too aware of having left out significant scenes and poets. I doubt that Northern California has suffered equally in that regard. David Lerner and Café Babar deserve their "air-time" in Foley's multi-decade trajectory, but the almost complete absence from either volume of any recognition of Leland Hickman, Dennis Cooper, Eloise Klein Healy, Holly Prado, Harry Northup, James Krusoe, Ron Koertge, Charles Webb, Deena Metzger, and Maurya Simon is bothersome. To give four full pages to a full-length reprinting of an utterly banal "erotic" poem by Floyd Salas entitled "Pussy Pussy Everywhere" and not to acknowledge the publication of Hickman's *Great Slave Lake Suite* in 1980 or Dennis Cooper's *The Tenderness of the Wolves* two years later amounts to an egregious oversight, especially given that both Hickman and Cooper edited magazines that were every bit as significant as some of the other magazines edited in California between 1940 and 2000.

That all of the names I listed between Hickman and Simon are associated with Southern California may explain their absence. Perhaps Foley should have brought on an editorial assistant familiar with Los Angeles poetry to help review his project in its penultimate stage. Such a person would not only have reminded him of Grover Jacoby's magazines (*Recurrence* and *Variegation*) but also nudged Foley to take another look at his own backyard: Santa Cruz had a lively scene for a couple of decades and one can only wince to see Stephen Kessler and Greg Hall go completely unnoticed in this timeline. I would have also liked to have had more detail about the life and work of Jerry Ratch, a poet who deserves much more attention. Despite these shortcomings, Foley deserves much appreciation for the references he has made accessible in these volumes. How many books are able to make a claim that they have made a sincere attempt to recount in a fairly objective fashion the "language wars" of the 1980s that engulfed the Bay Area? If poets began to take their responsibility to *think* about their art's relationship to larger questions of cultural economy, the avant-garde on the West Coast certainly deserves the credit, and Foley's second volume in this set

makes easily available some of the crucial public exchanges and events that marked the emergence of alternative scenes.

All too often those who examine West Coast poetry privilege one portion or region over another. If Foley's project falters on occasion, *Visions and Affiliations* nevertheless remains a significant undertaking imbued with the urgent intimacy of poetic commitment. These volumes mark the continued development of a critical dialogue that withstands the old prejudices of urban sibling rivalry and instead allows us to savor the enormous variety that has always marked the undertakings of poets positioned on the West Coast.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Deborah Fleming has published "A man who does not exist': The Irish Peasant in the Work of W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge" and articles on

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Ugo Gervasoni teaches English language and literature at Liceo Scientifico Lorenzo Mascheroni in Bergamo, Italy. When he first read a poem by Robinson Jeffers, some years ago, he immediately realized he had come across a very unique artist, who was able to communicate new ways of understanding the world. Gervasoni has translated and illustrated works by several artists: Herman Melville's "Bartleby," Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere* (1798 text), Walt Whitman's "The Sleepers," James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Julian and Maddalo," and Robinson Jeffers's "Roan Stallion" and *Selected Poems*. He has recently finished his translation of "Tamar." Like his other books, it is handwritten and illustrated.

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

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