Jeffers Studies

William Everson

The Far-Cast Spear

A Foreword to

The Women at Point Sur

by Robinson Jeffers

Newly Revised and Enlarged from

Fragments of an Older Fury

Brother Antoninus

oyez 1966

A Publication of
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Editor's Note

This issue of *Jeffers Studies* is the fruit of a friendship. William Everson, poet and printer, known as Brother Antoninus during the period when he was a Dominican lay brother, 1951-69, wrote two books about Jeffers' work, *Robinson Jeffers: Fragments of an Older Fury* and *The Excesses of God*. Late in life he gave his friend Steven Herrmann, scholar and Jungian psychologist, a revised version of the chapter from the former book which concerned Jeffers' longest and most vexing poem, *The Women at Point Sur*. Everson charged Herrmann with the task of seeing that this final version of his thoughts on Jeffers' poem was published. That revised chapter is the bulk of this issue, which includes a preface to the revision by Everson himself, an account of issues encountered while preparing it for publication by Rob Kafka, and an afterword in which Herrmann explains in greater detail the points which Everson raises. Thus we pay a debt to Jeffers' foremost admirer and defender.

This issue also contains reviews of three important additions to Jeffers scholarship: the concluding volume of James Karman's edition of *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers,* the latest revision of Karman's assessment of Jeffers' life and career, *Robinson Jeffers: Poet and Prophet*, and the latest collection of critical essays on Jeffers, *The Wildness That Attracts Us,* edited by ShaunAnne Tangney.

Also, with this issue *Jeffers Studies* switches to an annual publication format.

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A Note on the Contents

Robert Kafka

At the conclusion of the Robinson Jeffers Association conference in Asilomar CA in 2012, Steven Herrmann presented me with two documents he had received from William Everson (the former Brother Antoninus) in the summer of 1992. According to Herrmann, Everson had told him, "See that this gets published." The longest was a revision, carefully prepared and seemingly typeset, but with a few typographical errors, of the final chapter, "The Far-Cast Spear," of Antoninus's book *Fragments of an Older Fury* (Berkeley: Oyez, 1968). The shorter was a fifteen-page typescript titled "The Roots of Incarnation: Jeffers' *Point Sur* as a Promethean Myth," which bears the date 7/20/92, apparently in Herrmann's hand. I will refer to these two documents as FCS2 and RI, respectively. The original version of the essay in *Fragments* will be referred to as FCS1.

RI must be the earlier of the two new documents. It begins with a brief description of Everson's prose compositional method and of the concluding phase of the publication of *Fragments*, which is here presented as Everson's preface. The rest is a reprinting of section IX of FCS1 (supplied for context, in the author's explanation), and an interpolated section X on the Prometheus myth. This new material has been organized differently in the later and longer revision, FCS2. In addition, FCS2 breaks the long exposition of "Prelude" in section XII of FCS1 into shorter sections, numbered XV—XVIII. The only textual change is a replacement of one sentence (the paragraph beginning "The power of the depth," FSC1, p. 145) with the interpolated paragraph on page 44 beginning "This seems an odd thing to say." As the material in RI has been incorporated in FCS2, RI is not presented separately here.

This was not the first time I had seen FCS2. Everson had originally intended it as a contribution to Robert Brophy's collection of essays, *Robinson Jeffers: Dimensions of a Poet* (Fordham, 1995). Brophy struggled with it, as he had (and everyone else, to my knowledge) with FCS1. He sent a copy to me in 1993, and also to at least three other other Jeffersians, asking for comments and for an abstract, if we could produce one. Lack of time prevented me from obliging, even if I had been able, and I do not know if others responded. The upshot was that FCS2 was

not included in *Dimensions*, and a chapter ("All Flesh is Grass") from Everson's book *The Excesses of God* was substituted.

Everson died in June of 1994. This revision is therefore among the last things that he authored. The effort he put into it is apparent, as well as his conviction that it was among his most important statements on Jeffers. While readers will still struggle to grasp his understanding of *Point Sur*, it seems fitting for *Jeffers Studies* to present this material now, as his final statement on the subject – along with Steven Herrmann's reflections on the material. We have retained and labeled "Preface" the brief comment on compositional method and publication history from RI, as it does not appear elsewhere. The aforementioned typographical errors have been silently corrected.

One further emendation must be noted. Section IX of Everson's text ends with a reference to Mt. Sinai in both FCS1 and FCS2. In the intermediary "The Roots of Incarnation," the reference is to Golgotha. The editors have retained the latter reading, assuming that Everson caught the error in the published text (FCS1), corrected it in RI – and then lost it again in the final revision (FCS2).

But the matter bears closer inquiry. Everson says in section VII of both FCS1 and FCS2 that Lawrence Clark Powell "notes that he saw a typescript of Point Sur in which Jeffers had labeled Barclay's apotheosis on the mountain as "the Mount Sinai Scene." This statement is not found in the only Powell work cited in Everson's list of Works Cited, *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and his Work*. Perhaps it is from another of Powell's long list of publications; the editors lament the sometime carelessness of Everson's bibliographic references, and have corrected them where identified. But no typescript of *Point Sur* survives, and so it is doubtful that Powell could have seen one, as he came on the scene four years after the composition of *Point Sur*, by which time Una Jeffers had assumed control of Jeffers's literary effects. She knew the monetary value of this material for her household, and guarded and disposed of it carefully – to which we owe much of its preservation. But by that time the typescript of *Point Sur* had probably already been destroyed. I recently visited the Beinecke Library at Yale to see if such a notation exists on the manuscript of *Point Sur*, or possibly on the page proofs or galley proofs. Such a notation on a typescript would be unusual, but not on a manuscript. But my examination of the manuscript and the two proof sets did not turn it up.

Much of the action of *Point Sur* occurs on Pico Blanco, but the relevant chapters seem to be XIV and XV, with their repeated echo from Golgotha, "It is finished," and Barclay's subsequent apotheosis through madness. We have therefore tentatively decided the Golgotha/Mt Sinai contradiction in favor of Golgotha.

A few more anomalies must be mentioned. Everson did not include page numbers, or parenthetical citations, for his quotations. They have been supplied. In his quotations from H. D. F. Kitto, he has converted some words (hamartia, for instance) from the Greek to the Roman alphabet. We have allowed these to stand. The quote attributed to Santayana on page 40 does not occur in Santayana's oeuvre. He may have made such a statement conversationally, although this has been disputed. On page 11 Everson attributes the block quote beginning "The most extreme" to Carpenter – but it is not to be found in the only Carpenter text in the Works Cited, and we have been unable to find it in Carpenter's other writings on Jeffers. We have substituted "[Source unknown]." Similarly, on page 23 Everson attributes the quote beginning "Jeffers' desire to deal solely with the elemental passions" to Gilbert – but it comes instead from Horace Gregory, so we have made that change as well. A number of works were left off the Works Cited list, and others were mis-cited. We have made corrections and additions where necessary. In places where it is unclear whom Everson is quoting, we have added context in brackets.

Preface

By William Everson

In the winter and spring of 1966 I was putting the final touches on my book *Robinson Jeffers: Fragments of an Older Fury* for Oyez, the Berkeley avant garde publishing house. The year before, its editor and proprietor, Robert Hawley, had approached me to collect the papers on Jeffers I had been sporadically publishing in magazines since the poet's death in 1962. Shaping the items for book format had placed me squarely in the draft of Jeffers' torrential dynamic, and my mind was ablaze with possibility. I began to reel off massive new chapters on Jeffers' works while the deadline came and went. The volume was beginning to bulk up beyond the agreed upon pagination, and no end in sight. Most alarming was my launching out on a piece about Jeffers as a religious figure. I have related in my foreword to *The Excesses of God* (Stanford, 1989) how Hawley prevailed upon me to forego my placement of it as the finale to *Fragments* and shape it to a book in its own right, letting my next-longest essay, "The Far-Cast Spear," shape the close of this one.

Meanwhile the printer, Graham MacKintosh, had also expressed concern at the inordinate slowness of my composition. He had taken on a footloose linotype operator who had jumped at the chance to set type for a book about a famous author, but things were not working out well. In an attempt to expedite matters Hawley asked me if there was anything he could do. I told him I could use a typist to help shape my rough drafts into editorial form. But Graham argued that his linotypist could do that directly in hot metal and thereby eliminate a step in the process. Hawley concurred.

A grievous miscalculation. They reckoned without the inevitable authorial *gaffe* to gum up the works. My prose method involves a first draft in continuous longhand to get the sweep of the text out on its way without editorial impediment. But on my first typewritten draft, which I generally do myself, I isolate the paragraphs one to a page, thereby enabling me to shift them around if necessary, [which] obviates a lot of repetitious typing, before and after the specific passages chosen. Generally this is done with scissors and paste, but the aesthetic opportunity to see the paragraph intact before my eyes proves irresistible, and I willingly absorb the extra time and fussiness this method entails. It helps to more perfectly mold the paragraphs and keep the texture even.

The problem was that I found myself too deep in the text to pull back and not deep enough to pull through. In the monastery at Kentfield in Marin County I kept revising and expanding my single-page paragraphs and mailing them over to the printers in Berkeley to be reset, corrected and returned.

Suddenly the linotypist swore that he had had enough. Correcting one paragraph three times, then confronted with a fourth, he threw down his eyeshade and stalked out, talking to himself as he left. As a result Graham, who was a pressman by training, had to hunt and peck his way across the linotype keyboard to finish the job.

So finally Hawley became adamant. He insisted that we forego the incipient "Excesses of God" chapter and wind up with my *Point Sur* explication, "The Far-Cast Spear." I had recently extended it with an interlude on the Prometheus myth which posits the attribution of incarnation. I soon finished the section but it proved too late, and the work went to press without it.

The book itself is long out of print, but I recently came across the missing section, and reading it over I began to feel that the thought touched fire in the disregarded archetype, mostly deemed an absurdity by our recent scientific establishment. I present herewith the text of this missing section, and, for the convenience of the reader in grasping its place in the study, the section preceding it. This duplicates with minor alterations the corresponding text of the original printing. But only when *Fragments* is reprinted, which the revival of Jeffers studies may make possible, will this incarnational meditation find its wholeness. Until then may students of modern myth experience herein something of the source of what they seek. It begins on page 113 of the published edition.

William Everson

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In my paper on Jeffers' fine meditative poem "Post Mortem" I sought to show how a conscious, powerfully deployed artistry belied the charges of crudity and shapelessness often leveled against his work. But because many critics concede to Jeffers' shorter poems a certain controlled sufficiency of form (even Yvor Winters acknowledged that "Hurt Hawks II" is "quite fine"), it might be argued that such a detailed explanation of a carefully selected minor poem really offers little toward the rehabilitation of Jeffers as a major American writer. The decline of Jeffers' reputation, once so emphatic, was occasioned, we are told, by a reconsideration of

his larger narratives, wherein the themes of excess and violence are chiefly met. From this point of view, only when these narratives are shown to be examples of fine poetic art in their own right can any real restoration of Jeffers' reputation be entertained. I propose, therefore, to take up the most difficult and forbidding of all his poems, not indeed to submit it to the same density of textual analysis as was attempted with "Post Mortem," but still to consider it with sufficient attention to arrive at some understanding of its specific weight, its intrinsic substance. As a beginning, two sections will be devoted to the critical problem. Before taking up the powerful assault of the hostile, it seems best to consider the reservations of those who think of themselves as his friends. Even for them *The Women at Point Sur,* from the moment of its inception, was a stumbling block.

I

When on June 30, 1927, Jeffers' monumental narrative was formally published, his career, cresting rapidly after a belated beginning, was at that critical point best described as "penultimate." Forty years old, the poet had waited long. When recognition came, it came dramatically—he was suddenly the kind of dark horse sensation every obscure poet dreams of but rarely becomes. Not only had the privately printed *Tamar* scored an underground success among the intelligentsia—a fact so improbable, given the conditions of the book's production and distribution, that it can only be called a miracle—but a year later the trade edition, bearing the imprint of a leading *avant garde* publisher, fortified with strong new work and retitled *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems,* had cut a swath like a scorched earth campaign through the studios and bistros of Greenwich Village, to climb to a smashing success in the national press. Now, on this new eve of publication, the iron that *Tamar* had heated was glowing red in the banked coals of *Roan Stallion.* Another triumph would make it white hot. Could the sensational promise of the first great breakthrough be crystallized? Or was this new poet merely one of those meteoric flashes that emerge, given decades like the twenties, to burn out with one sensational book and never be seen again? For the poet's admirers the moment had all the suspense of the silent film serials with which Hollywood inveigled Saturday's groundlings back to the box office. They had announced his emergence with the most extravagant praise, and they had to have him follow through, clinch his place among the positive voices of his time. As for the poet himself, we do not know his mood. The image he gave, ensconced in his stone tower, going his own way with glyptic unconcern, has truth, certainly, but hardly the

whole of it. There are signs that behind the great stone face he, too, was human.

The Women at Point Sur moved into this situation of extreme suspense in a way that no one could have predicted. The book had everything that was expected: the same unreal landscape, the same obsessive atmosphere, the same blasted men and lustful women. True, there were none of the beautiful, grave, somehow reassuring lyrics that had tempered the flickering narrative violence of the first two books. But that fact itself ought to increase the impact, for this work had bulk; it stood alone between its covers and demanded that it and nothing else be reckoned with.

And yet what should have been a smash—if incest, suicide and violence had done it before, then incest, rape and violence could do it again—was only a wounding, agonized deflation. Nor can it be said that simply an over-ripe inflation was mercifully punctured. The book was not a *gaffe*. It stood too powerfully apart for that. The incredible power, the unfailing passion, the massive running thrust of sheer language driven beyond the extreme any language ought to be forced to go—all the impact that the *Roan Stallion* volume had promised was certainly there, and greater, and more of it, more inclusive. But . . . *What did it mean?* That was the question. What was it all about? Men who had prayed for a smash like they had never prayed for grace had the awful feeling that their prayers were answered. But God, who had not deigned to shake their hearts, had with this doomed appalling book, gone them something better. He had kicked them in the teeth.

And the reviews, when they came, registered it. They carried the bewildered responses of bewildered men. The appearance of the hoped-for masterpiece that would clinch the achievement, that would conclusively vindicate what they had asserted in the speakeasies and proclaimed in the press, must now be postponed. But when metal is glowing, delay, any delay, is fatal and so it was with Jeffers. The great moment passed. Though the work that followed would reassure many, *Point Sur,* coming when the iron was cherry and crisping for the hammer, the decisive stroke that seals prestige forever—*Point Sur* was cold water. From then on, and forever afterward, what hung over the name and the fame of Robinson Jeffers was not an exclamation point but a question mark. No matter with what restraint he might limn the frame of *Cawdor;* no matter how sensitively, how tenderly he might delineate the presence of *The Loving Shepherdess,* there stood, always, in the mind of the reader, that mad minister Barclay, glaring out of the buckeye thickets of the imagination and the memory, his eyes glazed, his lips frothed, and his exposed genitals, obscene, revolting, stained with the blood of his own daughter's virtue.

The setback, for all the monumental aloofness that kept him immured in his tower by the sea, must have touched the poet to the quick. In the work that followed, among the shorter lyrics, those briefer revealments in which his personal feelings, as distinct from the cosmic vision of his narratives, were so sensitively expressed, would come one called "The Bird with the Dark Plumes." I think it reveals more than the poet meant it to. There is a high exultance in the hurt, but for all the exultance, can the hurt be hid?

> The bird with the dark plumes in my blood,
> That never for one moment however I patched my truces
> Consented to make peace with the people,
> It is pitiful now to watch her pleasure in a breath of tempest
> Breaking the sad promise of spring.
> Are these that morose hawk's wings, vaulting, a mere mad swallow's,
> The snow-shed peak, the violent precipice?
> Poor outlaw that would not value their praise do you prize their blame?
> "Their liking," she said, "was a long creance,
> But let them be kind enough to hate me that opens the sky."
> It is almost as foolish my poor falcon
> To want hatred as to want love; and harder to win. (*CP* 1: 402)

The long creance is a string fastened to a falcon's heel to prevent her escape during training. By a strange irony it also carries the meaning of belief, of faith. Was the snapped string that opened the sky the faithlessness of his friends?

For the doubt, the bafflement, the ambivalence, the shock that greeted *Point Sur* has never really lifted from it. There would come the outright attacks of enemies, and that is normal, that clearly is to be expected. But the doubt, the embarrassment of one's friends and admirers is a thing that cuts a man where no armor protects him. The *gall* of their apologies! Ten years later when he compiled his *Selected Poetry* he kept only a page from *Point Sur,* but in the introduction he mentions, proudly, his foremost work, and he mentions it first: *"The Women at Point Sur* seems to me—in spite of grave faults—the most inclusive, and poetically the most intense of any of my poems." And then, stiff-lipped: "[I]t is omitted from this selection because it is the least understood and least liked; and because it is the longest" (*CP* 4: 390). In his heart the poet receives the rejection of the best he has done by the best of his friends as a kind of killing disbelief, a profound failure of faith. He lives Christ's gaze on Judas. Oh, he can forgive the wound—seventy times seven, if need be. But he can never be healed of it.

II

To begin, then, I want to take up the reaction to *Point Sur* of Jeffers' admirers—not the initial bafflement but the considered judgment of later commentators. For by looking at the reservations his friends have for the poem we may be able to bring into focus what the total attacks of his enemies only obscure. If we can settle with these difficulties, the thrusts of detractors can be met in their own way; our ground will, at least, have been cleared of ambiguities.

"Of all Jeffers' work," writes Lawrence Clark Powell, in his pioneer study of the Californian, "it is this long and complex poem which most puzzles the general reader," and goes on:

> The poem's weakness, as I see it, lies in its lack of balance: climaxes of lust and terror are superimposed, until the reader's sensibilities are nearly benumbed . . . [but] the poem is strung on a loom of beautiful language which, at times, rises to exalted heights. (43-44)

Carpenter writes:

> The most extreme (and the least successful) of all Jeffers' narrative poems focused most sharply on the problem of violence . . . Extreme literary violence resulted in complete literary failure.
> [Source unknown]

And Squires remarks:

> Whatever rhetorical success the poem has, it fails to realize the manifold hopes that Jeffers entertained. Even as a study in abnormal psychology it is not successful, for the psychology with its excessively Freudian stratagems has merely the effect of mechanizing and defeating the characters. (34)

Only Rudolph Gilbert seems to have accepted *Point Sur* without reservation, seeing in its hero a figure powerful enough to stand beside the tormented giants of Shakespeare and Dostoevski and Ibsen:

> The Rev. Dr. Barclay, the protagonist of *The Women at Point Sur,* is a literary type worthy to be ranked with Hamlet, Ivan Karamazov, and Brand. Dr. Barclay is a man who in the end is powerless before the unconquerable power of biological life. He may be likened to Oedipus trying to solve the riddle of the sphinx, a universal humanity seeking itself and destroyed by itself, like Hamlet in despair over the external fixity of things, Karamazov martyred by doubt and a great sin, Brand, bruised and bleeding, wishing "everything and nothing," eternal *Christus futurus* and *homo futurus* in conflict.

> In Dr. Barclay Jeffers has created a symbol of the truth, terribly realized, that the individual cannot exist singly for himself alone, like a Lucretian atom, but is of "the mold to break away from." In this tragic poem Jeffers has touched, as does Pascal, the void outside human existence. In no other poem does his fancy reach such an eminence of unendurable height. The deep *Weltschmerz,* the blind race of man in fetters, is heroically conceived as it might have been by Michael Angelo or Beethoven. Here the Nietzschean *"Will zur Macht"* becomes through poetic vision, a prophesy. A new note is struck—"God thinks through action"—suggesting Aquinas's *"Intellectus igitur et voluntas in Deo non sunt ut potentiae, sed solum ut actiones."* The Blakean "God is no more" in Jeffers has been replaced with "humanity is no more." God alone must be realized; even sacrifice of the human, the womanly, may become necessary to this realization. (109-10)

If I have permitted Professor Gilbert to speak at such length, despite a certain efflorescence of expression and a sweeping eclecticism of reference, it is in order to place Barclay where I think he belongs, among his tortured peers in world literature.

This, of course, has been specifically denied. Mrs. Monjian points out that the difference between Dostoevski's Raskolnikov and a typical Jeffers protagonist, Margrave, is that

> while the young Russian suffers and repents so that at the novel's end he shines forth a finer-edged human being, Margrave doggedly believes in his murder's justification until he hangs himself to spare himself . . . .
>
> Since many of Jeffers' tragedies are rooted in Greek tragedy, it seems evident that he admires these great plays from which Aristotle made his observations. And therefore it seems justifiable to apply some of Aristotle's derived principles to the dramatic narratives. (83-84)

She is forced to conclude that "on Aristotelian terms Jeffers does not succeed." If this is not wholly true, for Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska have stated flatly of *Roan Stallion* that "no narrative poem written by an American during the twentieth century is a better example of the classical rules of unity" (Birth, 405), it is nevertheless true enough to serve as a generalization. The real question is, taken simply as a judgment, what is it worth?

III

For H. D. F. Kitto, it isn't worth much. His book *Greek Tragedy* makes it clear that as far as Aristotelian terms were concerned, the great Greek tragedians themselves are not infrequently found to deviate.

> We may now inquire what is the relation of Aristotle's theory to Aeschylus. The answer is, roughly, None whatever. Aristotle's tragic hero, who must be neither good nor bad, but average (or a little better) and 'like' us, is the Sophoclean hero who in himself pre-figures the human tragedy, all of it. He must be a blend of good and bad, strong and weak, or his ruin will mean nothing. The Aeschylean hero, who is not intended to sum up and typify in his own breast the tragic strength and weakness of man, need not be a blend and therefore cannot be 'like us'; he must be only the sinner, with so much characterization as to make him intelligible. He is, notwithstanding this, far from being the completely wicked man in whose downfall Aristotle refused to be interested; he is not a complete man at all, for we see (as of course in Sophocles too) only that part of him that belongs to the drama, and it is a single part; and, what is more important, he acts not from evil motives but from moral blindness. (110-11)

Of special interest to the problem of Jeffers:

> Since the Aeschylean hero is so single-minded we need to be careful with the doctrine of hamartia. In Aristotle's theory this is the flaw, be it great or small, moral or intellectual, without which the hero would not have fallen nor his character have been a tragic one. The hubris of Xerxes or Agamemnon is not this at all; it is something without which these heroes would not exist; *it is all of them that matters*. (111) [Italics mine.]

Or, in regard to certain dramatic sequences in *Prometheus Bound:*

> The choice of these and the order of their appearance is not arbitrary, but it is by no means inevitable; we cannot say that they come . . . by Aristotle's law of inevitable or probable sequence. It would be possible and just as natural for Io to appear before Oceanus—but this does not involve Aristotle's censure of plays in which scenes could be transposed without making any difference. Aristotle's rule is not valid here. There is a law, but it is one of increasing tension, not of 'natural' or logical sequence. (58-59)
>
> Wherever we look therefore in *Medea* we find that Euripides differs from Aristotle's theory and Sophocles' practice, and that not merely on the surface but radically. . . . (192)
>
> Medea is drawn stark as the strongest possible impersonation of this force; balance of character is necessarily denied her . . . Euripides is not asking us to sympathize with her . . . but to understand her, to understand that such things are, that Medeas and Jasons exist, poetically . . . if not actually. . . . (194)

> He is presenting to us his tragic conception that the passions and unreason to which humanity is subject are its greatest scourge. This implies no tragic interlock between character and situation; the situation is nothing but the setting for the outburst of unreason, the channel along which it rushes. What matters now is not that the situation must be convincing and illuminating, not even that the heroine be convincing as a person; but that her passion must be, in however extreme a form, a fundamental and familiar one. If Medea is in this sense true, we shall not stay to object that she is not likely. (196)

"[L]est we be tempted," Kitto says, "to think that these [differences] are only casual licenses taken by the poet which can, with luck, be explained away, we ought to observe how fundamental is the divergence between the poet and the philosopher here" (188).

It is a divergence as old as man's heart. Mark Van Doren, who found Jeffers with *Tamar* and lost him with *Point Sur,* defines, in his famous essay on the *Iliad,* "the main art a poet must learn":

> the art of standing at the right distance from his matter, of keeping the right relation to it, and of using, along with the knowledge he brings, the knowledge he gains while he goes. With the poet, as with the historian, the position he takes is everything, and we shall not believe him unless he maintains it. (17)

Shall we not? If position is everything, then the minor poet is the equal of the major one, for each determines his own place. Longfellow maintains, with the historian, his distance from Evangeline with infinitely more success than Shakespeare does from Hamlet, Milton from Satan, or Goethe from Faust, and still we do not believe him. But Kitto reminds us:

> Euripides sacrifices . . . external tidiness to directness of expression, being in this truly Greek; for surely the greatness of all Greek art lies not in its ability to achieve beauty of form (never the first aim of the great artist), but in its absolute sincerity to the underlying idea. (208)

It is this "directness of expression," this passion, this total commitment to the underlying motive, which I wish to accent as the key to the achievement of Robinson Jeffers.

IV

For the correspondence upon which Gilbert identified Barclay with the other suffering heroes of our literature was made upon an equally processive stripping away, a reduction through the accumulation of

experience to the essential flaw of his humanity, the flaw that is not accidental at all, but precisely *all of him that matters*. This processive stripping away, this reduction of excrescence upon excrescence to the point of annihilation, produces a different form and style than the one validated by Aristotle, ordained as it was to a point of view which assumed a metaphysic centered upon an abiding principle of limit in the cosmos. W. Norris Clarke, S.J., in a study of the origins of Greek philosophical attitudes, writes:

> [T]he inability of the early Greek thinkers to transcend material categories or to distinguish between philosophy and natural science, their growing preoccupation with astronomical problems, and the very manner in which they framed their fundamental problem, "What is the first principle *out of which* all things are formed?", gradually led them—if not Anaximander, at least his successors—to identify the infinite with the indeterminate, formless substratum or raw material of the universe, the primeval chaos of matter in itself, as yet unperfected by the limit of form. Emerging out of it and opposed to it was the finished or perfect cosmos, formed, limited and intelligible. (174)

Thus for Plato and Aristotle both,

> the principle of limitation is consistently identified with number, form, idea, and being, as the source of intelligibility and perfection. The principle of illimitation, on the other hand, is identified with the formlessness and indeterminacy of pure matter and multiplicity as such, and therefore with "otherness" or nonbeing, as the source of unintelligibility and imperfection. (176)

But by the time of Plotinus, five centuries later,

> [t]he emergence of the new notion of infinity seems to have been provoked not by any internal progress of philosophical speculation by itself but by the impact of the mystery religions of the East, now infiltrating the Roman Empire on all sides. The latter brought with them a new notion of the divinity, a divinity of power and mystery, master of the limitless spaces of the heavens discovered by the new Syrian astronomy, above all rational human concepts, but with whom the believer could enter into salvific personal union by mystical or other non-rational means. (184)

This transcendental acquisition from the East must have found a fertile ground in the Dionysian element in Greek culture, which of course has come down in mythology, ritual and drama, if not in philosophy, as itself a valid element of the divine, and which actually produced the creative

tension in Greek sensibility, until the triumph of Rome, with its passion for order and law, re-emphasized the rational in the philosophical heritage. Nevertheless, the underlying tension, inherited and passed forward, achieved its highest expression in Christianity, where the torn God of Dionysos Zagreus, the transcendental God of the mystery cults, and the "rational" God of Plato and Aristotle found their ultimate synthesis and resolution. But the Protestant insistence on a dichotomy between reason and faith led, after the Enlightenment, to the triumph of a dissociated rationality, until the cleavage between these psychic dimensions forced that fracturing so markedly defined and deplored in modern man. It is within the dimension of this culturally received, yet rationally discounted cleavage in the collective psyche, that Jeffers, as well as every other modern poet, wrote.

As far as his Greek heritage was concerned, Jeffers, of course, spoke from both the Dionysian and Apollonian perspectives. Squires has shown how his narratives divide in formation between these two poles, which he identifies as "the saga formula and the classical, the diffuse and the unified" (30). For him, the "unified" is typified by *Roan Stallion*. The exemplar of the "diffuse" however, is typified by *Point Sur,* his judgment of which we have already seen. But if my insight is correct, the cleavage goes back to the crisis in Greek culture, between the earlier concept of the divine as *limit* over against the mythologically-intuited apprehension of chaos as itself divine, and the later, grafted-on, orientally-derived concept of the divine as Infinite. It is with some such background in mind that I hope to redress Squires' judgment, and establish that the "diffuse" not the "unified" is the keystone of Jeffers' achievement. My intuition is that the more deeply seated Dionysian element in his psyche enables him to commit a more powerfully centered volitional resource to processively breaking down the culturally-affixed limits of his figures, and that intensity, not contour, is the key to his genius. If it is true that his sense of form is provisional, in that he establishes it in order to transcend it, it is no less true that its establishment is quite adequate to the tasks of transcendence, and his singular acuity of visual concretization is crucial to this purpose. I believe that the superiority of intensity was for him validated by the fact that his Christian-oriented religious intuition enabled him to conceive of an infinite God greater than any series of limitations the Greek concept of the finite, seated in his culture, was able to bring against it.

For the mind of every man is balanced upon the creative tension within him of conceptual mediation between the opposed polarities of the finite and the infinite, the essential and the existential. The exact equation between them is responsible for the basic human types, which, in aesthetics, constitute the classical and the romantic temperaments.

R. G. Collingwood has accented the difference between classicism and romanticism as a distinction between concern for craft, for making, and concern for the subject. And indeed, were it not obvious in his work, Jeffers has affirmed the "romantic" solution by declaring that "the poetry is in the subject." If, therefore, it goes without saying that Jeffers is a true "Dionysian," it must be insisted, against the critical prejudice of our time, that his transcendent greatness above contemporary formulas is assured, not denied, by this fact. For that he has powerful Apollonian elements within him is equally obvious. The enormous energies this tension generated does indicate the preponderance, the ultimate accent, of the expansiveness over the restraint, but my effort will be to show that the expansion is centered and directed, that the powerful forces of restraint in Jeffers, and in his greatest poem, retain the focus within which that expansion takes place; and that the end result of this process is not diffusion but a true expansion of consciousness; not despair but exaltation, that the annihilation of man is essentially a symbolic annihilation of egoism; and that Jeffersian nihilism is a canceling out of the contingent only to get through to the incomparable splendor of the Absolute. In order to achieve this he employs the right hand and the left with equal force, focusing the intellect with the right hand of the imagination, and transcending its projectives in the left hand of the will, constellated in the insuperable torrent of his sound.

For the contemplation of this denouement, this canceling out of contingency, does leave the reader not with hopelessness but with self-knowledge and the birth of understanding. And when we finish with Barclay we are able to say, of certain tendencies within us carried to their term, "Now I see," and seeing are chastened and appeased. In approaching this task we have touched on the misgivings and bewilderment of Jeffers' friends, his keenest apologists; before we proceed, however, we have to meet the objection not of those who think the best of him but of those who think the worst.

V

The worst was written by Yvor Winters, and it came only three or four years after *Point Sur* was published. Nor has its influence passed, as instanced by this recent testament from the pen of Kenneth Rexroth, who in recourse to it acknowledges perhaps his only appeal to the authority of a New Critic:

> Many years ago Jeffers' only serious rival to the title of "California's leading poet" wrote an essay on him in the *Hound and Horn,* later substantially reprinted in the book *In Defense of Reason.* It was one of the most devastating attacks in modem criticism and Jeffers' reputation, then at its height, never recovered, but entered a slow decline. (214)

It goes without saying that for many discriminating readers the judgment still stands. I shall quote Winters' attack at sufficient length to register the full measure of its condemnation.

> *The Women at Point Sur* is a perfect laboratory of Mr. Jeffers' philosophy. Barclay, an insane divine, preaches Mr. Jeffers' religion, and his disciples, acting upon it, become emotional mechanisms, lewd and twitching conglomerations of plexi, their humanity annulled. Human experience, in these circumstances, having necessarily and according to the doctrine no meaning, there can be and is no necessary sequence of events: every act is equivalent to every other; every act is at the peak of hysteria; most of the incidents could be shuffled around into varying sequences without violating anything save, perhaps, Mr. Jeffers' private sense of their relative intensity. Since the poem is his, of course, such a private sense is legitimate enough; the point is that this is not a narrative, nor a dramatic, but a lyrical criterion. A successful lyrical poem of one hundred and seventy five pages is unlikely, for the essence of lyrical expression is concentration; but it is at least theoretically possible. The difficulty is that the lyric achieves its effect by the generalization of emotion (that is, by the separation of the emotion from the personal history that gives rise to it in actual concrete experience) and by the concentration of expression. Narrative can survive in a measure without concentration, or intensity of detail, provided the narrative logic is detailed and compelling, as in the case of Balzac, though it is only wise to add that this occurs most often in prose. Now Mr. Jeffers, as I have pointed out, has abandoned narrative logic with the theory of ethics, and he has never achieved, in addition, a close and masterly style. His writing is loose, turgid, and careless; like most anti-intellectualists, he relies on his feelings alone and has no standard of criticism for them outside of themselves. There are occasional good flashes in his poems, and to these I shall return later, but they are very few, are very limited in their range of feeling and in their subject matter, and they are very far between. Mr. Jeffers has no remaining method of sustaining his lyric, then, other than the employment of an accidental (i.e., non-narrative) chain of anecdotes (i.e., details that are lyrically impure); his philosophical doctrine and his artistic dilemma alike decree that these shall be anecdotes of hysteria. By this method Mr. Jeffers continually *lays claim* to a high pitch of emotion which has no narrative support (that is, support of the inevitable accumulation of experience), nor lyrical support (that is, support of the intense perception of pure, or transferable, emotion), which has, in short, no support at all, and which is therefore simply unmastered and self-inflicted hysteria. (281-83)

The strategy here of course is two-pronged: it strikes at both ends and means. By a simplifying process of reduction the end is contemptuously dismissed, and any real correction must wait upon the complete emergence of those ends as the poem itself unfolds. However, Squires has scored Winters' oversimplifications:

> I wish to share Mr. Winters' reservations about *The Women at Point Sur* as a work of art, but not his confusions about it as doctrine. Barclay, as I have already taken pains to demonstrate, does not preach Jeffers' "religion," but the opposite of his religion. Nor do Barclay's "disciples" (if by "disciples" Mr. Winters means the other main characters in the narrative) act upon it. They are, as a matter of fact, only faintly aware of what Barclay is up to and they go pretty much their own ways. They are indeed "lewd and twitching" (it is impossible to improve on Mr. Winters' diction when he is inspired by indignation), but they are connected with Jeffers' creed only by a relationship of antipathy. (159)

Anyone who has found Winters' criticism of Jeffers "devastating" may select the adjective he chooses to describe what this does to one prong of Winters' attack.

But it is the other prong behind which Winters mounts his chief offensive, and it is hard to answer, for by an arbitrary restriction of sanction to two closely defined methodologies, narrative and lyric, the critic is enabled to have it both ways. He concludes that since the poet does not write "pure" versions of either, his work must fail. The reply of Jeffers' apologists has chiefly been to expand the available categories, but this has not gone well, for Jeffers' longer poems are commonly called narratives, and it is hard to object to Winters' employment of the term and yet avoid relapsing frequently into its use.

Still, it is apparent that Jeffers' "narratives" do not move in the way that Winters defines the movement of narrative. Amos Wilder, trying for a more satisfactory category, writes: "The point is that these poems ordinarily should not be read or judged as narratives. [Yet he cannot call them anything else throughout his study.] They are hymns of salvation and the dramatic interest lies not in any cogent sequence of human interest . . . but in the constant tension between the life of man and the goal beyond it" (144). To call *Point Sur* a hymn of salvation is I think true enough in the highest and most acute reading of the poem, but not very serviceable in critical discussion.

Frederic Carpenter calls the narratives "modern myths" and this is more helpful:

> Conceived in terms of myth—rather than of tragedy, or of fiction, or of philosophy—Jeffers' long poems can be described and judged by their

> own "singular" virtues or faults, rather than by the lack of virtues to which they never pretended. The particular qualities of his individual poems appear clearly when described in these terms, and the separate poems fall into definable groups. The changes of form and psychology which have marked his creative career assume a meaningful pattern. If these changes in his poetic conceptions were not always for the good, at least they were not capricious, but were directed by the logic (or the illogic) of modem myth. (57)

The difficulty here is that while the term narrative is a purely formal designation, the word myth relates more to psychological attitude than to form. A narrative is a tale, a story, and unquestionably *Point Sur* is that. But a myth as a category is more a habit of mind. Heinrich Zimmer quotes Nietzsche:

> "It is not true", says Nietzsche, "that there is some hidden thought or idea at the bottom of the myth, as some in a period of civilization that has become artificial have put it, but the myth itself is a kind or style of thinking. It imparts an idea of the universe, but does it in the sequence of events, actions, and sufferings."

Zimmer goes on:

> This is why we may look into it as into a mirror or fountain full of hints and prophecies, telling us what we are and how we should behave amidst the bewildering sequences of surprising events and happenings that are our common lot. . . . Myth is the sole and spontaneous image of life itself in its flowing harmony and mutually hostile contrarieties, in all the polyphony and harmony of their contradictions. Therein lies its inexhaustible power. (310)

This we feel is true, but from a formal point of view it does not help us. It all could be asserted, for instance, of "Art." How are we to meet the charge that so long as myth deals with "the sequence of events" it must be judged by the law of narrative, "the inevitable accumulation of experience," as Mr. Winters defines it?

The solution is this. While myth does indeed proceed by virtue of the "inevitable accumulation of experience" the sequence is not governed by rational but by symbolic criteria. Myth emerged before art, that is to say, before the direct application of individual consciousness to aesthetic form. With the triumph of reason in the evolution of consciousness symbolic referents fell into the background, became mere adjuncts to the main course of aesthetic development. But with the crisis of reason in modern times, and the opening of the unconscious, symbolic correspondences once again emerged, not on the collective

level as with archaic myth, but on the individual level, as discernible in the scenarios of modern dreams no less than in the modal evolution of modern narrative forms—flashback, stream of consciousness, etc. It is the task of the critic to expose the processes of symbolic sequence which underlies the narrative action, no matter how apparently "anecdotal," and it must be done by recourse to a theory of symbolism solidly based on psychological reality rather than on the conscious deployment of classical mythical phenomena.

Thus it is disappointing to find Carpenter relying on an obsolete definition of myth as "an imaginary story usually concerning deities and demi-gods" and thinking of the characters of myth as "primarily personifications of natural forces" (56-57). This leads him to posit a dichotomy between the "mythical" and the "modern" psychology in Jeffers' characters, a dichotomy which he feels simply throws the reader off step. All this is not true. Whether ancient or modern, the characters of myth are essentially archetypal projections. Barclay is not a personification of a natural force, he is an embodiment of the archetype of the Redeemer. That Jeffers understands the nature of archetypes is shown full well in one of his first narratives, *Roan Stallion:*

> The fire threw up figures
> And symbols meanwhile, racial myths formed and dissolved in it, the phantom rulers 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. (*CP* 1: 194)

The method is a direct recourse to the subjective interiority upon which archetypal situation is grounded. Nor are mythical events mere anecdotes. Rather by a shift in perspective all anecdotes can be seen to participate, if they have any interest at all, in some underlying archetypal stimulus. Because the atmosphere of archetypal situation is mythical rather than narrational or lyrical, the poet boldly induces a dimension of psychological suspense, and having secured it moves forward by generating a kind of vortiginous intensification, situation to situation as he proceeds, and develops his intensity by virtue of an increase of cumulative pressure. The scenarios of dream and myth follow the same emotional contours, and may not be evaluated by the criteria of logic. They have come into being precisely to afford play to correspondences in depth which the workaday forces of logic could not accommodate. Poetry and art, it is true, proceed closer to the conscious mind, to the reason—if

dreams sufficed men would never write poetry—but nevertheless their impetus is sourced in the same origins as those of dream.

For if "narrative" is the rational ordering of explicit events and if "lyric" is the generalization of emotion obtaining between subject and object then myths, visions, dreams, are scenarios of mood. Mood is the psychic dimension that accommodates the hiatus left by a deficiency of reason, or knowledge, in man's perception of phenomena. Its symbolism is not the static, consciously deployed system of referents we find supporting the methodologies of narrative and lyric. Rather it is fluid, it proceeds by an interior qualitative association, but it does not lack "inevitability." For instance, when Barclay enjoys the gross Indian woman Maruca in Chapter VI, this act *evokes* his daughter, who symbolizes virginity and purity, in the next chapter. They are not unrelated anecdotes, therefore; they are related by archetypal accommodation, each evoking, and subsequently yielding to, another. The processive determination is that of psychological suspension, symbolic accommodation, and, if the poet is good, cumulative intensification.

This intensification, furthermore, escapes the charge of hysteria, "emotion in excess of motive," for here, as in mysticism, emotion is ultimately authenticated not by its motive but by its End. It is Mr. Winters' refusal to understand this end that occasions his indictment of the method. But in this he is typical not only of the poet's opponents but of his advocates as well. I believe that the difficulty the contemporary reader has with the poem is not a failure on Jeffers' part to mount and sustain intensity, not in any "laying claim" to a high pitch of emotion that has no rational support, but in the very direction and term toward which the mounting intensity is inexorably directed, in his version of an Absolute that redeems and justifies the processes leading to it.

Nor can it be said that, however exemplary the term, the underlying compulsions which Jeffers is uncovering are as yet insufficiently assimilated into our consciousness to be fully accessible to the contemporary reader, even the trained reader. No, what continues to shake us about *Point Sur* is the appalling density of psychic atmosphere which its diction, imagery, rhythm, pace and apprehension of phenomena generate. The compulsions are familiar enough: what distinguishes them here is the psychic registration, at once refined and primitive. And this primitivism is achieved by recourse to a duality of direction. First, the term, the holy and terrible presence of the divine as it overshadows the human situation. And second, that terrible presence is achieved by an invocation from the roots of the being of a force outside nature which can only be called daemonic. And it is a force which is constellated, as in no other Jeffersian work, around the polarity of a single man. Goethe writes:

> [T]he daemonic character appears in its most *dreadful* form when it stands out dominatingly in some *man*. Such are not always the most remarkable men, either in spiritual quality or natural talents, and they seldom have any goodness of heart to recommend them. But an incredible force goes forth from them and they exercise an incredible power over all creatures, nay, perhaps even over the elements. And who can say how far such an influence may not extend? (qtd. in Otto, 156)

It is my contention that no other figure in American literature, not Ahab himself, so powerfully localizes this incredible force as does Jeffers' terrible hero, The Rev. Dr. Barclay.

Thus when Gilbert writes that "Barclay is a man who in the end is powerless before the unconquerable power of biological life" (110) he misses the point at issue behind Barclay's action. And when [Horace Gregory] writes that "Jeffers' desire to deal solely with the elemental passions tends to mislead the reader into the colder regions of hell which are a paradox of romantic agony; the reader is repelled," he falsifies the actual situation ("Poet," 11-12).

I would say rather that Jeffers' heroic necessity to engage the underlying archetype which sources daemonic action (in Goethe's sense) enables the reader to experience its truth. It is not that the reader is repelled; the important thing is that Jeffers makes it possible to experience *despite,* or, more accurately, precisely *by virtue of,* his repulsion. My hope is, then, to trace the processes of approach insofar as I am able, so that the reader may perceive, as Jeffers himself was driven to perceive, those boiling fountains of inscrutable motivation, those archetypes, and face out what they are. In order to justify this we have already had recourse to the practice of Euripides, for we needed his example to counteract the strictures of contemporary Greekophiles and afford some deliverance from the Iron Maiden of Aristotle's poetics. This does not imply, however, any real identity between his own method and that of the Greek tragic poet.

VI

But if what Jeffers is saying is not what Euripides was saying, namely, that "passion can be stronger than reason," and which, as we saw, his commentators generally take him to be saying, what, then, is his book all about, and how does the example of Euripides justify his method? It justifies it because in Jeffers' account we indeed do see an overwhelming power at work, with insuperable intensity and with awesome disintegrating force, but it is simply that the origin and nature of that force are not explained by the tension between passion and reason. In determining what they are I shall not have recourse to the list of "intentions" Jeffers spelled

out in letters to his friends after the fact, as it were, when *Point Sur* was under attack. (*CL* 1: 688) These "intentions" are chiefly responsible for throwing critics off the track in regard to understanding the poem. The occasion was one of only two periods in his life when Jeffers lost his detachment, the other being America's entry into World War II, a much more serious affair. But in 1927, as I have shown, he was cresting on a wave of renown after years of retardation and unfulfillment, and it is not to be wondered at that he was shaken when he sensed the collapse of a fame so belatedly won, blasting "the sad promise of spring" (*CP* 1: 402). Let us go, therefore, directly to a synopsis of the plot, choosing that of Squires as the most serviceable. If it is unsympathetic in tone it is the most detailed and hence closest to our purpose.

> "The Rev. Dr. Barclay" finds suddenly that he has nothing to say to his congregation and, deserting his pulpit as well as his wife and daughter, he wanders to Point Sur where he takes a room at the house of Natalia Morhead whose husband has not yet returned from the war. In Morhead's absence his father ("Old Morhead") has become a bedridden cripple, and Natalia has entered into a homosexual relationship with Faith Heriot, a waif who has suffered as a result of male brutality. Barclay ambles about the hills and in his incremental madness attracts disciples. To them he preaches Jeffers' Inhumanism adulterated with his own insanity and repressions. Meanwhile, his "private impurity" compels him to seek sexual liaison with Maruca, an Indian woman. When his daughter, April, arrives with her mother to look after him, he contrives successfully to rape her. April bears the brunt not only of her father's difficulties but also of Randal Morhead's; for Randal returns at length from the war and falls vaguely in love with her. At the same time Faith Heriot becomes jealous of April because she thinks that Natalia's affections have been transferred to her. Eventually April, deranged by her rape and thinking that she is her brother Edward (killed in the war), determines to kill her father but kills herself instead. Barclay wanders on; his hypnotized disciples fall off one by one, and he dies of exhaustion alone in the wilderness. (33-34)

We will see in a moment that the underlying archetype behind Barclay's decisive break with his congregation is the archetype of Renewal, centered deep in the authority of ancient mythological motifs, but before we approach that dimension it is not inappropriate to point out that Barclay's break is not unique, but rather corresponds to a certain dark strain in all revivalism. Ronald Knox, in his book *Enthusiasm* (558-566), examines this phenomenon, characteristic of all intense religions, but particularly endemic to Protestantism. In America it led to a virtual paroxysm of schism and proliferation, each hinging on greater and greater charismatic freedom, and progressively foundering on the unconscious

forces of sexuality which the sundering invariably unleashed. As a historical phenomenon Barclay's break could be documented many times over in the religious history of America, some of them with actual results hardly less sensational than the denouement of *Point Sur* itself. Thus when Kitto says of Euripides' *Medea* that "what matters now is not that the situation must be convincing and illuminating, not even that the heroine must be convincing as a person; but that her passion must be, in however extreme a form, *a fundamental and familiar one,*" it cannot be said of *Point Sur,* that its situation is implausible. The relationship between revivalism and sexuality is so thoroughly understood by the American mind that it is embedded in our folklore.

From this historical point of view the course of action in *Point Sur* may be seen not as "isolated incidents dependent only upon their author's view as to their relative intensity" but a systematic, step by step, deterioration of ego structure brought about by an unwise attempt to establish direct union with God without an *ascesis* and without adequate direction, one of the dangers of Protestantism's thrust of centrality back to the primacy of the individual conscience. In fact, it may well be that spiritual directors of the future will place *Point Sur* in the hands of their novices as an object lesson in what happens to the religious enthusiast when he sets out to go it alone. They will point out that, all down the line, Barclay was in the great tradition, from his emphatic break with the world, which, though perhaps too brutal, was nevertheless necessary, to his unfortunate demise, which followed from an unmitigated *hubris,* throwing him among the "Lost," and nullifying all the hope of his great adventure, which was to have secured not only his own place but those of his fellows among the "Saved." For the step is fraught with extreme danger. What is necessary is a guide, a *guru* or a director of souls as he is known in the West. But when a culture shifts from the sacral orientation to a pluralistic one, the *guru* and the priest alike tend to become mere institutional functionaries, until the fabric of society begins to creak under the strain of its distressed minds, and a new equivalent in time emerges. Joseph L. Henderson, a Jungian psychiatrist, writes in the *Wisdom of the Serpent:*

> This role which has been carried traditionally by the priest is today frequently bestowed upon the psychiatrist as analyst in the language of dreams. I have been represented as a chauffeur, the leader of an archaeological expedition, the conductor of an orchestra, and the one who formulates something, a lecturer or teacher all in the spirit of this "messenger of favorable words." As a dentist, doctor, medicine man, male nurse, or priest I may be represented in the role of healer implying that an ordeal to which the dreamer has submitted is brought to a climax in a healing ceremony whether of a practical secular nature or as an act

> of spiritual enlightenment. The reader will no doubt be able to supply from literature and drama many more examples of this figure acting as an intermediary between the suffering initiate and his experience of the death which may or may not lead to a rebirth; for example, the role of Thoth in the myth of Isis and Horus, Virgil in the *Divina Commedia* as the guide to Dante, Hermes as the guide of Aeneas in the *Aeneid,* Heracles as messenger to the underworld in *Alcestis.* It was not unintentional that T. S. Eliot patterned Reilly, the psychiatrist in *The Cocktail Party,* upon this aspect of Heracles as a semi-heroic, trickster-figure enabled by his mercurial nature to act as mediator between the two worlds, conscious and unconscious. As we trace him back to more primitive levels we find him represented as the tribal medicine man identified with the animal as totem, who is known, whether in animal or human garb, as Master of Initiation. (47-48)

Without such a guide we have a total succumbing to what Jung calls the *mana-personality,* of which Barclay is certainly an outstanding example, a virtual case history. Jung writes:

> Historically, the mana-personality evolves into the hero and the godlike being, whose earthly form is the priest . . . But insofar as the ego apparently draws to itself the power belonging to the anima, the ego does become a mana-personality. This development is an almost regular phenomenon. I have never yet seen a fairly advanced development of this kind where at least a temporary identification with the archetype of the mana-personality did not take place. It is the most natural thing in the world that this should happen, for not only does one expect it oneself, but everybody else expects it too. One can scarcely help admiring oneself a little for having seen more deeply into things than others, and the others have such an urge to find a tangible hero somewhere, or a superior wise man, a leader and father, some undisputed authority, that they build temples to little tin gods with the greatest promptitude and burn incense at the altars. This is not just the lamentable stupidity of idolators incapable of judging for themselves, but a natural psychological law which says that what has once been will always be in the future. And so it will be, unless consciousness puts an end to the naive concretization of primordial images. I do not know whether it is desirable that consciousness should alter the eternal laws; I only know that occasionally it does alter them, and that this measure is a vital necessity for some people—which, however, does not always prevent these same people from setting themselves up on the father's throne and making the old rule come true. It is indeed hard to see how one can escape the sovereign power of the primordial images. (233-34)

In Barclay we have an example of the man who, utterly without guide himself, yet, seized up in the manapersonality, presumes to guide others. From the historical point of view, his demise could be charted over and over. From the mythological one, the case is more complex, more awesome, and incomparably more interesting. In order to chart it we must have recourse to a more specific text. I propose to use for this purpose Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* an analysis, with reference to mythology and depth psychology, of the hero archetype as the fundamental agency of psychic and religious renewal. This he calls the "monomyth." Using Campbell's scheme as a guide, we can at least begin with Barclay and see what he is about. If we cannot end with him, it is because Campbell charts the course of the hero through its risks to success, while Jeffers charts it to failure. The ends are diverse, but the motivation the same.

VII

"The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero," writes Campbell, "is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return:"

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.
>
> Prometheus ascended to the heavens, stole fire from the gods, and descended. Jason sailed through the Clashing Rocks into a sea of marvels, circumvented the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, and returned with the fleece and the power to wrest his rightful throne from a usurper. Aeneas went down into the underworld, crossed the dreadful river of the dead, threw a sop to the three-headed watchdog Cerberus, and conversed, at last, with the shade of his dead father. All things were unfolded to him: the destiny of souls, the destiny of Rome, which he was about to found, "and in what wise he might avoid or endure every burden." He returned through the ivory gate to his work in the world. (30-31)

Campbell then describes the legend of the Buddha, how the young prince Gautama set forth secretly from his father's palace, endured all the trials of adversity, and at last found enlightenment:

> Then he doubted whether his message could be communicated, and he thought to retain the wisdom for himself; but the god Brahma descended from the Zenith to implore that he should become the teacher of gods and men. The Buddha was thus persuaded to path. And he went back

> into the cities of men where he moved among the citizens of the world, bestowing the inestimable boon of the knowledge of the Way. (33-34)

"The Old Testament," continues Campbell, (in an observation of special interest for us, because Powell notes that he saw a typescript of *Point Sur* in which Jeffers had labeled Barclay's apotheosis on the mountain as "the Mount Sinai scene")

> records a comparable deed in its legend of Moses, who, in the third month of the departure of Israel out of the land of Egypt, came with his people into the wilderness of Sinai; and there Israel pitched their tents over against the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called unto him from the mountain. The Lord gave to him the Tables of the Law and commanded Moses to return with these to Israel, the people of the Lord. (34)

"As we . . . shall see," he summarizes, "whether presented in the vast, almost oceanic images of the Orient, in the vigorous narratives of the Greeks, or in the majestic legends of the Bible, the adventure of the hero normally follows the pattern of the nuclear unit above described: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return" (35).

That Barclay participates in this immemorial pattern is clearly evident in the opening chapter when he breaks with the past and the present, the conventionalized domain of limitation and security, and declares for an initiation into a new life. He tells his congregation:

> It is not possible
> To know anything while you eat lies: you half-believers, fog-people: leave that, wash the eyes, and who knows
> Now the earth draws to maturity, has taken the bloody
> Initiation of coming of age, you also grown adult
> May fish some flaming gleam of knowledge out of the netted ocean, run down some deer of perception
> In the dark wood . . .
> It is no alliance
> And I am the hunter you shall not run as hounds for: but think you old men, you old women, if one of you
> Should stumble over it by chance, you had cleaned the mind that you could see it, some instant pebble of perception
> Glowing in the dust. (*CP* 1: 250-51)

Notice the mythological images of beasts and fishes, of dark woods, of insignificant pebbles that hold the key to eternal life. Barclay has himself, before the action begins, already experienced the reality of the

Dark Kingdom, and these images are historically and archetypally its talismans:

> Typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring, and the loathly, underestimated appearance of the carrier of the power of destiny. (Campbell 51-52)

Barclay's forth-going into the mystic world of the Carmel coast is also in the same tradition.

> This first stage of the mythological journey—which we have designated the "call to adventure"—signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown. This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds and impossible delight. (58)

Jeffers then, in directing his creative intention to the problem of a man who sets himself apart and tries to enter the essence of inner reality, has himself fallen under the spell of the ancient archetype he has approached, and becomes the instrument of its specification, just as the dreamer who dreams the images which deliver him. Out of his nature-drenched mind the immemorial talismans manifest themselves, and his redeeming hero is on his way.

VIII

But if this sets *Point Sur* in its proper perspective, what it does not do is provide us with the clue to Jeffers' choice of the failure of the legend rather than its accomplishment and success, for it is the failure, not the success, that concerned him.

> The *return and reintegration with society*, which is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy in the world, and which, from the standpoint of the community, is the justification of the long retreat, the hero himself may find the most difficult requirement of all. For if he has won through, like the Buddha, to the profound repose of complete enlightenment, there is danger that the bliss of this experience may annihilate all recollection of, interest in, or hope for, the sorrows of the world; or else the problem of making known the way of illumination to people wrapped in economic problems may seem too great to solve. (Campbell 36-37)

Are we to believe that this was actually the case with Jeffers, that sometime in the period after the war, but before the writing of *Tamar,* there came to him a mystical experience of such depth and intensity that he could forever after refuse to consummate the Eternal Return and spend his years justifying his intuition by a series of monumental explanations? The possibility of such an event deepens his metaphysical substance and, given his acute sensibility, may well be true. From the point of view of Barclay, however, the alternative is obvious:

> And on the other hand, if the hero, instead of submitting to all the initiatory tests, has, like Prometheus, simply darted to his goal (by violence, quick device, or luck) and plucked the boon for the world that he intended, then the powers that he has unbalanced may react so sharply that he will be blasted from within and without—crucified, like Prometheus, on the rock of his own violated unconscious. (37)

We are here, without doubt, at the situation of Barclay, hero of Jeffers' blighted myth of renewal. That Jeffers, despite all the negative "intentions" of his after-thought, really saw Barclay as some such Promethean figure is shown, not only by his tacit admission ten years later of the positive achievement of Barclay:

> I stand near Soberanes Creek, on the knoll over the sea, west of the road.
> I remember
> This is the very place where Arthur Barclay, a priest in revolt, proposed
> three questions to himself . . .
> Large timeworn questions no doubt; yet
> he touched his answers, they are not unattainable. (*CP* 2: 608)

But more crucially in his rhetorical commitments, the power and range of participation with which he realizes Barclay's attempt, the kind of emotional identification which critics have long noted in Milton's language when he wrote of Satan, the tell-tale unconscious salute to the abhorred rebel who must carry the author's unconscious rebellion to its term and then be erased in favor of all the conscious norms he has defied.

Actually, when an artist is impelled to write a poem like *Point Sur,* it means that the two polarities within him are locked in a kind of impasse, and he creates the character whose mission it is to resolve it. That side of himself which represents the Institutional—the inherited wisdom of the race, Tradition, the past, its values, ideas, rules and reservations, in short, the Code—gambles that the Hero-Sinner cannot win; while that side of himself which represents pure potentiality—the Charismatic—gambles that he will win, and win through violation. It is not merely that a mind

as finely balanced as Jeffers' had to have it both ways; the problem is much deeper. The mere results, what we can call the plot, will represent the Institutional, and will see the Hero destroyed—killed off, in fact, to satisfy its norms. But the art, the poetry, all the intuitive *affect* of the writing—the Charismatic—will see to it that he does, somehow, score, and its success is a celebration and a testament to his attainment. So with Barclay: he has to die, to destroy himself as a consequence of his actions. But the dark unknown side of Jeffers has to see that he somehow wins, and all the strange, fiery, violent exultation of the language testifies that he has.

For it is apparent that behind the archetype of renewal reside its various sub-categories, each dominated by a symbolic motif, and each capable of many variations. There is, first of all, the counter archetype of the failure of renewal, the chief motif of which is suicide. But there is also the absolutely crucial intermediate archetype, the one human consciousness always balks at, and yet the only one really to show the way through, the one that actually lies beyond the paradigms of success which Campbell charts. It is the archetype of *renewal through failure*. It is the archetype of the renewal of Christ, who failed in the fact of His crucifixion and death, and yet who renewed the world, through that failure, in His resurrection.

It is, obviously, the archetype upon which Jeffers founds the trial and ordeal of his protagonist. But if he rejects the mode of renewal proffered within the Christian solution as no longer adequate to man's needs, it is to search, however obscurely, for a more mysterious kind of renewal. What this is must await our analysis of the myth's outworking, but it is necessary to establish at this point the cruciality of the attempt Jeffers is making, and to hold in mind that in the making, certain residual Christian elements in his heritage, and hence in our own, are powerfully in play.

For Barclay is for Jeffers a Promethean figure, and Prometheus is the figure that most centrally binds the two sides of Jeffers' heritage and our own, the Greek and the Christian. Small wonder, then, that Jeffers should encounter this archetype very early in the working out of his creative destiny. It came first to him in the ordeal of his *anima*, the feminine component within himself. For Tamar too had been a Promethean figure, the girl who crossed all the tribal taboos to fetch the fire of freedom and accepted consummation in that fire. But it was inevitable that he should pit the image of masculinity, his *animus*, to the same attempt, and it is significant that for him this is the image of the father.

Now to me it is apparent that, compared simply as figures, Tamar has a great deal more appeal than Barclay, and as a creation is more humanly "successful"—closer to us, more intimate of our own spirit.

For the artist is always closer to his *anima,* the motivating force of his creativity. But the solution of Barclay is more crucial to us *as a people,* for it is the male, the father, who must solve the problem inherent in the traditional patriarchy in any contemporary crisis. In that solution it is of the essence of the scenario that Barclay must fail, since the Christian myth had established the cruciality of failure, but it is also of its essence that he must eventually succeed. Barclay's failure is everywhere evident: the poem has revulsed the majority of its readers from the day it was published. Our task must be to search out and lay bare the obscure and perplexing measure of his success. In order to do that we must approach the underlying archetype, and probe more deeply into the figure of Prometheus himself.

IX

Among all the gods of Greece," writes Kerenyi, in his penetrating study of the Fire-bringer myth, "it is Prometheus who stands in the most remarkable relation to mankind. He presents a striking resemblance and a striking contrast to the Christian Saviour" (3). Prometheus presents in its utmost cruciality the tension of man's situation as a conscious being, with intelligence and will, in all its ambiguity in relation to the Absolute. In the Christian tradition, therefore, it is not strange to find that the figure of this god was appropriated as a prototype behind the emergence of the Redeemer Himself. In *Lucifer and Prometheus* RJ. Zwi Werblowsky writes:

> No wonder, then, that in spite of the many profound differences between the two myths, the early Fathers could point to Prometheus as the symbol of Christ. Tertullian speaks of the *crucibus Caucasorum* and exclaims: *Verus Prometheus, deus omnipotens, blasphemiis lancinatus,* whilst others found god-and-man in a bold anagram (*Protheus*), or dilated on the similarities of the sufferings of Prometheus and the passion of Christ, comparing Zeus' eagle to the lance, the Oceanides to the disciples, Cheiron's descent to Hades with that of Christ to hell, the virgin conception of Io and of Mary, and more fond similarities of this sort. (63)

But this is not the way Prometheus began, for when he is first encountered in Hesiod he is an outright rebel and villain. It is not until Aeschylus five centuries later that we are confronted with the right-about-face that permits Prometheus to emerge as a hero and allows the Church Fathers to assimilate him to Christ. That this is possible is due to an inherent ambiguity in the archetype upon which the Promethean symbol is founded. Werblowsky summarizes:

> The Promethean myth thus betrays an interesting ambivalence, and shows itself capable of developing in two directions. As a typical Lucifer, "bringer of light", Prometheus shares the full ambivalence of this archetypal image. He has a light and a dark side, which can either differentiate into two sharply distinguished figures (as has happened with the original Lucifer) or else remain a multivalent, amorphous whole, lending itself, at the bid of occasion, to absorption by and amalgamation with other, more clear-cut and determined images. The Promethean myth can thus point towards Christ as well as towards Satan, according to our susceptibilities and our views about man, as imposed on us by our civilization and the exigencies of our psychic situation. (63)

It is by virtue of this ambivalence that Thomas Merton, in preparing his own meditation on the mythical hero, discovers Erasmus in the sixteenth century reverting to the original Hesiodic version, and realizes that the Renaissance effected a profound reversal of attitude toward God by manipulating the symbol from its beneficent to its malignant aspects, with meaningful consequences for modern man:

> The two faces of Prometheus [he writes] represent two attitudes toward life, one positive, the other negative. It is significant that the Renaissance, in choosing between the two, selected the negative. It is against this negative choice that my Prometheus is written. My meditation is a rejection of the negative, modern myth of Prometheus. It is a return to the archaic, Aeschylean and positive aspect of Prometheus, which is, at the same time, to my mind, deeply and implicitly Christian. The Prometheus of Hesiod is Cain. The Prometheus of Aeschylus is Christ on the Cross. (14)

It is true that in his meditation Merton does give us the Christian version of Prometheus as it came down to us in the hallowed Catholic tradition, the archetype, one might say, fulfilled by the great Age of Faith. But I feel that Merton oversimplifies in attributing to modern man a Prometheus identified with Cain, pure and simple. We will not be able to understand the contemporary Promethean figure unless we recognize that powerful Christian elements are retained in it. However, Merton has seen that the difference between the versions of Hesiod and Aeschylus lies in the attitude toward the implacable father figure, Zeus.

> Hesiod represents and approves the Olympian order, where Zeus reigns in absolute power over the subversive and dethroned gods of archaic Greece. Zeus is the god of the invading Achaians who destroyed the matriarchal and tribal society of primitive Greece, the society of the Earth Mother, of Demeter, of Hera and Athene. Prometheus, the son of Earth and of

> Ocean is a threat to the static order established by Zeus, the order in which no bird may chirp and no flower may look at the sun without the permission of the jealous Father. Zeus is the master of life rather than its giver. He tolerates man and man's world, but only barely.
>
> According to Hesiod, when Prometheus stole the fire for men (there was no other way in which he could get fire away from Zeus) Zeus revenged himself on Prometheus in the way we well know with the added detail that he drives a stake through his heart. But Zeus is also revenged upon mankind: how? By sending woman.
>
> Strange, ponderous fantasy of an aggressively male society! Woman comes from Zeus as a punishment, for in her "everything is good but her heart."
>
> Woman, the culminating penance in a life of labor and sorrow! (12)

But the five centuries that lay between Hesiod and the Greek tragedians brought a complete reversal in attitude toward the father, an attitude effected by a corresponding reversal in feeling toward woman:

> The Prometheus of Aeschylus is the exact opposite of the Prometheus of Hesiod. Between Prometheus and the Earth Mother and Ocean rises the figure of a usurper. For in Aeschylus it is Zeus, not Prometheus, who is the usurper. It is Zeus, not Prometheus, who is sick with hubris. True, Prometheus is driven by desperation beyond the wise limits which the Greek mind recognized so well. But his rebellion is the rebellion of life against inertia, of mercy and love against tyranny, of humanity against cruelty and arbitrary violence. And he calls upon the feminine, the wordless, the tirelessly moving elements to witness his sufferings. Earth hears him. (13-14)

Kerenyi does not enlarge on the distinction between the Prometheus of Hesoid and that of Aeschylus, but he does recognize that the problem is more complex than Merton lets us know. In his view Prometheus, as we saw, "presents a striking resemblance and a striking contrast to the Christian Saviour."

> More than any other Greek god, he intercedes for mankind, makes common cause with men. Therein lies the resemblance. But Christ suffered human existence as a man. His whole mission depended on his close bond with mankind. The paradox in his case is not that he, a man, made common cause with mankind. The paradox is the faith of the Christians who believe him to be a god. (3)

It is apparent that Jeffers' rejection of the Christian paradox of Christ, the being who appeared to be a man and yet proved himself God, has

thrown the Promethean archetype within his own psyche back upon the original tension in pre-Christian consciousness, and that in doing so he encountered the opposite face of Prometheus: Prometheus as Cain. But it could never be Cain, pure and simple. The Christ element in the symbol may be played down, but never extirpated. What this means is a terrible tension, an unbearable strain, in the symbol itself. And given the rupture of modern life that strain will intensify into madness. In the psychological shambles following World War I, Yeats's rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouching toward Bethlehem to be born, became for Jeffers the Rev. Dr. Barclay, climbing Pico Blanco for a new Golgotha.

X

That for Jeffers Barclay is a Promethean Cain rather than a Promethean Christ is signified straight-away by his insanity. But the madness is more than a symbol. It is also a device to brush aside the structure of conscious determination and localize the protagonist's motivation as a "private impurity". Too many cases of false prophets exist to deny it, but what interests us is the totality of Jeffers' rejection, his all-inclusive dismissal, tagging not only Barclay but every other religious prophet, even the greatest, with some fatal flaw. From the point of view of *Point Sur* the operative defect seems to be a consuming need for disciples. Since this is also a chief Jeffers contention against the historical Jesus, it becomes one of our clues to the fact that Barclay is actually a Christ-figure. Of more immediate concern is the reason. Why, one asks, is the cultivation of disciples an "impurity"?

It cannot be denied that Jeffers, in his answer, accords with a dominant school of contemporary psychology. Freud was not the first to assert it, but he certainly made such attributions popular. Coming from Jeffers that is precisely what makes us suspicious of it. The cultivation of disciples is seen as corrupt because it is founded on an unconscious evasion, a secret reflex toward personal power justified as an ultimate service, a purely substitutive device by which what was given and received as a blessing was actually an error, an evil, a curse. Jung himself, as we saw in his note on the "mana-personality" delineated the inflational root of the malady, and warned of its universal threat to the charismatic man; but for him it was simply a dangerous phase, an unavoidable pitfall on an authentic quest. With Jeffers it is the totality of the attribution that disturbs us. For as an all-inclusive generality the clear position of the record is against it. Though unquestionably the monomyth does attest to the hero's ability to remain in the other world, the visionary realm above and beyond the common lot of life, nevertheless this is by no means the norm, but rather seems more in the nature of a privilege serving to emphasize to

men the awesome completeness of a state infinitely superior to their own. [Campbell again:]

> The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.
>
> But the responsibility has been frequently refused. Even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of realization could be communicated, and saints are reported to have passed away while in the supernal ecstasy. Numerous indeed are the heroes fabled to have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being. (193)

That Jeffers would reject such "boons" as inflational in no way alters his essential agreement with the monomyth that the first step, the main step, is to break the grip of the mind on its own normative processes, cross the threshold—"cast one's humanity" as he says—and enter the interior freedom. His wish to remain there, fulfilled in his own version of the boon, is granted by the monomyth itself. What it does not grant him is his out-of-hand indictment of those who return. For the historic course, the "normal" course, demands the hero's re-entry into the everyday reality he left, and not by virtue of the Jeffersian attribution of the mana-personality, but by a deeper law intrinsic in the nature of contingent being itself. Campbell continues:

> Whether rescued from without, driven from within, or gently carried along by the guiding divinities, he has yet to re-enter with his boon the long-forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete. He has yet to confront society with his ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir, and take the return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend. (216)

It is a confrontation which, of its very nature, constitutes a service, and as a service presupposes, for maximum effectiveness, the presence of disciples. It has always been so. Right into our own time Ouspensky, intent on the mystic way, questioning Gurdjieff's preoccupation with esoteric groups, got the Master's reply:

> The point is that a "group" is the beginning of everything. One man can do nothing, can attain nothing. A group with a real leader can do more. A group of people can do what one man can never do.
>
> You do not realize your own situation. You are in prison. All you can wish for, if you are a sensible man, is to escape. But how escape? It is

> necessary to tunnel under a wall. One man can do nothing. But let us suppose there are ten or twenty men—if they work in turn and if one covers another they can complete the tunnel and escape.
>
> Furthermore, no one can escape from prison without the help of those *who have escaped before*. Only they can say in what way escape is possible or can send tools, files, or whatever may be necessary. But one prisoner alone cannot find these people or get into touch with them. An organization is necessary. Nothing can be achieved without an organization. (30)

With the evidence before us suddenly we are tempted to turn on Jeffers and demand of him an accounting. Why this agony about disciples? Is it Barclay or is it yourself, Jeffers, who is in trouble, immobilized by a really private impurity, a buried fear of love, a shame of your own tenderness, your own essential humanity—perhaps, actually, fear of that germ of homosexuality latent in every man which psychology has laid bare as the root of so much masculine hardness? And if so, is *Point Sur* a massive cover-up of your own demon, the intense pageantry behind which the hidden conflict is acted out, yet so contrived as to escape the vigilance of the bemused ego, only too glad to be reassured that the intensity of the drama is the guarantee of the purity of the motive?

The matter is important because if Jeffers' list of "intentions" means anything at all it indicates that more than any other of his long poems this one was "programmatic." *Point Sur* was written just as fame enveloped him, and we cannot but suspect that this poem is his most intense and apocalyptic because the nerve of something enormously seductive—the public man's almost feminine thirst for adulation—had been touched, a "private impurity" so tempting that he dare not acknowledge it, lest he succumb, and be consumed. (*CL* 1: 688)

Jeffers, doubtless, would have his answers, and he is entitled to them. As a poet's answers we might expect them to have an elementary grounding in philosophy and science, but we will not receive them, to accept or reject, only in terms of that philosophy or that science. We will understand that the true answers of a poet are beyond him, visitational solutions emerging from the fabric of an inspired utterance, a synthesis of intuition from a world, a cognitive realm, which philosophy and science are unable to reach. Despite our glance at the man Jeffers himself, what we are attempting here is not so much to solve the problem of his motivation but to localize the nucleus out of which the poem emerged. That nucleus, that archetype, is certainly the Hero-Redeemer, the Promethean savior. But it is revealed to us—and this is its cruciality for modem times—not under its positive but under its negative aspects.

We are offered a redeemer who, on the conscious level, revolts us to the basis of our being.

And yet, our revulsion is somehow gainsaid by the very quality, the esthetic tension, the indefinable force of the shattering narrative *Point Sur.* In recognizing this we are driven to conclude that for Jeffers to generate such intensity, and the specific kind of intensity this poem evinces, merely to delineate a contemporary illusion, is difficult to believe. Whatever that peculiar quality is, however we estimate it, and however we respond to it, it is simply too oppressive, too compelling. It is too "real" to be a mere device.

What that force suggests to me is that behind the passion this poet is unconsciously creating, *through denial,* the positive, or efficacious aspect he ostensibly seeks to reject, that the actual result, whatever his "intention," is truly to evoke from the deeps of his negation an efficacious redeemer. Thus by denying his hero any "truth," denying him even rationality, he is enabled to press him forward through a processive stripping away into a new order, an area of awareness never penetrated to before. I say never penetrated to before because the findings of astronomy and physics have disclosed a material cosmos unconceived of in the history of man's thought, a cosmos that seems to prophesy the absolute negation of man's racial ambition. Given this unprecedented cosmic prospect, what Jeffers has done is put a typical prophet—a religious seeker bearing all the psychic liabilities an accusative clinical psychology could attribute to him—through a test run in order to determine if any affirmation possibly survives the extremes of such negation, of such nihilism. It is my belief that Barclay's quintessential truth does just that.

XI

As for ourselves however, lest we succumb to the temptation, peculiarly attractive to a disenchanted sophistication, of resting on paradox alone for our resolution, let us rapidly summarize the issue behind the problem, in the hope that in doing so we may spring free the clue unlocking the relevance of Barclay as a Promethean figure. For one thing is certain. In Jeffers the thirst for an ultimate is too consuming to be satisfied with the consolations of paradox. If this makes him a stranger in his own time it also renders him singularly equipped for this pursuit, for the point of the Promethean ordeal is precisely to hew out a symbol, or postulate a symbolic act, of sufficient ruggedness to engage at full stretch nothing less than the eschatological Hell, terrible and sickening and revoltingly obscene, yawning beneath the paradox of Heaven and Earth.

We begin by saying that man's dark situation, his travail of existence, denotes a radical disparity between cosmic purpose and his own. Man is,

religiously speaking, alienated from God, and alienation, psychologically speaking, is hostility. Hence, "God was wroth." And hence, too, man's confrontation of that wrath and his response and solution to it—the Prometheus archetype in the deeps of his psyche. In doing so he encounters the opposite face of Prometheus: Prometheus as Cain.

If, as observed above, the attempts of Hesoid and Aeschylus could not be final because the Greek concept of God was imperfect, the Judaic tradition stemming from Abraham corrected this. What man could only misconceive by reason is finally set straight by revelation. The identity of God is now inclusive enough to accommodate to the situation of man, and Job provides the highest working model of this adequation in the Old Testament.

Still, man's existential situation, though no longer alienated, remains out of phase with that of God. When God offers mankind His unrestricted freedom on Mount Sinai, humanity is unable to rise to it. This offer of freedom, and the failure of such freedom, confirms the necessity of incarnation as the efficacious salvivic principle. What God offered did not meet the exactitude of the Promethean archetype as it exists in the human soul, and man must never forget it. Until it was met he could not respond to the freedom poured out on him. What is needed for freedom to be efficacious is the divination of man in order to achieve parity with the existential situation of God. This implies incarnation.

However, even less so than among the Greeks, who you might say frittered it away with plurality, was the incarnation solution acceptable to the Jews. As a recourse it remains deeply repressed due to its archaic retardation in the fertility cults adjacent to the Hebrew community. Predictions of it, as a matter of fact, are half buried in scripture, but these only emerged in retrospect under the eyes of Christian exegetes pursuing the continuity of doctrine. For all practical purposes the possibility of the incarnational solution to man's existential condition remained closed to the Hebrew mind until infiltration among the Jews prepared the way for an incarnational perspective superior to that which created the demigods originally confronting them, and the Christ could emerge. Only after a people has become too sophisticated to any longer naively mythologize, does incarnation, as a workable solution, become historically possible. The line of pre-Incarnational evolution ran from Abraham to the Virgin Mary, who became the apotheosis of human virtue and thereby precipitated the influx of the Holy Spirit to produce the child man-god Jesus the Christ. This is the scandal of Christianity: Incarnation had to become culturally obsolete to be historically feasible.

And when at last it was feasible, the ultimate solution as met within the Gospels was insured. The long Hebraic fidelity had purified the notion of Godhead until its fear from contamination by mythological

reference was passed, and the Christ could emerge. The solution was perfect because here the Promethean hero (Jesus) could accommodate the full human requirement, genetically and by situation, while satisfying, by capability and identity, the divine requirement that only God can appease an injury to God—a solution hinging directly upon the doctrine of the Trinity.

Here again Kerenyi's attribution of paradox in the Christian situation, as with that of Prometheus, must be avoided. For paradox, the suspension of contrarieties in a purely mental equipoise, is incapable of meeting the psychological issue posited by the appalling torsion of the Promethean archetype. To do that, not paradox, the mental emphasis on contrarieties, but identity, the volitional response to correspondences, is needed. In theological terms, man is saved by faith not by reason.

This is seen in the Gospels. Taken as a literary document alone, the presentation of the deeds of Jesus, unified in their field of situation, established His divine identity so that when the Resurrection is postulated it comes with true psychological inevitability. There is no appeal to paradox. Incarnation has been so convincingly demonstrated that psychological release transcends the suspension of contrarieties upon which paradoxical toleration depends.

This is important to any understanding of the difficulties with which writers struggle when they take up the Promethean theme. These difficulties, which refuse to be wrestled down, convince that if Jesus of Nazareth was not the Redeemer, then the world is waiting for One who will do the same thing. This hardly being likely, the poet, obsessed by the problem of Prometheus and denying the solution of Christ, will continue to toss between the Hesiodic and Aeschylean alternatives.

For the archetype is there, and no recourse to the ironies accommodated in paradox can absorb its awesome and torturous demands. Given the terrible requirements posited by its evident psychic needs, Santayana's "There is no God and Mary is His mother" simply will not do.

XII

At any rate, it is not astonishing that as skepticism increased following the Medieval period the Promethean archetype reemerged in sharper focus in the consciousness of man. The disaffection from the Christian solution at the Renaissance, as Merton noted in Erasmus' revival of the Hesiodic Prometheus, and later that of Goethe and Shelley in their romantic redactions, indicates that inevitably the negative side of the archetype must invite reemphasis.

However, this accent was not so much a hybristic rejection of God and Woman as Merton suggests, but stems from a growing abstractness

due to the emergence of a more sophisticated cosmology following Copernicus and the rise of modern scientific perspectives. God once more is alienated and, psychologically speaking, alienation is, as we saw, hostility. Thus the revival of the Hesiod situation.

It is apparent, as we also saw, that Jeffers' rejection of the Christian answer to the enigma of Christ, the being who, historically a man yet affirmed Himself God, has also thrown the Promethean archetype within the poet's psyche back upon the original tension in pre-Christian consciousness, encountering Prometheus as Cain. But it could never be Cain pure and simple. The Christ-presence has appropriated the core of the symbol, and may never be extirpated. It may only be repressed. As a repression its existence remains the stone upon which every reconstruction of the theme ultimately shatters.

For this repression results in the terrible tension, an unbearable strain, in the symbol itself. Given the rupture of modern life, and the refocussing of man's existential travail, that strain intensifies toward madness. This is the cruciality of Jeffers' attempt. It is the element of madness occasioned by the repression of the Christ-presence in the Promethean archetype that is its problem for modern man. Jeffers has written his poem not to illustrate this, certainly, for he does not believe it, but to gainsay it, to absorb madness, to take up that madness into the aesthetic dimension, momentarily appease its corrosion in the solution of his theme.

XIII

Mostly however, these answers will yield only to a penetration into the fabric of the narrative itself, as seen in the poet's unconscious imagery, and in the implicit valuation of his diction. But as we pursue them we must make sure that we protect ourselves against the personalistic cul de sac that Jeffers himself succumbed to in his treatment of Jesus—I mean Jeffers' merely private fear of disciples. We must take into account the possibility that this revulsion may actually originate in something collective, may in some way be symptomatic of a condition within collective consciousness itself, and for the prophet to crave or accept disciples is now not only personalistically sick but racially perverse as well, a dangerous collective regression. If this is so the man of excessive charismatic potential must resolutely forbear appropriating to himself those reactionary elements which the recessive aspects of the collective unconscious only too eagerly thrust upon him. Campbell writes:

> The problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great coordinating mythologies which now are known as lies. Then all meaning was in the group, in the great anonymous forms, none in the self-expressive

> individual; today no meaning is in the group—none in the world: all is in the individual. But there the meaning is absolutely unconscious. One does not know toward what one moves. One does not know by what one is propelled. The lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious zones of the human psyche have all been cut, and we have been split in two. (388)

From this point of view it may well be that Jeffers, in the artist's heroic role as purifier of consciousness, by refusing the lure of disciples, by extirpating through Barclay the collective's now impure need for hero-redeemers, does truly fulfill his obligation to protect the race against its own regressions. In writing his book he fulfills his role as prophet; in refusing to found a movement or become a guru he forces the collective to grope forward beyond any premature fixation upon human intermediaries. No self-gratifying egoism must permit it to deflect from its destiny, its own naked encounter with the naked God.

XIV

But the time has come for us to put aside speculation and enter the work itself. Beginning with the "Prelude" as a sort of weathering process, we can expect it to furnish the conditioning interval we need for our acclimatization, orient us into the prospective violence, and at the same time protect us from psychic inundation by too direct an exposure to the blast of action itself. If it is to do this it must be forceful, evocative and intense, and must seize us with the Giant Hand that is the true signature of genius. For as Erich Neumann writes:

> Every transformative or creative process comprises stages of possession. To be moved, captivated, spellbound, signify to be possessed by something; and without such a fascination and the emotional tension connected with it, no concentration, no lasting interest, no creative process, are possible. Every possession can justifiably be interpreted either as a one-sided narrowing or as an intensification and deepening. The exclusivity and radicality of such "possession" represent both an opportunity and a danger. But no great achievement is possible if one does not accept this risk . . . (177-78)

It is in his magnificent "Prelude" that Jeffers first possesses us, prepares us to "accept the risk," forces us into the mythological dimension where all the violations may be endured without flinching, and where we may grope forward toward whatever solutions we can find to the ritual of deliverance and ordeal which constitute the opportunity or the destruction of modern man.

It is one of the masterpieces of Jeffers' art, exhibiting to maximum degree his complex technical skills. And it reveals much about the questions the poem proposes, and some intimation of their answers. I was long of the opinion that it was created well after the inception of the narrative itself. A poet will enter into a theme tentatively, not fully engaged, expecting to deepen his involvement as he goes. Then, finally committed, he turns back and strokes in his opening, able at last to operate somewhere near the level of his subsistent aesthetic commitment. Indeed, the shift in psychic tension between the "Prelude" and the first section seemed evidence enough that this was the case. But when I examined the Jeffers papers in the Yale Collection of American Literature I saw it was not so. The poet wrote the "Prelude" as we have it and proceeded immediately to the narrative. Thus we see that it is indeed the psychological matrix out of which the whole work develops. More important, it is the "door," the threshold over which we must pass in order to effect a shift in attitude from our normative consciousness, in order to leave the world of "actuality" and enter the world of "myth."

This, the world of myth, is the dimension into which the "Prelude" takes us, and it does so masterfully. Beautiful, intense, vibrant with urgency, flecked with lightning flashes of scorn and repudiation, it hovers over our world like the entry of one of the great storms which it invokes above the Carmel coast, and introduces us not only to the climate of mind and the figures we are going to encounter, but also to the basic religious symbols that lie in all their primitiveness beneath our culture. It creates the psychic atmosphere which evokes the presence of the "deliverer," the man Barclay himself.

XV

The Prelude opens powerfully:

> I drew solitude over me, on the lone shore,
> By the hawk-perch stones; the hawks and the gulls are never breakers of solitude.

And savagely:

> When the animals Christ is rumored to have died for drew in,
> The land thickening, drew in about me, I planted trees eastward, and the ocean
> Secured the west with the quietness of thunder. I was quiet.

And contemptuously:

> Imagination, the traitor of the mind, has taken my solitude and slain it.
> No peace but many companions; the hateful-eyed
> And human-bodied are all about me: you that love multitude may have them.

It would seem Jeffers is saying that though he prefers solitude and has taken steps to ensure it, the invasion of Carmel in the twenties shifted the psychic balance the region had provided him and overbalanced his soul with the fervid restlessness of the normative American mentality: gregarious, talkative, slap-happy, trivial, mundane, unreflective—all polar opposites to the quietude of the elements. More likely, at a far deeper level, he is saying that Fame, which has in fact come to him, has touched some somnolent nerve of response, and he must either accept its stimulus and succumb to it, or utterly reject its appeal.

At any rate he has scoffed at our values, and in scoffing intrigued us with the power of the negative. Yet the negative must be uttered, and utterance is positive. He proclaims himself vulnerable.

> But why should I make fables again? There are many
> Tellers of tales to delight women and the people.
> I have no vocation.

This seems an odd thing to say. Is he not a poet? And does not the writing of poetry constitute the answer to a calling? (*Vocare*. To be called.) But in Jeffers' day, vocation referred mainly to the service of ecclesiastical personnel. Jeffers is summarily disavowing any metaphysical or institutional option.

> The old rock under the house, the hills with their hard roots and the ocean hearted
> With sacred quietness from here to Asia . . .

But he cannot rest there, despite himself he is driven to engage in what he despises:

> Make me ashamed to speak of the active little bodies, the coupling bodies, the misty brainfuls
> Of perplexed passion.

Against the immense impersonal gravity and masculine permanence of things, it is this itch, the female sexual itch, that confronts him. Why?

Why not? Carmel, the summer cottages and love-nests of the Jazz Age, week-ending businessmen with their hot mamas, drunk on green

liquor smuggled in by boat from Canada. Carmel, where Aimee Semple McPherson, the torrid evangelist, [holed up] while the nation scoured the byways enthusiastically searching for her kidnapped person.

> Humanity is needless.
> I said, "Humanity is the start of the race, the gate to break away from, the coal to kindle,
> The blind mask crying to be slit with eye-holes."

That was in "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," a flashback into Aeschylus's world, when civilization as we know it was just beginning. [Everson is wrong here. The quotation is from *Roan Stallion*,]

> Well now it is done, the mask slit, the rag burnt, the starting-post left behind: but not in a fable.

What was then projected as a prophecy has become in actuality a hard fact:

> Culture's outlived, art's root-cut, discovery's
> The way to walk in. (*CP* 1: 240)

The poet's duty is no longer to seek ways to prefigure what will be, but to scrawl it out crudely and be done:

> Only remains to invent the language to tell it. Match-ends of burnt experience
> Human enough to be understood,
> Scraps and metaphors will serve. (*CP* 1: 240-41)

For if the race has burnt itself out, then only burnt-out images are necessary to show it to itself. The time when Christ must speak in parables because the people were incapable of apprehending is over. Jeffers reaches for the heart of the parable to show actuality to a post-Christian people:

> The wine was a little too strong for the new wine-skins. (*CP* 1: 241)

XVI

It is important here not to be stung into feeling insulted, into contemptuous dismissal. We are overhearing a man in dialogue with himself. We share, in some measure, his difficulties. Profoundly religious, he loves solitude and permanence, and he seeks out the symbols and

images that confirm these truths to himself. But he is shaken, too, with excesses, the fretful and itching acerbations of imagination and dissolution. He has seen those realities increase as the culture proliferated, until by the mid-twenties of this century they were at boiling point. He longs for silence but he is impelled to speak. He despises speaking but speak he must. "The active little bodies, the coupling bodies, the misty brainfuls of perplexed passion." He projects them outside himself, but they are his own projections, and he cannot escape them. For him, a poet, there is only one solution, and that is the creative act. Drawing down within himself, against the stagnation of his conscious mind where the tension has been equalized because the forces countercheck each other, he calls up the great image of creative release, the great archetypal centrality that dominates the Prelude.

> Come storm, kind storm.
> Summer and the days of tired gold
> And bitter blue are more ruinous.
> The leprous grass, the sick forest,
> The sea like a whore's eyes,
> And the noise of the sun,
> The yellow dog barking in the blue pasture,
> Snapping sidewise. (*CP* 1: 241)

What then is needed? To restore the roots of viability beneath the sterility of corrupt culture. Zimmer says:

> Ages and attitudes of man that are long gone by still survive in the deeper unconscious layers of our soul. The spiritual heritage of archaic man (the ritual and mythology that once visibly guided his conscious life) has vanished to a large extent from the surface of the tangible and conscious realm, yet survives and remains ever present in the subterranean layers of the unconscious. It is the part of our being that links us to a remote ancestry and constitutes our involuntary kinship with archaic man and with ancient civilizations and traditions. (310)

It is the sovereign role of the poet to perform this function for modern man. If the politician appropriates that role and perverts it for the uses of power, creating a fascism which by appeal to blood and soil perverts the needs of the people to be restored to their roots, he pre-empts but does not invalidate the office of the poet. Hitler does not invalidate Wagner. Jeffers despised fascism, but he did not permit its misappropriations to deter him from his archetypal function as source-seeker for the race.

Now the summer stagnation, image of our rationally dominated culture, in the extremity of its drought, invokes its redeemer, the "kind

storm." It is the image of renewal in the creative act, the Dionysian syndrome, and it holds its terrific potential of deliverance: one of those great storms that form on the upper Pacific and start southward bringing winds, rains, and the violence of lightning. This violence is seen as nonhuman and divine, and it has its correspondence in the human soul:

> When I remembered old rains,
> Running clouds and the iron wind, then the trees trembled.
> I was calling one of the great dancers
> Who wander down from the Aleutian rocks and the open Pacific
> Pivoting countersunwise, celebrating power with the whirl of a dance,
> sloping to the mainland.
> I watched his feet waken the water
> And the ocean break in foam beyond Lobos;
> The iron wind struck from the hills.

This noble and sublime titanic center of energy serves us as prototype to the figure of Barclay himself—not as a "personification of natural force," for clearly here the storm itself is characterized as an archetypal figure. But the conventionalized rational structure of materialistic civilization is heavily established and refuses to yield.

> You are tired and corrupt,
> You kept the beast under till the fountain's poisoned,
> He drips with mange and stinks through the oubliette window.

Here we are introduced to the underlying psychological apparatus of the poem. The oubliette, a dungeon with an opening only at the top, is a crude symbol of the Freudian version of the unconscious. If the instincts, the "beast," are repressed too long, they will corrupt the conscious powers themselves. Even the recent bloodbath of World War I did not slake or heal these tendencies, for the slaughter was so great that those who might have come back appeased, and hence given balance to society, were themselves killed off, leaving the survivors no better than before:

> The promise-breaker war killed whom it freed
> And none living's the cleaner.

But the creative potential remains:

> Yet storm comes, the lions hunt
> In the nights striped with lightning. It will come: feed on peace
> While the crust holds . . .

He warns the complacent, in a fatherly tone:

> to each of you at length a little
> Desolation; a pinch of lust or a drop of terror. (*CP* 1: 241)

And we make our exit from the areas of rational disquisition as the images fade and blend together in the cadences of appeasement and release, a falling asleep or a drift into Dionysian deliverance:

> Then the lions hunt in the brain of the dying: storm is good, storm is
> good, good creature,
> Kind violence, throbbing throat aches with pity. (*CP* 1: 242)

XVII

Now we are introduced to one of the principal figures of the drama, Onorio Vasquez, who stands between two worlds, the practical and the visionary. Of all the characters in the drama, only he survives to appear in other Jeffers narratives. He is watching his brothers crucify a hawk, the principal symbol for Jeffers of divinity in act, and by virtue of this crucifixion, is identified with Christ, an identification made earlier by Hopkins in his "Windhover," though it is problematical whether at that time Jeffers had seen that poem—more likely it is an instance of an underlying archetype precipitating an identical insight in two widely separated poets.

> They crucified the creature,
> A nail in the broken wing on the barn wall
> Between the pink splinters of bone and a nail in the other.
> They prod his breast with a wand, no sponge of vinegar,
> "Fly down, Jew-beak."

The hawk, the Christ-like male symbol, introduces Onorio's prophetic mind to its feminine counterpart, a figure corresponding in archetypal dimension to the storm, the great dancer that had preceded her on the water. In the galley proofs of the poem at Yale certain details of her sketch were excised due, according to a note affixed to the portfolio, to the censorship situation at that time. I give the passage, with the kind permission of the curators at Yale, as it exists in the galley proofs.

> What he sees:
> The ocean like sleek gray stone perfectly jointed
> To the heads and bays, a woman walking upon it,
> The curling scud of the storm around her ankles,
> Naked and strong, her thighs the height of the mountain, walking and

weeping,
The shadow of hair under the belly, the jutting breasts like hills, the face
in the hands and the hair
Streaming north.

Now the Christ-hawk identity is deepened. In the mind of Onorio the archetypal woman on the sea is associated with the mother of Jesus:

"Why are you sad, our lady?" "I had only one son.
The strange lover never breaks the window-latches again
When Joseph's at synagogue."

Here the poet accommodates to the modernist interpretation of the miracle of Mary's overshadowing by the Holy Spirit but retains the necessary ambiguity, as the figure "strange lover" fittingly retains the orthodox meaning as well. These ambiguities deepen the Christ-hawk visage into an almost Blakean image of austere divinity:

Orange eyes, tired and fierce,
They're casting knives at you now, but clumsily, the knives
Quiver in the wood, stern eyes the storm deepens.
Don't wince, topaz eyes. (*CP* 1: 242)

Old Vasquez and his boys burn the mountain: fire, the symbol of consuming fulfillment, of punishment and purgation. This symbol takes us from the archetypal woman to the young wife who yearns for erotic fulfillment but is frustrate, unable to transmute her need into charismatic encounter, latching the windows but forgetting the door:

Myrtle Cartwright
Could sleep if her heart would quit moving the bed-clothes. . . . (*CP* 1: 243)

This heart-movement introduces Faith Heriot, seen here as a pubescent girl, one of the main figures in the drama to come. She lies to her father, who keeps, not Point Sur but Point Pinos light, to get out in the dark. At last alone she lies under the swinging light of the beacon, another phallic symbol of the restless energizing Spirit, rich with fertility images:

This girl never goes near the cowshed but wanders
Into the dunes, the long beam of the light
Swims over and over her head in the high darkness,
The spray of the storm strains through the beam but Faith
Crouches out of the wind in a hollow of the sand
And hears the sea, she rolls on her back in the clear sand
Shuddering, and feels the light lie thwart her hot body

And the sand trickle into the burning places.

We have before this been given the suggestion of the dominant motif, that of strain, but now it rises to an incantatory chant, a function it will maintain throughout the poem:

Oh crucified
Wings, orange eyes, open?
Always the strain, straining flesh, who feels what God feels
Knows the straining flesh, the aching desires,
The enormous water straining its bounds, the electric
Strain in the cloud, the strain of the oil in the oil tanks
At Monterey, aching to burn, the strain of the spinning
Demons that make an atom, straining to fly asunder,
Straining to rest at the center,
The strain in the skull, blind strains, force and counterforce,
Nothing prevails. . . . (*CP* 1: 244)

Now we are at the heart of the psychic drama that centers the poem. We have entered the mythological dimension in which the poet is establishing himself: the opposed polarities of an aching mankind and aching Nature, an aching cosmos. Nothing can resolve this tension but release, and such are the opposed forces that release means violence—release means the consummation of the lesser element in the greater, a burnt out filament in a light bulb, Barclay burnt out at the mouth of the Womb-Tomb to end the drama: "Match-ends of burnt experience [just] Human enough to be understood." The end of the affair.

Now wind rises, introducing another aspect of Spirit (hawk, lover, lightning, wind):

At Vasquez' place in the yellow
Pallor of dawn the roof of the barn's lifting, his sons cast ropes over the timbers. The crucified
Snaps his beak at them. He flies on two nails.
Great eyes, lived all night?
Onorio should have held the rope but it slid through his fingers. Onorio Vasquez
Never sees anything to the point. What he sees:
The planted eucalyptuses bent double
All in a row, praying north, "Why everything's praying
And running northward, old hawk anchored with nails
You see that everything goes north like a river.
On a cliff in the north
Stands the strange lover, shines and calls." (*CP* 1: 245-46)

The great phallic lighthouse joins the litany of energy-forces assimilated to Spirit. Myrtle Cartwright in the seep of dawn can abide no longer. Her husband is away. She starts through the storm to find her lover. When she flees to her profane lover the lightning as symbol of Spirit overtakes her and covers her like a beast. But it is not a beast:

> The lightnings like white doves hovering her head, harmless as pigeons,
> through great bars of black noise.
> She lifts her wet arms. "Come doves."

The dove was employed as an erotic symbol centuries before Christian iconography applied it to the Holy Spirit. This overshadowing, this conception, was occasioned by the igniting of the oil tanks by lightning in Monterey. As the atoms split and explode the release from the strain is granted in marriage, the symbols of sexual consummation:

> The oil tank boils with joy in the
> north . . . roars with fulfilled desire,
> The ring-bound molecules splitting, the atoms dancing apart, marrying
> the air. (*CP* 1: 247)

It all builds up to humanity's immolation in the forces behind itself. Human ache of desire will find its consummation, whether as did Myrtle Cartwright, who latched her window against the Spirit but left her door open to the world, or Onorio Vasquez, who longs to immolate his consciousness in a consummation greater than mankind's:

> Don't you see any vision Onorio Vasquez? "No, for the topazes
> Have dulled out of his head, he soars on two nails,
> Dead hawk over the coast. Oh little brother
> Julio, if you could drive nails through my hands
> I'd stand against the door: through the middle of the palms:
> And take the hawk's place, you could throw knives at me.
> I'd give you my saddle and the big bridle, Julio,
> With the bit that rings and rings when the horse twirls it."
> He smiles. "You'd see the lights flicker in my hair."
> He smiles craftily. "You'd live long and be rich,
> And nobody could beat you in running or riding."
> He chatters his teeth. "It is necessary for someone to be fastened with
> nails.
> And Jew-beak died in the night. Jew-beak is dead." (*CP* 1: 248)

XVIII

Thus ends the Prelude. The turning of the storm, the anguish of human desire, the promise of release in physical consummation, all have combined to take us out of our normative consciousness. The archetypal symbols unfold within us in their pristine originality and primitive vigor. We are given to understand that we are not to conceive of this narrative as a sequential account of human events, the drama of the heroic consciousness confronted with nature, or God, or itself. We are instead in the domain of collective myth, and "the myth disregards—does not even know—the individual." Projections of subsistent human consciousness are called up from the deeps and extended into the cruciality of engagement with the cosmos and the spirit. They are given names but they are not to be seen as personalities. Neither are they "coagulations of human plexi." They are personifications of the elements of man's inner being which have lost contact with one another and have started forward each on its own path of deliverance.

Thus the solution posited in the possibility of humanity's having passed beyond the need for a redeemer is, as the saying goes, "up for grabs." Everything about these personifications indicates that they are ripe for the deliverer, a true hero, a true superman, who is of the essence of mythical awareness, and who must needs arise if the separating consciousnesses are to be held together. "It is necessary for someone to be fastened with nails." In the debased religiosity and vitiation of the Jazz Age, its triviality, its itching and squirming libido, its profane ignorance and its corrosive cynicism, the anthropocentric version of the God of Christianity will not avail. "Jew-beak is dead." Instead emerges a new hero, a new messiah, a new superman. He will seek to weld all together in a terrible act of unbelievable affirmation—an affirmation beyond the limits of common hope. He will free himself through the ancient acts of violation, fornication, incest and rape and he will carry his followers to the mouth of the tomb. His name is fated to eat like acid, to become a stumbling block to the perplexed literate intelligence of his time. His name is the Rev. Dr. Arthur Barclay, and he is headed for Point Sur. It remains to be seen whether his creator will realize or deny the hunger that gave him birth.

XIX

And so having touched some of the strands of motif and implication that might help us on our way, having immersed ourselves in the compulsive atmosphere of storm, dissolution and renewal that so powerfully pervades the Prelude, we stand at last on the lip of the initiating action, and face forward into the consequential dimension of the myth itself. In

treating the Prelude we have seen the present conditioning of human collectiveness delineated, its alienation from God and nature, its need of a redeemer to take it back into contact with the making forces of reality, sources of renewal long repressed under metallic surfaces. We have seen, too, something of the individual dimension, the personal adventure posited as initiation rite. A society without religious orientation in depth cries out for a messiah to take it back to its origins. But it cannot produce such a messiah, for it has lost the spiritual attitude that makes it possible for him to emerge, and it has jettisoned the techniques that might enable him to perfect himself, be sufficient to the task that would confront him.

Thus it is possible to see in *Point Sur* the two tendencies, the collective and the individual, on a "collision course," and we might read the unfolding of its scenario with that in mind. As the various personifications typified by the cast of characters emerge—Natalia, Morhead, Faith Heriot, Maruca, Randal—their essential rootlessness and inversion signify that they are cut off from centrality, and hence must react like loose flotsam, or metallic particles. Barclay, on the other hand, possessed by the collectivity's need for a messiah, is unable to withstand its compelling demand. It is a demand so overpowering that only the most perfectly formed consciousness could fulfill it, a consciousness which, paradoxically, the collectivity has renounced the capacity to produce. Thus, as it reacts to his presence and becomes more and more intense around him, Barclay himself burns with a more single intensity toward destruction. We are justified, then, in seeing the denouement at Point Sur as the crisis of a culture, a culture cut off at the roots and delivered to the consequence of its spiritual ignorance.

But, it must be insisted, this is not the position of Jeffers himself. He is registering not the crisis of a culture but the crisis of mankind. For him the more "whole" traditional sacral cultures of the past were no better, essentially, than the painfully rootless ones of today. Why? Because science has shown their beliefs to be as illusionary as ours. The cosmos of Jeffers is essentially a Newtonian one. The religious transposition made available through the shift from Newtonian to Einsteinian physics came too late for him. Nineteenth-century science had demolished the Christian God as an anthropomorphism, and explained religion, no matter what its substance, as mere compensation. The process by which sacral man had staved off disintegration, forms of ritual and meditation sufficient to balance the collective consciousness and produce messiahs in times of crisis—these were, one and all, provisional solutions, efficacious only within the pathetic limits of human consciousness, while those who rose to the bait—Christ, Gautama, Lao Tze—did so out of private impurity. In *Point Sur* Jeffers is putting that solution through its final

test-run. He is doing it in order to demonstrate that it will no longer do, has in fact, never done. In "Theory of Truth" he asks over, as we saw, the questions Barclay has asked. Sketching the private impurity of the three great prophets he asks again:

> Then search for truth is foredoomed and frustrate?
> Only stained fragments?

And answers:

> Until the mind has turned its love from itself and man,
> from parts to the whole. (*CP* 2: 610)

XX

And yet, even as he utters it, he gives the game away. Even for himself, this solution never sufficed. I am not speaking in terms of the inadequacy of his philosophy, I am speaking in terms of the problem posited by his creative drive. *Point Sur* moves out of the conditions of fragmented and isolated tension we saw in the Prelude and takes its course through a series of inter-reacting exchanges to final crystallization and utter annihilation at the point of conclusion. And whatever the philosophy is saying, the poetry is saying that this is good. All Jeffers' explanations, all his "intentions," do not ring true because they are all belied by the exultation of his verse.

How can this be? The essential attraction-revulsion syndrome upon which the ambivalence is poised is endemic to human nature. But it is so strong in Jeffers that he is willing to intensify contingency in order to clinch it. This is the fact. It could never, for him, suffice to "turn from man," turn "from the parts to the whole." Because to turn, to see, is itself to manifest contingency, and contingency is excruciating. Who is the One and what are the Many? To crystallize consciousness in participation in the whole is Jeffers's consuming need, the existence of his verse attests to it. He declares the opposite. He proclaims the necessity, and his willingness, to achieve a life of ego-annulling contemplation. His poetics deny it. Intense, passionate, onrushing, needful and aching, his volcanic rhythms intensify contingency rather than annul it. Yet, somehow, through that crystallized contingency he touches finality, the living glimpse of annihilation. Annihilation. "The most beautiful word." And how are we to conceive of annihilation? It is, essentially, unspeakable; but in a thousand contingent images he evokes it metaphorically. The night. The peace. The quietude. The timelessness. Over and over he creates the images of contingency in

order to indicate the substance of his need, which is to pass beyond what he has created, what he has seen, what he has desired.

And in fact the whole effort and achievement of his poem is to establish the ordeal, transmute its agonies into transcendence, and pass beyond transcendence into—what? Well, actually, beatitude. But beatitude as seen from the point of the utter negative. From the positive point of view, beatitude would be the Beatific Vision of the Christian, or the Nirvana of the Buddhist, but Jeffers fights shy of either. They are too conceptual for him. He is aware of the over-mastering presence of God, but the liability of his basic contingency makes him contemptuous of accepting any kind of beatitude based on any kind of deduction from the Reality he has sought.

I suppose his essential role as poet prevents him, actually, from settling for the eventualities of either the philosopher, the seer, or the mystic. Jeffers as poet can only *create* the condition of his beatitude, and when he calls it Annihilation he is thinking of the canceling *in itself* of that appetitive need within him which is the aesthetic impulse and whose mode is the creative act. So he creates his death, severally, and over and over, in his various narratives and descriptive poems

In *Tamar* he cast the first spear. He took the *anima,* the feminine principle in himself, and drove it to the point of annihilation, consumed in the fires of the House of Incest. She would not stay dead. In "Apology for Bad Dreams" she haunts him into telling how he encountered her, and years later in a poem called "Come Little Birds" that story is spelled out in detail. "I am Tamar Cauldwell. . . . Tell them / I have my desire" (*CP* 3: 9). Next he took the *animus,* the masculine principle, and drove it to the point of annihilation. This is Barclay. But neither would the *animus* stay dead. In subsequent narratives he contented himself with exploring the ratios of inter-dependent contingencies and these are more contained, more formally resolved aesthetic structures, and are better liked. But he did not pitch the spear at the absolute again until "At the Birth of an Age" when, in the figure of Gudrun, he cast the *anima* once more. Gudrun does not burn with the same intenseness of naked potentiality that Tamar did; it was as if by that time Jeffers *knew* beforehand, whereas Tamar for him had been pure discovery, as Barclay was pure discovery. But nevertheless in the poem's closing pages the voice of the Nordic Gudrun merges with that of the Oriental Jesus to make a *heiros gamos*, a *conjunctio,* which together are subsumed into that of the Promethean Hanged God, the pure archetype of self-sustaining immolation, which is actually the voice of Barclay purged of its insanity and burning with unspeakable purity, the principle of subsistent consciousness upon which the whole of reality turns and sustains, the principle that Christians themselves perceive as the keynote of all being, and call the Christ:

> If I were quiet and emptied myself of pain, breaking these bonds,
> Healing these wounds: without strain there is nothing. Without pressure, without conditions, without pain,
> Is peace; that's nothing, not-being; the pure night, the perfect freedom, the black crystal. I have chosen
> Being; therefore wounds, bonds, limits and pain; the crowded mind and the anguished nerves, experience and ecstasy.
>
> Whatever electron or atom or flesh or star or universe cries to me,
> Or endures in shut silence: it is my cry, my silence; I am the nerve, I am the agony, I am the endurance. I torture myself
> To discover myself; trying with a little or extreme experiment each nerve and fibril, all forms
> Of being, of life, of cold substance; all motions and netted complications of event,
> All poisons of desire, love, hatred, joy, partial peace, partial vision. Discovery is deep and endless,
> Each moment of being is new: therefore I still refrain my burning thirst from·the crystal-black
> Water of an end. (*CP* 2: 482)

So we are not to see *Point Sur* as anything conclusive. We are to see it as a try, a far-cast spear, thrown out of painful ambivalence in an attempt at transcendence. Before the cast was begun the understanding of what transcendence really consisted of was deeply forming in the underlying consciousness, but not articulated. *Tamar* had only glimpsed it. True, '"Tower Beyond Tragedy" had posited the alternative of contemplation, but the archetypes of imbalance in Jeffers's nature were too acute to accept that. In *Point Sur* he tossed again, the longest, hardest, most intense cast of the spear he was ever to make, and he "touched *his* answer" annihilation—the only answer that would ever appease his spirit. But he could not keep with it. The secondary calls of contemplation kept positing their claims, and he wrote out his remaining narratives (save one, "The Birth of an Age") to accommodate his needs, rather than discover them.

Now he possesses his answers. His spirit lives on in the annihilative center of the body of poems which constitute his work, the still center of the aesthetic intuition, whose term is beyond mediation, beyond subject and object, beyond contingency, beyond the subsidiary distinctions to the supreme Isness, where all things are annihilated within the abyss of Being, which he, and I, and all men, in our own way and by our own terms, have always called God. "[B]ut think on the nothing/Outside the stars," cried Barclay at the last, "the other shore of me, there's peace."

He ran northward, his followers
Tired and fell off. He alone, like a burnt pillar
Smeared with the blood of sacrifice passed across the black hills,
And then the gray ones, the fire had stopped at a valley.
He came to a road and followed it, the waste vitality
Would not be spent. When the sun stood westward he turned
Away from the light and entered Mal Paso Canyon.
At the head of the steep cleft men had mined coal
Half a century before; acres of dry thistles
Covered the place where men had labored, and Barclay
Lay down in the mouth of the black pit. After three days,
Having not tasted water, he was dying and he said:
"I want creation . . ."

And so the tossed spear has turned in midair and is winging back to life. The ritual of initiation into death has been successful. It is an initiation into renewal. The mythological teleology is preserved, contained in the impenetrable diastole and systole that make up reality. Annihilation is only the entry into the abyss of renewal. Barclay's heroic ordeal, crippled by unpreparedness, propelled by a collective need greater than he could withstand, was not in vain. In the deep psyche of the reader, violation after violation have been passed through, hell-hole after hell-hole penetrated and passed beyond. In death the old life is liberated into the new, and God speaks out of the throat of his mouthpiece:

"I want creation. The wind over the desert
Has turned and I will build again all that's gone down.
I am inexhaustible." (*CP* 1: 367)

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Afterword

By Steven Herrmann

I

In 1991 William Everson called me down to his home at Kingfisher Flat in Davenport, CA, in order to begin a collaborative venture on our book of conversations that include a number of considerations of Jeffers's works (*William Everson: The Shaman's Call*, 2009). In the midst of these conversations, in the summer of 1992, Everson handed me a newly expanded version of "The Far-Cast Spear," the final chapter of *Fragments of an Older Fury*, his critical study of Robinson Jeffers's great narrative poem *The Women at Point Sur* (1927), written while he was a lay brother in the Dominican Order under the name Brother Antoninus. Along with this recently revised chapter, Everson handed me an unpublished essay that was originally entitled "The Roots of Incarnation." He made an added request that I do my best to find a publisher for these documents, so that he could rest assured of their availability for posterity. It has now been twenty-four years since Everson handed me these documents and the editors of *Jeffers Studies* have generously agreed to print them, for which I am grateful.

Without any doubt, Everson's attempts to provide a critical commentary on the *Women at Point Sur* were tentative, as recent Jeffers scholarship has filled in many of the lacunae Everson had originally sensed. It must be admitted, furthermore, that Everson's lack of careful scholarship made the publication of the two essays problematic for the editors of this current edition and for me as well. Page references, bibliographic information, and precise quotations were not provided by Everson. This posed a number of challenges for the editors that required diligent work and expert handling. Hunting down citations became a truly heroic task, such as Rob Kafka's trip to the Beinecke, at Yale. Without Jim Baird's and Rob Kafka's perseverance and diligence, these works would never have met modern critical standards. So, we are thankful for their persistance and acumen.

II

Antoninus had set out in "The Far Cast Spear" to show how Jeffers's most hostile critics, such as Yvor Winters, did not properly understand the visionary significance of Jeffers's project as a religious poet. With the tools of C. G. Jung's analytical psychology, Antoninus set out to analyze this most enigmatic of Jeffers's books. In Antoninus's view, only Rudolph

Gilbert appeared to have fully appreciated *Point Sur.* Antoninus tells us, however, that the question none of Jeffers's early critics seemed capable of answering was: "But… *What did it mean*?" (Antoninus, 103). Antoninus was determined in "The Far-Cast Spear" to reveal his understanding of the poem's significance for the twentieth century. Jeffers's vocation, in Antoninus's view, was to increase our comprehension of the divine and encourage humanity to accept our inevitable human dependence upon the instinctive God of nature and love *the incredible beauty of things* just as they are. The aim of Jeffers's narrative in his view was to lead us to experience a "true expansion of consciousness" (113), a transformation made possible by a transport to a higher mode of seeing, knowing, and being. He called *Point Sur* Jeffers's "greatest poem" because it can lead to a transformation of awareness when its *meaning* is understood properly.

In Antoninus's view, not even Herman Melville's Captain Ahab localizes the incredible force of the archetypes in American literature as powerfully and as forcefully as does Jeffers's hero figure, the god-like Rev. Barclay. "As a historical phenomenon," writes Antoninus, "Barclay's break [his insanity, or madness] could be documented many times over in the religious history of America" (123). In order to explain Barclay's mental derangement, Antoninus turned to Jung's notion of the *mana-personality*, the archetype of the hero and religious seer, who becomes inflated with instinctive and spiritual power and succumbs to hubris; he gives us an astute psychological analysis of Barclay's illness as a "virtual case history" (125).

Antoninus suggests moreover that during the writing of *Point Sur,* Jeffers fell temporarily under the spell of the archetype of the mana-personality; a hypothesis that is entirely plausible, for as Jung says, it can happen to anyone of us (at least temporarily) who submits to the process of individuation. Antoninus explains in Jungian terms what the Barclay symbol *means* to Jeffers when he refers to him as a redeeming hero. The paradigm in the national psyche Barclay follows is "the archetype of *renewal through failure*" (132). Antoninus asserts further that what the Barclay myth represented for readers in 1927 was that *the time for the divinization of the human being, in proper relation to the environment, had begun.* The meaning of the Barclay myth is contained, as Antoninus reasons, in the "nucleus out of which the poem emerged" and this *nuclear center of psychic energy, the incredible force out of which Jeffers's religious thoughts are formed,* is "the Hero-Redeemer, the Promethean savior," an archetype of the fire-bringer in the Greco-Roman psyche (140). Taking the Prometheus myth forward, Antoninus sees that by refusing the lure of disciples Jeffers fulfills his obligations

> to protect the race against its own regressions. In writing his book [Jeffers] fulfills his role as prophet; in refusing to found a movement or

> become a *guru* he forces the collective to grope forward beyond any premature fixation upon human intermediaries. No self-gratifying egotism must permit it to deflect from its destiny, its own naked encounter with the naked God. (142-43)

III

In "The Far-Cast Spear," Antoninus saw that the "Prelude" to *Point Sur* is actually the "door," the "threshold crossing," indeed the "psychological matrix out of which the whole work develops" (144). It is the psychological doorway to the Cosmos. Out of the void of silence, Jeffers calls out in *Point Sur's* "Prelude" for what Antoninus refers to as "the great image of creative release, the great archetypal centrality that dominates the 'Prelude'." By creative release Antoninus means Jeffers' own release through creativity in the invocation: "Come storm, kind storm. / … I was calling one of the great dancers / Who wander down from the Aleutian rocks and the open Pacific." (*CP* 1: 241)

Hence, Barclay is a symbol for strain, storm, and chaos and it is this sheer cosmic force invested in the symbol that gives Barclay his redemptive telos. The evocation of the Pacific rainstorm is representative of the chaotic forces of violence on the waters and in the upper atmosphere of the coast. Jeffers summons a storm from the Aleutians that he refers to as "good," and its violence is spoken of as "kind." There are striking reversals of meaning in his metaphors; Christian values are turned around here: "storm is good, storm is good, good creature." (*CP* 1: 242) These are not humanist Christian values, but post-Christian values that are inhumanistically in accord with the natural integrity of the environment.

In the "Prelude" to *Point Sur* it is not Jesus who suffers on the cross to redeem humanity of its inherent evils; it is a crucified hawk, what Antoninus calls Jeffers's symbol of "divinity in act." The hawk's crucifixion in the "Prelude" symbolizes the divinity of the environment itself. What we see in Jeffers's calling of a Pacific storm is an image for the environment made incarnate in the hawk's flesh transformed, the crucified as spiritual substance, panentheism itself as the deliverer. This scene is remarkably prophetic of the coming of Pacific storms, referred to as *El Niño,* the little Christ child, storms that may be precipitated by the burning of fossil fuels (such burnings are represented in "Prelude" in a haunting image of the exploding oil tanks on the Monterey Bay), and by what is now everywhere being spoken of in the news as global warming and increasingly violent climate change. What is most interesting about Jeffers's "Prelude" is that it is not Barclay's voice that is speaking here, but Jeffers's narrative voice, in direct dialectic with humanity in 1927.

He is sounding his awful truths as warnings. Scientists are pointing to the ocean-warming in the Pacific as cause of the deadly weather-patterns around the world today, and Jeffers seems to have foreseen this. In the late poem "The polar ice-caps are melting" he says prophetically that after New York and London are drowned by rising Atlantic ocean tides, the cypress trees he planted with his own hands and Tor House will be under water, yet remarkably he adds: "The tower at last will hold against the seas's buffeting, it will become / Geological, fossil and permanent." (*CP* 3: 476) Now warming water off the Pacific Northwest is increasingly amplifying the violent weather currents down from the Aleutians and bringing rapid snow melt and floods to Alaska, Washington, and parts of Oregon.

Jeffers never fully quenches his thirst for annihilation in the black crystal, as Barclay does; rather, his calling to write lyrics and tragic narratives leads him to sacrifice his ego needs and disgust for the pollution he sees in Carmel for the greater needs and good of the Self, or, what he refers to as "organic wholeness." Jeffers's answer to the problem of man's *rootlessness* from nature and the ocean he so passionately loves is to give us a symbol of environmental integrity symbolized by the resurrection of the hawk's spirit over the Pacific.

The whole thrust of Everson's meditations in "Roots" rests upon the foundation stone of divinization: "What is needed for freedom to be efficacious, is the divinization of man in order to achieve parity with the existential situation of God. This implies incarnation." Parity with God means equality with the whole. In order to embody it, to become integral parts in the whole, man must learn to accept symbolic crucifixion, or ego annihilation on the cross, by taking the hawk's place and rising thereby to a vista where our tragic human fate can be comprehended from a place of final disinterestedness.

By "divinization" he means the divine consciousness of the whole, spread throughout the entire Cosmos. We have only to experience it to discover our integrity with all things. We can see his accent on resurrection in the editorial change Antoninus made in "Roots" from the original *Fragments* essay, where the ending trope of "Mount Sinai" was altered to read the "new Golgotha," transferring Barclay's final ascent of Pico Blanco from an Old Testament metaphor to a modern metaphor of Apocalypse. "In the psychological shambles following World War I," writes Everson in the closing lines of "Roots," "Yeats' rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouching toward Bethlehem to be born, turns out to be the Rev. Dr. Barclay, his mind flickering with insanity, climbing Pico Blanco toward a new Golgotha," although "Golgotha" was editorially substituted for "Mt Sinai" in the final revision of "The Far-Cast Spear," as it was apparently an oversight. "Golgotha" is the reading

in "Roots," and makes more sense in the context. Taking up the theme of the falcon no longer being able to hear the falconer in Yeats's "The Second Coming" as an apocalyptic prediction of the chaos churning in the collective psyche itself, Everson is hinting that the new Golgotha, the skull capital of the world, might be the storm that Barclay portends.

What Jeffers saw in 1927, in this view, is that the time for religious redeemers had passed and a new age of discovery, where each person must carry his or her own cross for humanity and the hawk—hawk-as-environment—had begun. Says Barclay: "How shall men live / Without religion? All the religions are dead, / You are chosen to found the new one, / To draw from your own fountain the soul of the world." (*CP* 1: 310) Jeffers means that we all have a vocation to do our part to protect the *Anima Mundi,* the integrity of the world's oceans, mountains, and animals. He means we are each called to carry our own responsibility to God or the Cosmos.

IV

Now let me report what Everson actually told me about "Roots." In his reflections on *Fragments*, during our conversations recorded in *The Shaman's Call,* he said he held *Point Sur* to be Jeffers' masterpiece, even if nobody else does. He stated that he had been writing in 1992 about incarnation and something we were speaking about suddenly made him think about a passage in "Roots," so, being preoccupied with it, he picked it up and suddenly began reading from it. He told me he had written it in the sixties, while he was still Brother Antoninus, but it didn't get into *Fragments*. The publisher had apparently not given him enough time and he wasn't able to finish it. When Everson read aloud from "Roots" during our conversation, I was moved. It was clear that he believed that *Point Sur* was Jeffers's masterpiece, and particularly the "Prelude." I immediately thought of the crucified hawk in that piece. On July 7, 1993, Everson said:

> In the Jeffers piece I have been working on, "The Far Cast Spear," I say that he was a Newtonian who came too late for the Einsteinian revolution. I have also been working on Jeffers's poem, *The Women at Point Sur.* It's a study on the mana-personality, Jung's designation of the mana-personality. . . . Jeffers takes Barclay as an example of the mana-personality. He brings him down in the end. At the same time he makes him realizable. He gains his power from the black crystal. (Herrmann 244)

We have to stress the significance, finally, of the crucifixion imagery in the "Prelude" to reveal another facet of Jeffers's religious meanings. We have to ask ourselves what the hawk's resurrection means to Jeffers:

What does it mean to the collective psyche of humanity? What does its crucifixion and transfiguration mean to Californians? I believe what is resurrected in Jeffers's individuation of integrity is the hawk's spirit incarnated into matter: the massive stone edifice of Hawk Tower. This emblem was his wholeness, represented both symbolically and materially. His newly transformed consciousness is embodied in his symbol for the divine in "Rock and Hawk." I believe Jeffers revered the Cosmic God in his turret atop Hawk Tower. It was his place of integrity, his link to the divine, the sacred shrine he worshiped in. What he was saying in "Rock and Hawk" is that we each need to construct our own emblems to celebrate the environmental God in whatever way we possibly can; find our redeeming symbols to help deliver us and humanity from our tendency towards inflation as a species. In this sense, Barclay's quest for annihilation is redemptive, like Ahab's, and Everson saw this before he died and celebrated Jeffers for having written it. Jeffers did not succumb in the end to the mana-personality. His relationships with his family, planting of trees, and construction of Hawk Tower saved him. They kept him grounded in his humanness, the earth, his animal instincts, and his body.

Thus, through self-sacrifice, Jeffers touched peace, and he invited us to do the same. By leading us to the divine consciousness, which is absolute, he opened the doorway to an emergent environmental consciousness that is everywhere upon us now as a new myth in the twenty-first century. If Jesus = God, in Antoninus's view, then the hawk equals God, too, and so too do the Pacific storms, and the entire Cosmos, in Jeffers's view. Either we admire and respect the hawk and see it as an equivalent symbol for divinity, with Christ, or the living God (nature) will destroy us along with Barclay; through our own ignorance and disseverance from nature, we hasten our own demise. The choice is ours: crucify the hawk, destroy the environment (our link to the sacred and the Cosmos) and we destroy ourselves. Admire the hawk and arrive at our transformation.

Reading Jeffers is a way to remind ourselves of our vocation as humans, to revere the sacred and live in harmony with it. I have to thank my old mentor and friend, William Everson, for leading me to Jeffers, at a time in my life when I was searching for answers to the problem of my own individuation: my call as a Jungian. He struck me as one of the most loving persons I had ever met in my life. Part of this great love he felt and shared with me and others was made possible, I believe, by his tremendous love for his master, Robinson Jeffers. We would all be wise to continue reading Jeffers today, as he has so much to teach us, not only as a great prophet of California and as a shamanic seer of spiritual democracy (Herrmann, *Spiritual Democracy*), but as a truly remarkable and unforgettably wise human being.

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Book Reviews

The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers. Edited by James Karman. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009 – 2015.

Humanizing Jeffers

Reviewed by Geneva Gano

It can only be considered an arduous labor of love to produce a gold-standard edition of a single person's collected correspondence: that is, one with a thorough yet unadorned biographical introduction, a consistent, conscientious annotation of important references, and careful attention to seemingly minute details of punctuation or provenance that might, in other hands, go unnoticed or unremarked. Every one of the 3000+ pages of *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009-15), edited by James Karman, evidences the dedication and persistent love for his subject that such an accomplishment requires. Stanford University's publication of the three-volume set, for which Karman received the Lawrence Clark Powell Award for Distinguished Scholarship and the California Book Club's Oscar Lewis Award for Western History (both in 2016), is a monumental achievement that fulfills one of the gargantuan assignments that George L. White, an early president of the Tor House Foundation, handed out in a luncheon meeting in the mid-1980s to the next generation of Jeffers scholars, which included Karman, Tim Hunt, and Robert Zaller. Each has dedicated his career to major efforts to support the preservation and sustenance of Jeffers studies. Karman, who in the long course of collecting, selecting, transcribing, and annotating more than 3000 letters by Robinson and Una Jeffers in the course of his research, has now become Emeritus Professor of English and Religious Studies at California State University, Chico, and is now in the position, himself, to bequeath. Having fulfilled his task, Karman has given us a meticulously edited collection that will serve as an essential basis for the next generation of Jeffers scholarship.

As the title of this gorgeously produced and eminently useful set indicates, Karman made an unusual choice in including not only letters by the poet but also the extensive correspondence of his muse, wife, and business partner, Una Call Kuster Jeffers. The decision to include her correspondence more than doubled the effort involved in the project, and certainly tripled the word count of the collection (and this is only a

"selection" of about half of her available letters). Surely those admirers, scholars, and students of Robinson Jeffers' work and career would have been satisfied with his words alone; unlike Elizabeth Barrett Browning or Jane Welsh Carlyle, whose letters have been published alongside those of their famous husbands, Una Jeffers had neither a distinguished career as a writer nor was her circle of correspondence especially significant in a broad historical sense. Why, then, did Karman dedicate the time and effort necessary to include her letters? Does this inclusion significantly add to our understanding of who Jeffers was and how his writings came to be? These seem to me the most pressing questions at hand in a review of this three-volume set, as this represents the most significant departure from most published collections of letters by well-known persons as well as from the 407-page, 1968 volume of *Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, 1897-1962,* edited by Ann N. Ridgeway. Like others before him, Karman assures us that the poet "cannot be understood apart from Una." By reading Una's letters, he claims, we will come to better know and understand Robinson Jeffers, his cultural, historical, and social context, and his poetry.

Taken as a whole, the three-volume set of letters confirms and delineates the broad scope of Una and Robinson Jeffers' collaboration in the production of his career. This emerges in the letters, and particularly in Volumes Two and Three, which form the major focus for this review (Volume One was reviewed in *Jeffers Studies* 12.1-2). We see this in three different ways: first, we witness how extensively the lives of this couple were entwined and how central the family—their boys in particular—was to them, both as a pair and individually. Second, we see Una Jeffers herself much more clearly than before, including details of her household management, her social life, and her husband's career. Lastly, we see the limits of the couple's entwinement: despite the regular assertions that Robinson and Una Jeffers are inseparable, I think that one of the most instructive aspects of this very thorough set of letters for a Jeffers scholar is that, by reading at length in the letters each of them penned, over time, we see precisely when and where they differ.

On the significance and value of their family, Robinson and Una Jeffers were absolutely aligned throughout their lives. Reading their letters together shows us that both parents invested deeply in their children, took care to nurture them well, and loved them immensely. From the time of the boys' birth until her death, Una's letters to close friends and friendly professional acquaintances alike are saturated with proud news of their latest accomplishments and her constant interest in their lives. Robinson Jeffers' attention to his children is also palpable throughout, as recorded in Una's descriptions of her husband reading aloud to them, assisting them with various projects (and, as he aged,

receiving their assistance, including with the stonework he was known for), and family hikes and excursions in the region and beyond. Many readers have remarked on the feeling and power of Robinson's love letters to Una, which were published in 1987 as *Where Shall I Take You To? The Love Letters of Una and Robinson Jeffers,* edited by Rob Kafka, from the independent Yolla Bolly Press. Yet, I have to confess that, to my judgment, the most touching, humorous, spontaneous, and natural-sounding letters written by the poet are not to his wife but to his sons. And while no letters from Robinson to either of his boys appear in either Volumes One or Two of the *Collected Letters*—Karman tells us that these were not preserved—those that appear in Volume Three are both heartfelt and heart-wrenching.

Perhaps this has to do with the strain of the moment: the first letter in the collection addressed to either of the boys was written by Robinson Jeffers to Garth in 1941 as it became clear that the young man would be drafted into service. Knowing well the horror and revulsion with which the poet recoiled from World War II—from evidence widely available in his published statements as well as in his poems (in these, the fathers of sons who went to war are blamed and mercilessly punished for sending them)—a reader who encounters this letter from father to son might expect a record of something akin to the "considerable disturbance of mind" that Jeffers had said plagued him during the First World War. Yet instead of fulminations or fear, Jeffers manages better than most parents would at such a time, refraining from commenting directly on the war itself. Instead, he cautiously reminds Garth how important it is that he keep in touch with his draft board so that they can find him when need be, and he counsels him more than once to indicate his typing skills and horseback riding experience when he is called. Of course, the implication was that perhaps, through emphasizing these skills, Garth might avoid the front lines. This unspoken wish palpitates, tell-tale, just beneath the surface of the written lines, and suffuses the letter with a father's pain and concern. Afraid that his son might be suspected of "irregularity" in his dealings with his draft board, but clearly torn because "[w]e don't want you in, of course," Jeffers reports that he and Una are feeling "quite troubled." "Do be careful," Jeffers writes. "Write to us when you can. Come home as soon as you can." Along with the other letters to Garth from this period, this is a letter to cry over. Good God, what it must have cost the father to send this letter to his son! Familial relationships are, of course, at the heart of some of Jeffers' most powerful poems, and the researcher who pores over these volumes may discover biographical foundations for some of the themes, characters, and events that appear in his literary texts.

Second, these letters allow us to distinguish a clear divide of work between Robinson and Una that indisputably made his career as a poet possible. In his "Forward" to Ridgeway's *Selected Letters*, Jeffers' friend and sometimes neighbor in Carmel, Mark Van Doren, precedes Karman in his proposal that Jeffers' relationship with his wife was crucial to his development, writing that "without [Una,] he would not have been the person he was" (vii). Based on the letters here, I am a bit more circumspect about Una's role in the development of Jeffers' "person" (more on this below), but I am wholly convinced that without Una's direction and will he very well may not have "amount[ed] to something worthwhile" (as he puts it in a letter written during their courtship, more than a decade before the sensational success of *Tamar*). Both in sheer volume as well as in content, the letters attest to just how much Una gave up to support his genius. Like one of Jeffers' influences, Henry David Thoreau, whose own "Life in the Woods" was in fact not so secluded as all that and in fact was actually enabled by the laundering and cooking of his sisters and mother (whose home was just a pleasant walk from his cabin), Jeffers depended greatly on the labor of his wife in order to live and write as best suited him. In addition to the many things that wives are frequently expected to take care of in order to make their husbands' careers go, Una put aside her own aspirations to teach as well as her research on Yeats and George Moore so as to ensure Robin's comfort and contentment. She gave up the exciting life of a Los Angeles socialite to be with Robin in the relatively rustic place that best suited him, and had no servants, no nurse, no electricity, no telephone—not until quite late, at any rate—to make managing the household easier. Indeed, as Una says in a letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan, she actively and self-consciously attempted to "create the appearance" of a wilder, more secluded place for Robin to live and work. She did not get to attend the cultural events that she enjoyed, including live music, theatre, and dance, as frequently as she had been accustomed to, and she went without the beautiful dresses, perfumes, and vacations she relished. That is, unless her wealthy friends and Robin's admirers lavished her with gifts and loans of such luxuries, which happened with enough regularity that the reader sometimes gets the sense that tributes to Una amounted to tributes to Jeffers (who would not have appreciated and certainly did not need them). The effusive and detailed thank-yous for these gifts, penned by Una, reveal how much these nice things meant to her. Nowhere in her letters did I detect a trace of resentment or jealousy related to her personal sacrifices, though Una's enthusiastic appreciation of the gifts and breathless, minute descriptions of the parties and events she attended—frequently without Robin—tell us much about Una's personal tastes and provide clues for

future investigations to those interested in the tenor of the relationship she had with her husband.

Perhaps even more significantly to those interested in Jeffers' poetic career, the letters reveal the extent of Una's active role as its lead curator. Una decided which dinner invitations were necessary to attend, put select letters that she felt he must personally answer in front of him (primarily to writers that seemed to be his peers—but not to mere "students") and nagged him to write them. She "corrected" interviews and biographical assertions that gave the wrong impression of husband (and herself), most notably struggling over factual data, interpretations, and even phrasing with two of Jeffers' early and important biographers, Lawrence Clark Powell and Melba Berry Bennett. She treated Powell, whom she regarded as something of a young philistine, fairly condescendingly, directly instructing him to censure portions of the apparently wide-ranging and candid interview he'd had with the poet: "He prefers not to be quoted in unconsidered opinions of his contemporaries. Delete Yeats etc." She continues, "leave out lines on O'Neill I've crossed out," corrects him about what he believes is the apparent influence of Edgar Lee Masters, and, emphatically says he must "omit Ulysses talk… Do not quote him on Ulysses." In addition, he "cannot be quoted on Catholicism." She also rebukes Powell for what she depicts as assuredly a misquote: "'guyed'—Be very careful if you wish to sound true not to put a word of slang in his mouth. One never hears him utter one word of slang. His speech is curiously free from it." While the letters can't provide direct evidence to the contrary about Jeffers' *speech*, they do demonstrate that in fact Jeffers' *language* contained slang, colloquialisms, and playful, informal speech, particularly when he was writing to his familiars. In letters both early and late, such as this one to Donald Friede, his editor at Boni and Liveright, he reports that he's had to "beg off" of certain duties and describes his latest work (*The Women at Point Sur*) as "a dinosaur in a deer-park." Decades later, his familiar voice is the same: he confesses to loving the "little wretches" Maeve and Lindsay ("for their own virtues" he clarifies, "not because they are grandchildren"), and that he hopes that *Life Magazine* will print a picture of him in it with his entire family, which he calls "the whole tribe." Casual, humorous, unpretentious, direct: Jeffers' voice in the letters is *intimate*. One suspects, reading Una's corrections, that in fact Powell had accessed the realm of the intimate with the poet; her letter of correction and rebuke indicates her desire to re-establish a boundary with the biographer that had been breached without her permission. After George Sterling's abbreviated, 1926 biography of Jeffers, in which Sterling reported that Jeffers believed that "woman is a drag and a drain on the creative artist," Una seems to have ("shrewdly," as Powell might have put it) run interference for

her husband *and* herself. Not again would Una permit a biographer to slight her or her influence on Jeffers. The letters provide no reason to doubt the poet's assertion that Una did not read Jeffers' work before he had completed and typed it, but her control over the usually unnoticed and largely unappreciated work of massaging business relationships for her husband is everywhere evident. These business relationships were very difficult to separate from the more casual, interpersonal ones so important to literary production in the age of social and technological mobility. While the poet himself explicitly and publicly declined to "be a modern," his wife actively, strategically, successfully inserted him into a very modern, brave new world of publication and promotion. If we believe his many protestations—and there is no reason not to—Jeffers happily, willingly relinquished this role to his wife. Yet as he cautions his friend Charles Erskine Scott Wood in a punchy letter from late 1934, "the letters [that Una] answers so faithfully are not her employer's but her own." To wit: he is his own man (and she is her own woman).

Finally, the letters throw into relief the differences of temperament, interest, and ideology between Robinson and Una Jeffers. The reader of this collection will come to get to know Una's voice and her topics of interest well: the rhythms of her written language reflect her spontaneous, expressive, chatty voice and indicate the "busyness" of her life in fragmentary asides and scattered interjections. Her casual, friendly relationships with her many acquaintances come through as she reports on the daily life of her family, looks forward to traveling and future visits with friends, gossips about cultural events she attends and famous people she meets, and declares her strongly-held opinions on literature, art, politics. She is, as the poet tells us in his preface to his *Selected Poetry* of 1938, "more like a woman in a Scotch ballad—passionate, untamed, rather heroic—or like a falcon—than like any ordinary person," and her letters reflect this. In these volumes we find at every turn her faithful and enduring love for her friends as well as her fiery denunciation of "communist propaganda," the "joke" of the "Noble red man" (she speaks here specifically of "the lazy, deceitful, worthless bum," Tony Luhan), and her proud recollection of her New Year's Eve toast for 1942: "May we be staunch and resourceful this year, and as *Ruthless as Necessary*!" When a friend reports elsewhere that Una told her of a two hours-long, all-out, physical fight between her and Robin in which she attacked him and marked him with "gashes, streaks, bites!", we can almost believe it. Her prejudices and preferences are openly expressed and argued in the letters. While this makes them come alive and helps us to vividly imagine the world she and Robin shared, her flashes of anger and willful narrowness at times can catch one by surprise. While the reader can frequently admire her and empathize with her, these sudden outbursts

can also cause the reader a feeling of embarrassment and guilt as she expresses some of her more violent opinions. Or perhaps that is just me.

The voice of Robinson Jeffers, as it is revealed in these letters, is very different. Jeffers is generally composed, measured, and gracious when writing about poetry to contemporaries and peers, as he is to Mark Van Doren, Saxe Commins, Van Wyck Brooks, James Rorty, and Benjamin De Casseres. To those few he considers first as friends, including Frederick Mortimer Clapp, George Sterling, and Charles Erskine Scott Wood, he is playful, affectionate, and candid. To his family he is teasing, touching, loving. Even without looking at the signature—such as when both Robinson and Una are writing to their sons together—the reader can quickly discern who is writing. The poet, as we might imagine, is more attuned to the natural world: he notices weather, trees, animals, and even people with a naturalist's eye, remarking on small details that seem significant to him in some way. For instance, writing jointly to Garth, his wife Charlotte, and their new granddaughter Maeve from Ireland, one of the authors observes that "[o]ne of the three ducks (*vide supra*) disappeared in the night, it was supposed that a fox had come; but later the body was found. He had fallen on his back, couldn't get up, and suffocated, like a sheep. Did you know that ducks do that?" and "We saw a stag beside the road 200 yds. from the castle, and his antlers were at least as long as his legs. Also a tame doe in an enclosure." This is Jeffers, of course, taking note of the unusual and striking: these creatures could easily be found in one of his poems. Here too is the poet, deftly drawing a picture: "McElhenny is rather young, alert, intelligent and active, as wealthy young men should be." The poet also typically responded to and recorded the sounds of place-names, noting them carefully as he does in this letter: Glenveaugh Castle, Dunlewy House, Errigal and Muckish are all mentioned in a single stream of language. In the same letter, Una's more quotidian report: "It's been bitterly cold & windy. I've been wearing constantly that heavy black knit dress Luisa Jenkins gave me—its a beautiful heavy one she had worn travelling but like new. – well I wear that all the time besides on top of it the cardigan of the red knit dress I bought in San Fran."

I point this distinction out because, in a frequently-quoted preface to his 1938 *Selected Poetry*, the poet identified Una Jeffers as his most significant source of inspiration and motivation. Surely the latter is true. (It is easy to imagine her, as the story goes, thumping the ceiling with her broomstick and commanding, "Pace, Robin!") But Jeffers's claim is more sweeping. Without her, he writes, he could claim neither humanity nor vision, both of which were absolutely essential to his poetic development and expression. "My nature is cold and undiscriminating," he wrote, "she excited and focused it, gave it eyes and nerves and sympathies." Yet,

as I have pointed out in the examples above, the Jeffers that emerges in his letters is truly "a warm-hearted man," as Van Doren says. It is possible that the poet here could be accused of gallantly giving Una credit for nurturing him both in his career as a poet and in his life's trajectory as a man. Too, it serves as a direct and definitive refutation of Sterling's callous (and very likely painful) assertion about women made a decade before in Jeffers' first biography. But we might also wonder if the poet decided to emphasize his wife's role at this particular moment in his career for more pressing, personal reasons. The letters and notes in these volumes clarify the context for Jeffers' statement and give this reader pause.

This statement was published in 1938, during one of the most difficult periods in Robinson Jeffers' life: as he had predicted and dreaded, a second world war was threatening to break out at any moment, he was suffering from an extended, painful episode of writer's block, and his marriage was under a significant strain that would result in infidelities and a suicide attempt. The collaboration between Robinson and Una that Karman emphasizes over the three-volume set seems to me very fragile at the beginning of Volume Three, which begins in 1940. The poet's claim, that Una so essentially and necessarily completed him, made just two years earlier, seems in this moment a desperate and romantic wish or prayer at a moment of world historical, professional, and personal crisis more than a reflection of a solid and indisputable truth.

Was Robinson Jeffers so inhuman and incomplete without Una? I don't ask this question in an effort to slight this unquestionably important relationship but rather to simply put forward the view that I believe the letters points us toward: the Jeffers that appears in his own letters, I think, was much more human, much less like granite, much less cold than he indicated. His passions were felt acutely, down to the sympathetic feeling he had for the suffering of animals, his fellow humans (though publicly he declared his "inhumanism"), and all of the parts of this earth. "Inhumanism," to my ear, is one of his private jokes that has publicly been misconstrued. The love of man caught Jeffers, too, when he walked on earth.

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Reviewed by Jim Baird

In his famous book *The Hedgehog and the Fox,* Isaiah Berlin establishes a classification system of writers based on a one line poem by Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, and the hedgehog knows but one." Berlin uses this distinction to note the differences between those artists whose work is identified by a single overriding philosophy, such as Dante, Milton, and Blake, and those who adopt no particular viewpoint but reflect the complexity of life—Shakespeare, Balzac, and Joyce, for example. The actual subject of his essay is Tolstoy, a person who was constitutionally a fox but yearned for the certainty that hedgehogdom offers. (Bob Dylan is a recent example of pingponging between these choices.)

If one fits Robinson Jeffers into this system, it is easy to see him as a hedgehog. His dour assessment of human nature, grim view of recent history, and belief that what salvation is possible is individual and based on an acceptance of humanity's limited role in a universe which is both magnificent and cruel appears in one form or another in almost everything he wrote. This viewpoint has been both a trap for critics and perhaps for Jeffers himself. As the poet himself repeatedly suggests, it is very hard to accept these conclusions even in an intellectual sense and still harder to do so emotionally. Although Jeffers' early works stunned readers with their raw power, after a time this message became hard to take. By the 1930s, critics began to see the poet as repetitive and harsh, and the sour anti-political volume *The Double Axe*, appearing amid the celebration of a great victory over fascism, sealed his fate among critics as a writer whose philosophy was easy to identify but unnecessarily rejective of modern society, and since then the process of marginalizing the poet has continued.

Careful readers of Jeffers know that this judgment, though understandable, is reductive and unfair. Robert Brophy's resurrection of Jeffers in the 1970s connected him with the rich vein of myth and showed that he is not alone in his view of human life as a repeated tragedy, but one which can be redeemed. Recent scholarship continues to show how Jeffers' verse narratives since "Tamar" do not merely repeat the same story as if the poet could think of nothing else but instead show how different characters react in different ways to his basic vision. Other writers have revealed other dimensions of Jeffers' thought, such as his interest in and deep understanding of the latest scientific theories posited during his lifetime. The more we learn about Jeffers, the more multifaceted his work

appears. Another volume which increases our awareness of the poet is the recent collection of essays edited by ShaunAnne Tangney, *The Wild That Attracts Us*. She points out in her introduction that a new set of essays on the poet is needed because a number of new critical approaches have appeared in the last twenty years, and Jeffers needs to be evaluated in terms of these. Each of the writers presented in this excellent volume deepens and extends our understanding of the poet so that, although he is still defined by his particular philosophy, nonetheless his "foxiness," his curiosity about so many fields and his personal responses to his experiences, is shown in every essay.

Consider Rob Kafka's essay on a climbing trip in the San Bernadino mountains above Los Angeles that Jeffers took in 1907 while enrolled at the University of Southern California. This detailed account of an episode taking a few days is researched by the essayist with characteristic thoroughness. The famously shy poet who would not travel five miles to meet William Shakespeare and was frequently "not at home" was, during his college years, able to climb like a bighorn sheep, meet strangers and easily make friends with them, respond to trouble with confidence, and lead this expedition. One is tempted to call him during his college years affable, a description which would have no doubt embarrassed the later Jeffers. In a fascinating sidebar, Kafka finds that one of the people the poet met on this occasion was a literal man on horseback, Homer Lea, one of the last solitary adventurers who populated the nineteenth century, and gives a full account of his career also.

In another work which is partly biographical, Bryon Williams pairs Jeffers with Thoreau in his essay examining the daily lives of the two writers, who, although both appear together frequently in ecological anthologies, would appear to have little in common. Jeffers said that he had never read Thoreau, so the earlier writer would appear to have no influence on the poet. But Williams explains that the close relationship with the environment that each artist sought was first based on living in a specific place and working there (praxis), in Jeffers' case his masonry and tree planting, for Thoreau his bean field and his "sauntering", which led to knowledge of the area (gnosis)—for both of these men, walking their surroundings for hours each day, constantly noticing something new, and finally shaping that knowledge into an artistic statement (poesis). The results that each writer achieved may appear to be different (although Thoreau is more pessimistic than he at first appears, bringing him closer to Jeffers' worldview), but the process through which the poet and the essayist passed are similar.

Obviously Jeffers was more at home in nature than in urban society, a frequent target of criticism in his work. His reaction to the hectic pace and confusion of cities was never more apparent than when he visited

San Francisco in 1929 and became physically ill, a condition which continued for several days. J. Bradford Campbell, in his contribution to the collection, identifies this reaction as not unique to Jeffers but one shared by many others, particularly artists: neurasthenia. He examines the writings of George Beard, a neurologist who studied this condition, in which Beard says that the human body has a limited amount of energy and that energy may be dissipated by the pressure of urban society, resulting in weakness and fatigue. Expanding on this definition, Campbell shows how it affected other writers such as the poet's friend George Sterling, and how this condition was a step toward Jeffers' recognition of a cure in Inhumanism. Like the coal mine canaries, many artists of the early twentieth century signaled future generations of something that is now well recognized: living in modern society is bad for your health.

Moving from the poet's life to his work, both Campbell and Christopher Damien specifically expand on George Hart's *Inventing the Language to Tell It*, which examines Jeffers' attempts to find new ways to express not thought and emotion but consciousness itself. Damien analyzes "Consciousness" and "De Rerum Virtute" to show how Jeffers works to find consciousness in beings other than human, a viewpoint which, Damien points out, has been embraced by the scientific community.

Tim Hunt adds to this discussion of consciousness with his analysis of a familiar puzzle which concerns not only Jeffers but such a very different poet as T.S. Eliot: how are we to understand the "I" who speaks in their verses? We have long ago moved past the naive reader's view that it is the poet himself who speaks, but what is the relationship of the "I" to the poet and thus to the reader? In addition to comparing the speaker in Jeffers' poems to Eliot's Prufrock and to Wordsworth's contention that poetry is "emotion recollected in tranquility," Hunt makes a careful analysis of "Point Joe." The speaker in that poem is not so much describing an experience as attempting to come to grips with the essence of that experience. Part of the experience is that Point Joe is a tricky place—if one is not careful, it can hurt you. The poem is a way to deal with this trickiness, a way to remind that all nature, in fact all consciousness, is similarly tricky and must be examined from many viewpoints. Even if one tries to understand things from this perspective, the results remain incomplete. Hunt's analysis places Jeffers in the world of the fox.

Robert Zaller ironically expands our view of the writer's worldview by associating him with pessimism, which might at first glance seem a dead end. Zaller points out that recent changes in the field of philosophy which have elevated the viewpoint of pessimism, previously thought of as an attitude, to a system of thought, a branch of philosophy which now embraces such thinkers as Schopenhauer, formerly thought of outliers, as

part of a wider stream. Rather than being merely a reflection of personal disappointment, Jeffers' works can now be seen as part of a longer tradition which looks at human behavior and world history and finds little to recommend either. Once again, the poet was there ahead of us.

The editor of the collection, ShaunAnne Tangney, contributes an ecofeminist analysis of "Roan Stallion" which describes how California is yet another exploited figure in a landscape full of rapists. Her final triumph on the hilltop finds her and her daughter finally alone with every male on Johnnie's spread dead. Prof. Tangney then pushes her analysis to make a point which is the most important in the book and which takes the reader beyond Jeffers. California has been the victim of violence, and although feminists might take pleasure in her taking charge of her life at last, in moral terms her particular rebellion is no advance at all. Men exploited and killed women for centuries; now a woman is the killer. This is no real change—the pattern of violence continues with different actors in the role of masters. Because of the dominance of men and our obsession with a quick response to violence (For example, the Gay Rights movement began with the Stonewall riot.), one assumes that women reach full consciousness when they begin to act like men, a trap into which many activists fall. Although Prof. Tangney never makes this point, looming over her analysis is the fact that California's triumph was the product of a male artist. Instead she points out that California is not a heroine but an example, and that true progress is made when all reject the cycle of violence, a change that Jeffers thought impossible. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela were great leaders because they refused the easy path of revenge and insisted that change bring something better, more humane. Prof. Tangney says this as well.

David Rothman helps to answer those who maintain that Jeffers is a throwback to the nineteenth century because he writes verse narratives, presumably an irrelevant form in an age of mostly short poems. In his essay on narrative and translation, Rothman points out that most of the best selling books of poetry are translations of classics such as *The Iliad, The Odyssey,* and *Beowulf.* He admits that sales are helped by the adoption of these books as classroom texts, but he also makes the central point that every translation is a recasting of the basic text in which the translator becomes a new author. The continuing popularity of these long poetic narratives in translation, including at least one success by Jeffers, *Medea,* shows both a lack of understanding by both the general public and critics that verse narrative is still vital (that is, alive) and Jeffers is hardly a niche writer, but clearly a part of the tradition of re-invigorating older works through presenting them from different perspectives.

Anthony Liol finds that Jeffers' works have borne fruit in the contemporary Dark Mountain Project. Before he explains how this

is so, Liol takes the reader on a detailed trip through the evolution of Jeffers' philosophical attitude through classical Stoicism tempered and influenced by the Calvinistic theology which the poet experienced at an early age. Liol maintains that these traditions are the source of Jeffers' doctrine of Inhumanism, which in itself fed the viewpoint of Deep Ecology, a system of thought which frightens philosophers because of its insistence that nature cannot be considered from a physical or scientific viewpoint alone but which must be regarded from a spiritual perspective as well. That conclusion means that logic must be abandoned or compromised at some point, leaving philosophy behind and verging into theology. The Dark Mountain Project, which takes its name from one of Jeffers' poems, is an attempt to free ecological thought from the strictures that consumerism and urban-based solutions have led it into, using Inhumanism to move to another solution: Uncivilization. Followers of this project urge people to regard themselves as not just part of human society, but the entire environment, including the oceans and the stars, to seek whatever salvation there may be in this widened relationship.

Petr Kopecky examines Jeffers in a quite different context in his essay about the great popular acceptance of his poetry in post-war Czechoslovakia, where translations of his works sold out as soon as they were issued. When this country was still behind the iron curtain, the Soviet-backed government allowed Jeffers' books to circulate because they were critical of American society while those of most other American writers were banned. Of course, Jeffers' works were critical of society in general, but one of the major flaws of a totalitarian state is that the leaders don't have to think very much; that activity is a secret weapon of the people. Czechs understood Jeffers' basic points about the evils of poor ecological and social planning because they could see it. Their country had been deforested long ago, stripped of its resources, and many of its cities trashed to be rebuilt as gray concrete models of collectivism. Also, in a land-locked country, Jeffers' descriptions of the coast, the mountains, the plants and the wildlife where he lived were as bizarre as a trip to the moon. Jeffers helped the Czechs to survive their bleak period under Communism in both political and spiritual ways, something the poet himself would probably never have thought of.

Jeffers may be a hedgehog, but his basic viewpoint is so all-encompassing and raises so many difficult questions, that, as Jeffers readers know, one could spend a lifetime investigating all the byways of his thought and art. He is a fox within a hedgehog. The great variety of ideas and experiences that he presents is part of the wild that attracts us to him.

James Karman. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet and Prophet*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015. 245 pp.

Reviewed by Brett Colasacco

James Karman is a truly gifted and graceful prose stylist, surely one of the finest writers at work in the field of American literary studies today. Full disclosure: Karman's first biography of Jeffers, *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California* (1987; rev. ed., Brownsville: Story Line Press, 1995), probably did more than any other single work—at least apart from Jeffers's own—to spur my interest in the poet and his writings, as I imagine it did for other students and young scholars of Jeffers. Indeed, the existence of that earlier, excellent, albeit brief biography would seem to beg the question as to the need for another one. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet and Prophet* is, of course, longer than its predecessor, but only slightly so, and similarly chronological in its organization. This is not the full-scale critical biography called for by George White, Robert Zaller, and others. Why, then, this book? What is its place on the proverbial Jeffers shelf?

Poet and Prophet is a revised version of Karman's introduction to *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers* (three vols., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009-2015). Most of the revisions are relatively minor: a changed word or phrase here and there; some longer paragraphs broken up into shorter, more easily digestible units. The only substantial chunk of new material comes near the beginning, where Karman has added several pages on the reception of Jeffers's poetry; the precipitous decline in his reputation as a poet—at least in certain circles—and reasons for it; and the renaissance that Jeffers scholarship is experiencing at the moment, with important publications in recent years from the likes of Zaller, George Hart, ShaunAnne Tangney, Deborah Fleming, and Michael Broomfield (2-7). An additional new paragraph compares Jeffers's poem "Continent's End" to lines by William Blake (48-49).

The introduction to the *Collected Letters* was divided into twelve sections. The middle sections each covered roughly a five-year span, while the first and last dealt with more extended swaths of time in Jeffers's life. *Poet and Prophet* preserves that structure but further groups the twelve sections into four chapters: "Wild honey," 1887-1915 (9-36); "Tides of fire," 1915-1930" (37-81); "The whirlwind's heart," 1930-1945 (83-145); and "Eagle and hawk," 1945-1962 (147-214). This is a helpful move because these new, larger chapter divisions map precisely onto the most significant historical events through which Jeffers lived and wrote: World War I, the Great Depression, World War II. The periodization signaled by the table of contents thus immediately suggests that the story

of Jeffers's career is one that is inseparably interconnected with that of his age. This in itself represents a bold thesis, since Jeffers is all too often seen, and dismissed, as an isolated figure, a merely regional poet whose concerns had little to do with those of his better-known modernist contemporaries. As Karman concludes: "An implicit argument of this book . . . is that Jeffers is essential to understanding ourselves, the twentieth century, and the world. No study of American history or literature is complete without him." (225)

Where *Poet and Prophet* clearly surpasses *Poet of California* is in the depth and breadth of its efforts at cultural, intellectual, and sociopolitical contextualization. Where the earlier book focused more narrowly on Jeffers's personal and family life and his relation to California, this one includes lengthy passages on Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson (21-25), the aftermath of World War I in Europe as well as in America (37-40), the so-called *anni mirabili* of modernism in literature and the arts from 1921 to 1925 (51-54), and other topics that touch upon the central narrative of Jeffers's literary production. Such passages, in the hands of a lesser author, could be simply digressions or tangents. Not so with Karman. The focus throughout remains squarely on Jeffers himself, whose life story is skillfully and successfully woven into the wider tapestry of the unfolding history of the first half of the twentieth century.

On the one hand, not much here could be described as original or groundbreaking. On the other hand, the degree to which Jeffers's work is shown both to reflect and to inflect the broader currents of his age could point the way for future research. I am especially excited by Karman's identification of the possible Wagnerian underpinnings of Jeffers's abandoned verse drama *The Alpine Christ* (42). The mythopoeic projects of Wagner and Jeffers are strikingly similar in some respects, and Wagner's music dramas or *Gesamtkunstwerken* deserve more attention from Jeffers scholars as precursors to, if not sources of direct influence on, the poet's narrative and dramatic oeuvre. Wagner's theoretical writings also constitute a crucial link between Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose relative degrees of influence on Jeffers's thinking were once a subject of considerable scholarly debate (see Radcliffe Squires, *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956]; and Arthur B. Coffin, *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Inhumanism* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971]).

In *Poet and Prophet* Karman paints an even richer picture of Jeffers than he did in *Poet of California*. *Poet of California* may still be the ideal biography for readers interested in Jeffers primarily as a regional figure or local celebrity, but *Poet and Prophet* is better suited for those with a more probing curiosity as to the meaning and enduring value of Jeffers's poetry, his place in the American and international literary pantheon. It would

be the perfect companion to Tim Hunt's *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) or Albert Gelpi's *The Wild God of the World: An Anthology of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) on undergraduate- or graduate-level course syllabi.

Making this revised version of Karman's introduction to the *Collected Letters* available to a general readership in the form of an inexpensive paperback is a powerful gesture on the part of Stanford University Press. Once again we Jeffersians owe Stanford a debt of gratitude. My only serious reservation about this book, finally, is what its appearance portends for that other, as-yet-unrealized project: a comprehensive, critical biography of Robinson Jeffers. Karman is without question the most qualified person alive to undertake the task, and one fears that having completed not one but two biographies of the poet—not to mention editing and exhaustively annotating the *Collected Letters*, the most invaluable of all of Karman's many services to the Jeffers community—neither he nor anyone else will be likely to tackle a third anytime soon. In the meantime, as Karman himself observes in *Poet and Prophet*:

> Readers who desire more than an overview, or who are curious about particular details mentioned in the text, should turn to the *Collected Letters*, where the full arc of Jeffers' life is traced through correspondence, and where he and Una tell their story in their own words. Key portions of that story—such as family life at Tor House, travels, marital conflicts, and relationships with friends—can only be understood through a study of the letters, together with the explanatory notes that accompany them. (8)

Contributors

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William Everson (1912–1994) was a poet, master printer, teacher, Dominican lay brother (1951–1968), and self-described disciple of Robinson Jeffers. From the 1960s until the end of his life, he wrote critically on Jeffers, and brought forth a massive amount of unpublished material by him.

Geneva Gano is an Assistant Professor of English at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. She has made many contributions to Jeffers scholarship and is the current President of the Robinson Jeffers Association.

Steven Herrmann began his vocation in Jeffers studies under the tutelage of William Everson at UC Santa Cruz. He later co-authored a full-length book study with Everson that looks at Jeffers as a shaman and has since published over thirty papers and two newer books. His newest book is titled *Spiritual Democracy: The Wisdom of Early American Visionaries for the Journey Forward*, published by North Atlantic Books in 2014, He is currently writing a book on Jeffers that positions the Carmel poet as the most seminal poet of Spiritual Democracy in America.

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Guidelines for Submissions

Submit double-spaced, MLA format Word file of critical essays, book reviews, short articles, and news items as email 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*. Citation of his and his wife's letters should be to the Stanford *Collected Letters*, if the letter was published there, and abbreviated *CL*. Formatting should follow the MLA *Handbook*, seventh edition, with parenthetical citations, endnotes, and works cited. Final revisions of accepted articles should be submitted as email attachments.

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