Robinson Jeffers

NEWSLETTER

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Contents

~ News & Notes ~

Robinson Jeffers October Festival

℘ The Robinson Jeffers October Festival was scheduled this year for the Sunset Center in Carmel, with events as follows:

Friday, Oct. 11, 5:30 p.m.

Book-signing reception for festival authors: Everson, Zaller, Hunt, Brophy, Hass, Karman,andothers. Thunderbird Bookshop, The Barnyard, Carmel.

Saturday, Oct. 12, 10 a.m.

Seminar: "Robinson Jeffers & the Work of William Everson" Carpenter Hall, Sunset Cultural Center.

Panelists: Robert Zaller, Tim Hunt, Robert Brophy. Guest: William Everson, author of *Fragments* of *An Older* Fury (1968) and *The Excesses of* God (1988); poet-author of *The Poet is Dead (1964),* editor of Californians *(1971), The Alpine Christ (1973), Tragedy Has Obligations (1973), Brides the South Wind (1974),* and *Granite and Cypress (1975)*

Panel: "R.J.and Everson as Literary Critic" (Zaller); "R.J.and the Perceptions of Wm.Everson" (Hunt); "Everson & the Religious Dimension in R.J." (Brophy).

Saturday, October 12, 2 p.m.

Seminar: "Robinson Jeffers: Retrospective."

Ward Ritchie: designer, printer, typographer, Daniel Kingman: Prof. of Music (CSU, Sacramento), composer of original composition based on Jeffers' "Evening Ebb" and "Fire on the Hills".

Saturday, October 12, 7:30 p.m.

Annual Jeffers Banquet, Poseidon Room, La Playa.

Speaker: Robert Hass, poet, critic, editor, Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow, Editor, Rock & *Hawk.*

Robinson Jeffers
NEWSLETTER

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~ News & Notes ~

Sunday, Oct. 13, 9:15 a.m.

Jeffers Poetry Walk. From Carmel's Forest Theater, ending at Stewart's Beach (picnic). Reading of poems. Led by poet John Dotson.

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Special Meetings

℘ The Western Literature Association 1991 Conference, held in Estes Park, Colorado, October 3 to 5, featured a program on the poet: "Teaching the Works of Robinson Jeffers," on October 3, organized by the newly formed Robinson Jeffers Association: Don Scheese (chair), Santa Clara University; David C. Morris, University of Washington-Tacoma ("Teaching Robinson Jeffers in Four Contexts"; Terry Beers, Santa Clara University ("Professing Robinson Jeffers"); Robert Brophy, California State University, Long Beach ("Teaching Jeffers: The Carmel/Big Sur Setting").

The Modern Language Association 1991 Convention in San Francisco at the end of December will host a meeting on Jeffers, organized by the Robinson Jeffers Association.

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Robinson Jeffers Association — New Members Sought

℘ The Robinson Jeffers Association (RJN 78, p. 5) is seeking to broaden its membership. Write Prof. Terry Beers, English Department, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95053. RJA's aim is to promote and support Jeffers studies, network for scholars interested in Jeffers research, and provide a forum for Jeffers scholarship at annual meetings.

Recent Jeffers Criticism — First Publication and Reprint

℘ Robert Zaller, ed., *Centennial Essays for Robinson Jeffers.* Newark: University of Delware, 1991.

James Karman, ed., *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers.* Boston: G.K. Hall, 1990.

Robert Brophy, ed., *The Robinson Jeffers Newsletter. A Jubilee Gathering,* 1962-1988. Los Angeles: Occidental College, 1988. Available through *RJN* editor.

Lawrence Clark Powell, *California Classics: The Creative Literature* of *the Golden State.* Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1989 (P.O. Box 2068. Santa Barbara, CA 93120; $11.95 paper). Chapter 18: "Give Your Heart to the Hawks: Robinson Jeffers."

Volume Three:

Tim Hunt, ed., *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers.* Stanford University Press, 1991. Poems 1938-1962 - *Be Angry at the Sun* (1938-1941), *The Double Axe* (1942-1947), *Hungerfield* (1948-1953), *Last Poems* (1953-1962).

~ Commentary ~

Jeffers, Ecology, and Gardening:
A Note, a Review, and an Article

℘ Early and late, Robinson Jeffers' home has been graced with a garden. Lee Jeffers and latterly the Tor House Foundation have for considerable years recreated both the Jeffers herb plantings and the flowers, bushes, lawns, and other rich colorings of the Tor House compound. In letter after letter, which are being transcribed for the Stanford edition of Jeffers correspondence, Una Jeffers glories in the color below her window, literally trembling at the spring blossoming of her own plantings and of the tapestry of wildflowers which surrounds her house. Jeffers himself covered his originally bare (i.e., grassy) foreland with cypresses and eucalypti, literally thousands of trees, a kind of windbreak and a view-break for him against the sight of civilization encroaching.

In the posthumous *The Beginning and the End,* Jeffers offers us a poem about Una's garden as carried on by his daughter-in-law:

The Shears

A great dawn-color rose widening the
petals around her gold eye
Peers day and night in the window.
She watches us
Breakfasting, lighting lamps, reading,
and the children playing, and the
dogs by the fire,
She watches earnestly, uncompre-
hending,
As we stare into the world of trees and
roses uncomprehending,
There is a great gulf fixed. But even
while
I gaze, and the rose at me, my little
flower-greedy daughter-in-law
Walks with shears, very blonde and
housewifely
Through the small garden, and sud-
denly the rose finds herself rootless
in-doors.
Now she is part of the 1ife she watched.
— So we: death comes and plucks us:
we become part of the living earth
And wind and water whom we so
loved. We are they.

An interesting comment. As a human eye might view it, there is a gulf between species, human and flower, indoors and out. And then suddenly there is assimilation-first casually in an act of appreciation (a gardener plucking), and then metaphysically, in the metaphor of death plucking us. We, too, are part of Nature's garden, though we separate and aggrandize ourselves. Ultimately we are inescapably "part of" and then, more mystically and simply, *"are* they."

In the essay-review that follows, Greg and Pat Williams, co-editors of a journal on gardening, consider Michael Pollan's *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* in light of Jeffers' inhumanism.

~ Commentary ~

The review is followed by vintage Lawrence Clark Powell, a reprint of his 1935 article, the first printed look into the Jefferses garden, in *Sunset Magazine*.

Finally, we note a recent and wonderfully woven article, "Robinson Jeffers and Tor House" by Phyllis Kelley, for the *Point Lobos Natural History Association Newsletter* (Spring 1991, pages 3 to 5), which gathers various facts and quotations on the Tor House garden together with Jeffers' reflection on trees and flowers in his poetry.

In Gardening Lies the Preservation of the Earth?

by Greg and Pat Williams

From HortIdeas, vol. *V71I, no. 6, June 1991, page 1; Route 1, Box 302, Gravel Switch, KY 40328I.*

℘ Philosophical gardening books are few and far between - not to mention ones which suggest that gardeners point the way to the salvation of our civilization. Michael Pollan's newly published *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* (Atlantic Monthly Press New York) resulted from the author's finding "a lot more going on in the garden than I'd expected to find" - that is, a lot of philosophical lessons about the interface between "nature" and "culture" in America. We don't agree completely with Pollan's conclusions, but we think his arguments deserve the attention of gardeners and environmentalists.

Pollan calls for a new kind of environmental ethic "based on the garden ... frankly anthropocentric." Underlying his acceptance of a human-centered morality is, first, his belief that culture is part of nature, that "the whole idea of nature as being 'out there,' a kind of abiding metaphysical absolute against which we can judge messy, contingent culture ... is *itself* a cultural construct, an invention of Emerson and Thoreau and the English romantic poets," and, second, "...what Is culture but forbearance? Conscience, ethical choice, memory, discrimination: it is these very human and decidedly unecological faculties that offer the planet its last best hope. It is true that, historically, we've concentrated on exercising these faculties in the human rather than the natural estate, but that doesn't mean they *cannot* be exercised there." And so, he criticizes passive naturalists and preservationists for their refusal to *act* in nature: "romantic metaphor offers us no role in nature except as an observer or worshipper." In support of his pragmatic prescription, Pollan cites Wendell Berry: "It is not natural to be disloyal to one's own kind."

What attitudes could a new environmental ethic adopt from gardeners? "The gardener doesn't waste much time

~ Commentary cont.~

on metaphysics-on figuring out what a 'truer' perspective on nature (such as biocentrism or geocentrism) might look like. That's probably because he's noticed that most of the very long or wide perspectives we've recently been asked to adopt ... are indifferent to our well-being and survival as a species ... (However,) the gardener's conception of his self-interest is broad and enlightened. Anthropocentric as he may be, he recognizes that he is dependent for his health and survival on many other forms of life, so he is careful to take their interests into account in whatever he does ... The gardener cultivates wildness, but he does so carefully and respectfully, in full recognition of its mystery ... The gardener tends not to be romantic *about nature* ... Nature is probably a poor place to look for values. She was indifferent to humankind's arrival, and she is indifferent to our survival ... The gardener feels he has a legitimate quarrel with nature ... But at the same time, the gardener appreciates that it would probably not be in his interest or in nature's, to push his side of the argument too hard ... The gardener doesn't take it for granted that man's impact on nature will always be negative ... The gardener doesn't feel that by virtue of the fact that he changes nature he is somehow outside of it ... The gardener firmly believes it is possible to make distinctions between kinds and degrees of human intervention in nature."

Our own assessment of these ideas is that Pollan is heading in the right direction, but still has some distance to go. He can see the destination, but not with clarity, and sometimes his view is distracted by tempting billboards along the roadside. We appreciate his lack of distinction between nature and culture, but we think a slightly different dichotomy should be retained, that between the human and the non-human. As the anthropologist Gregory Bateson made clear, human conscious purpose allied with human technological capability poses enormously greater dangers to earth than do the strivings of non-human nature. And the poet Robinson Jeffers eloquently portrayed humanity's infatuation with its own desires (he called it "incestuous"), in stark contrast with the selfless (because unconscious) beauty of the nonhuman (he called it the "inhuman"). We join Bateson and Jeffers in expressing a deep skepticism about whether anthropocentrism is a trustworthy foundation for environmental ethics. The question is: what other basis could there be? Do we *ever* make decisions, ethical or not, which are not rooted in our personal desires?

Although many economists (and some moralists!) might not know how to deal with such occasions, we think that unselfish human acts are indeed possible. We refer to acts of love, where what is done is what the *other wants* or needs. Love (or, perhaps better, compassion) is Pollan's yet-unreached stopping point, in our opinion. Why not an environmental ethic rooted in love? The obvious objection is that humans can truly love only other humans. But we suspect this claim to be just another intrusion of our incestuous habits. Non-human animals and

~ Commentary cont.~

plants, lacking human consciousness, still have needs. Who better than gardeners (and, of course, animal lovers) could show the rest of humanity that the non-human *can* be loved — can have its needs satisfied by our *unselfish* actions? Yes, it is entirely possible that in gardening lies the preservation of the earth. But the real revelation brought by gardeners, *contra* Pollan's pragmatism, is that human survival requires a kind of anti-anthropocentrism: love of the non-human.

Robinson Jeffers and His Garden

by Lawrence Clark Powell

Reprinted from Sunset Magazine, *May 1935, pages I 1 and 66.*

℘ Much has been written of the strange poetry and personality of Robinson Jeffers. Scores of visitors have been impressed by the poet's striking granite house and tower at Carmel-by-the-Sea, but no one has taken the trouble to tell of the garden at Tor House. This neglect is due, perhaps, to the very nature of the garden itself; for in it are planted no showy flowers, such as chrysanthemums, dahlias, potted begonias, tulips, nor eccentric cacti. It is an artful garden, half domestic, half wild, in which herbs and bushes, weeds and wild flowers blend naturally. Jeffers and his wife, Una, together created it.

When they came to Carmel in 1914, Mission Point (which lies a mile to the south of the village and just to the north of the Carmel River's mouth) was wild and windswept and rocky. Una, who had recently returned from a stay in England, saw it as a bit of Cornwall. She and her husband decided to build a low rock-house on the crowning tor and dwell there in bleak isolation, with only the sparse, fragrant wild grass and wild flowers for a garden.

But Jeffers was not long out of the School of Forestry at the University of Washington, and it was only natural for him, after the house was built and belted with a low stone wall, to plant a baker's dozen of the local Monterey cypresses for a windbreak just outside the courtyard wall.

A few years passed, and the formerly unfrequented village of Carmel became an artists' colony. Houses were strung southward along the bay, encroaching on the Cornish Isolation of Tor House, until, to insure their privacy as well as to afford protection from the mistrallike land breeze which sweeps by night down the Carmel River valley, they planted a dense grove of trees to the eastward. Over a period of years. Jeffers set out more than 2,000 young trees - eucalypti, cypresses, a few pines, one small black walnut (Una's father brought the nut from Washington's tomb at Mount Vernon), one metrosideros from New Zealand, a dozen Japanese hakea, and several dozen Acacia *latifolia*. In the mornings

~ Commentary cont.~

Jeffers wrote poetry, in the afternoons he watered and tended his trees and toiled at the building of the 40-foot granite Hawk Tower.

While Jeffers was occupied with the grove outside the courtyard, his wife was making a garden of the inner area. Two Irish yew trees were placed as sentinels. A carpet of sweet alyssum was spread. Then herbs for pleasant fragrance. And, as if this were not a sweet enough tussie-mussie, Una added bushes of rose-geraniums and odorous wallflowers.

Sea-gray-green is the color effect gained by the planting of gray santolina and green bushes against the gray granite walls of the house and tower. Many yellow flowers, however, add a bright note to the somber pattern. There are the Mid yellow grindelia (a sovereign remedy for poison oak much used by the Spanish, and, according to Una Jeffers, old Spaniards still come and ask to gather it in the hollow to the north of the house), and the bee-magnetic yellow sweet clover, marigolds, lion's-tails, yellow irises, and several yellow roses. Una is fond of all shades of yellow, and burnt orange. Blue, she says, is often sad on dull days, and red too dashing and violent, but yellow is gay and spirited and full of vitality.

It is a garden of soft color that blends beautifully with its surroundings. In summer the carpet of sweet alyssum blooms exuberantly and casts its fragrance to the sea wind. And in spring, when the winter rains have greened the hills and changed the sea ledge, all the way to Point Sur, to a *mille-fleur* tapestry, then the Jeffers garden is at its loveliest. In the hollow north of the house, the wild flowers come forth in such abundance that Una at one time counted 45 different kinds in bloom!

It is only natural that Robinson Jeffers' poetry should reflect his love for trees and flowers, yet no one has mentioned the fact in those horrific essays of stuff and nonsense that have been written about him as the arch-poet of morbidity and madness. Scattered through his poems are scores of passages which describe the natural beauty of the Carmel coast. With little effort 1 have compiled a list of almost 50 wild flowers and flowering vines and bushes which bloom in his verse.

It is easy enough for a poet, with the aid of a thesaurus, to adorn his verses with references to flowers, but such is not Jeffers' fashion. He links the flowers and trees to the landscape and to the very core of the land in which the[y] grow, as in the following description of spring in Mill Creek Canyon:

> The darkness under the trees in spring
> is starry with flowers, with redwood
> sorrel, colt's foot, wakerobin.
> The slender-stemmed pale yellow vio-
> lets,
> And Solomon's-seal that makes in-
> tense islands of fragrance in April.

No American poet has written so faithfully and lovingly of western flowers and trees as Robinson Jeffers, and no home in the West has a more happy adaptation of wild and domestic vegetation than that in the garden and grove of Una and Robinson Jeffers at Tor House.

~ Reflections ~

The 'Aperitif' Caper: Bob Jeffers and the Lost Lenore

℘ The following article, appearing in an obscure and long-defunct Santa Barbara magazine for October 1935, predictably was the source of some irritation within the Jeffers household. It occasioned a repudiation and rebuttal by the poet in the November issue. Una's letters that autumn refer to its scurrilous intent. Her friends/correspondents reacted variously, some by cornering available copies; others by writing protests to the magazine.

The author, John G. Moore, a would be writer and occasional lecturer on Walt Whitman, evidently saw in his "intimate revelations" an opportunity to draw Jeffers into an open forum. University of San Francisco's Gleeson Library has several manuscript letters of Moore follow-through, attempts to cajole or goad Jeffers into open response.

To Una's consternation, Melba Bennett was apparently taken in by Ms. Montgomery's story and wrote a whole chapter evidently intended either for *Robinson Jeffers and the Sea* or for an earlier version of her Jeffers biography, *The Stone-Mason of Tor House.* One can imagine the dynamics when she naively showed the manuscript to Una (this typescript is also housed at the Gleeson).

The essay is a curiosity, really of no particular biographical significance. One notes that Jeffers does not deny Lenore as a romantic episode but merely minimizes her importance and repudiates matrimonial intent. The poems, he says, were adapted to various women during that uncertain time before Una and he found their way together.

As a bizarre postscript, one discovers that after Lenore's death the carefully treasured manuscripts were in the safekeeping of Professor Richard Swift of the Art Department of California State University, Long Beach, her stepson, until the mid-1960s when a European "researcher," unknown to Jeffers scholarship before or since, borrowed them for examination and then mysteriously absconded.

The brief article is reprinted here as a footnote in Jeffersian ephemera. Jeffers' response appears as edited by the magazine.

The Editor

(Reprint begins next page)

The Beginnings of Jeffers:

A Few Notes for a History, a Biography, and an Interpretation

by John G. Moore

Reprinted from Aperitif, *October 1935, pages 6 and 13.*

℘ The only one of Jeffers' books bearing all three of his names, is the first thin volume of poems, *Flagons and Apples,* published in 1912. After that time, apparently, he dropped the name "John," as well as the mood, becoming merely "Robinson Jeffers" to the public, "Robin" or "Rob" to his wife, and a composer of "tragic narratives" after the pattern shown us on Mount Olympus. But he is "Bob" to at least two women in Southern California who "knew him when"; a romantic lover and, even deep down, he may be what they think he is: John, a sort of Beloved.

As John, he was tender and rather sentimental, and almost human at times; and a careful consideration of his first book reveals lots of sweetness, and some few lyrical notes that, since 1913, his poems generally lack. Then, the dark muse apparently got him, and he has outstripped the Greeks themselves since then, with psychic cathartics — (if that was their motive for dishing the dirt for the ancestors of those who still dote on having their blood pressure changed through reading about how he, she, or it, *"did it,"* or didn't *"do it.")* Of course, only heaven knows what "it" is. Imagination fills in the details.

Another interesting fact that consideration of Jeffers' first poems reveal under many varied lights is a strong feminine figure, to which he attached the name "Helen." No thoughtful student of Jeffers' can pass that figure a- -the early episode in his personal l i f e which it dominates, without wondering r. at least who or what she, or he, was or is. Was Helen really a goddess? A psychic wraith like a Beatrice to a modern Dante? Or just an ordinary woman (if any woman ever is) - that Jeffers imagined into a goddess by a *probably* legal use of his first Poet's License? Who was Jeffers' Helen?

Another question on this subject is: Why— at least in his poetry — is Jeffers so pessimistic about everything? does he so invariably bring out of sub- consciousness the black atavisms of old racialness? Thoughts and things about beasts, women, men, and gods — (good and bad); queer people and their sisters carrying on unnaturally . inconveniently, and surely uncomfortably in sexy situations; so-called women, and others, engaged in what Paul, California's state law, and most ordinary people's common sense, and private codes denounce; and tales violence, wherein people weltered each others' blood, and seemed to 1i - - it; wherein crimes, and lusts, played their monotonous minors, always ending with the same dull note that sounds to my ears like the thud of a hammer on

~ Reflections cont. ~

a bull's head in a slaughter pen, or the grunt of a negro heaving the sledge. Why do Jeffers' poems deal so much with that phase of things, and wind up with a moan of sorrow, and a wail of defeat and futility. "Woe! Woe! Woe! What the hell's the use of anything" rang in my ears after a day spent reading passages of his recently, just to see wherein the black notes marked his strange moods. (There are lovely passages too; and a fine power evident, even through the darkness.)

Can the pessimism — the lack of cheerfulness — of any person be understood by a psychoanalysis of their art forms? I believe it can. There is either a, or at least *the* woman, back of every art form a man ever made.

I met the woman recently who claims to have been the original disappointment for Jeffers — and the inspirer of his first poems, and the model for "Helen." She gave me some grounds to believe, too, that probably the poet's pessimism might be due to buried emotional things that may never have been rightly understood and dissipated. This woman told me Jeffers made love to her for nearly four years, wrote all his early poems to her — many not published — and, when she finally made up her mind to obey her parents' wishes and marry a "practical" man, gave him a shock she doesn't seem to believe he recovered from — very soon.

She divorced her husband after a year, and is now married to a successful-seeming psychologist-physician. Both have interest In Jeffers and his works. To the physician, he Is a sort of case, as most poets are to so-called "practical" people; but to Helen he is still the romantic John who, a quarter of a century ago, bombarded her with poems, importunings, and silent adoration for almost four years, and went away into the North to become a silent man of mystery, toiling slowly at building Rock Houses, and writing poems about Rocks and Death when she rejected his suit ...

"Bob wrote the poems in his first book to me," she said to me recently, "and I still have the manuscripts. The best of these were not published. Some that were are changed at points from what they said when he gave them to me, which only we can understand."

The woman's name was Lenore M., and she said they first met in Hermosa Beach while Bob was studying medicine in Los Angeles. She told me of the happy hours the two had together, and it surely was a typical Greek idyll — while it lasted. She was just 18; he was a mature man; neither of them seemed to care much about anything, for awhile, but each other, poetry, music, and nature.

She was singing in a Christian Science Church then, and used to entertain Bob with music. "That old piano there, "pointing to a Knabe grand in the corner of the room, "is the same one Bob hung over by the hour while I played to him. Isn't it strange" — with a smile — "he now says he detests music? And hates his first poems?" Women's smiles!

"I've never seen Bob since 1 refused finally to give myself to him — and there's something in me that's wondered every since if 1 did wrong or right

~ Reflections ~

Who can say? ... I am curious to know if Bob still thinks of me as 'Helen.' Some say his present wife claims she is - or was 'Helen' ... but I hardly believe he knew her when he began calling me by that name ... In a recent poem of his, he dealt rather violently with 'Helen,' you know. Did you read It? Was that his strange method of trying to blot me out of memory? I wonder ... you know," after a pause ... "I still love Bob Jeffers, just as I've always loved him, and probably always will. But you men l How many of you know what *love* really is! Most of you act toward a woman as you do towards a bottle of whiskey: Just something to drink, and then throw the bottle away. Why don't you poets at least find out what *love* is and then sing about it — or keep still." (Maybe women do that to men, too — I whispered to myself.)

"Here are the manuscripts of Bob's first poems ... This is the first one he ever gave me." (It was eight lines, yellow with age, scribbled in pencil, referring to "starry eyes," and singing seas, and sands, and to some "brief tidings out of heaven" he had glimpsed in "Helen's" young blue eyes.)

There was this significant change in the wording of another piece of work, which may be understood if you know your poetry and poets. In the poem called "Penitent," written, so Helen said, as an apology to her for some escapade with the usual liquid temper all young poets seem to fall for at some time or another, he speaks, in published form of it, of his "hot eternal torment of desire," and of the "suffering of a soul on fire." The same lines, however, in her original manuscript letter, were not so fatalistic. They referred rather to some "pure love that flames my whole life through" and that "burns It cleaner to love you, goddess." The letter to Helen, was written *before* the poet knew she was not going to be his. The published piece, after she had definitely said no.

Poets ought to be careful about calling women Goddesses or goddesses ... They might be ... And whether or not they are good ones, or *not* good ones, is a question for a real poet-philosopher to say.

When I wrote Jeffers for comment on this yarn — story — or her-story, (if not "his"-story,) — he was convinced that, surely, I was not so "naif" that I thought any romance permanently influenced a poet's work much unless it were "very final," or "very tragic" ... Well.

In explaining his "pessimism" which I don't enjoy, he said it was due instead to some personal experience, to a world "spirit" — of the times. (Los Angeles Times? The "spirit of the age," he seemed to believe, was one of defeat, darkness, gloom, and finality. But, I ask, what is the spirit of our age, except the massed mental atmosphere made by those of us who keep the waters of the humanities in constant turmoil? (Ultimately, it maybe even for the good of the waters, too.)

■

Jeffers sent the *following response:*

~ Reflections ~

Tor House,
Carmel, California
October, 1935
Editor, Aperitif

Dear Sir:

A number of my friends and enemies have been amused by the article called "The Beginnings of Jeffers" in your October issue; but in justice to my wife, whose little finger has always been more important to me than the Lenore M. referred to ever was, I must ask you to print this correction of a few errors in the article.

1. I never contemplated marrying L.M., and I never knew that her family wanted her to marry the "practical man" referred to in this article. I never heard of this marriage until after divorce had ended it.

2. 1 knew and loved the woman who is now my wife before I met L.M., and I married her as soon as she was free to have me, twenty-two years ago. That was two years after I had ceased all communication with L.M.

3. The verses in "Flagons and Apples" were mostly written to the woman who is now my wife. A few were written to various other girls. (They are bad imitative verses and do no credit to anyone.)

4. The manuscripts in the possession of L.M. are copies of verses which I handed about rather indiscriminately to a number of friends before I was twenty-five.

5. "Helen" is a name which I have used often in my verses, for various women, real and fictitious.

6. This much injustice to my wife. On my own account, do let me add that I am not a "pessimist."

Sincerely,
ROBINSON JEFFERS

The following is from "You must have been reading our mail" (letters to the editor), Aperitif, November 1935.

The editor apologizes to Mr. and Mrs. Jeffers for any misstatements in the story "Beginnings of Jeffers" run in our October issue. Apologies also to a number of friends of the Jeffers' [sic] who took us to task. Humble thanks to several California poets who gleefully urged us on. We do point out rather fearfully that we printed rather than wrote the article. There's a difference.

1993 American Literature Association Meeting

℘ The American Literature Association's third annual conference will be held in San Diego in May 1993. Two Jeffers sessions are planned. For information on accommodations and events contact Prof. Alfred Bendixen, English Department, California State University, Los Angeles, CA 90046.

ALA is a coalition of societies devoted to studying American authors and writings. To subscribe to the ALA newsletter, which covers its annual conference and other activities, send a check for $5 (made out to "American Literature Association") to Prof. Bendixen.

For Information on the Robinson Jeffers Association, formed under ALA sponsorship, and its plans at San Diego, contact Prof. Terry Beers, English Department, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95053.

~ Analysis ~

Carmel and Cushendun: The Irish Influence on Robinson Jeffers

by Fraser Drew

The article below is reprinted from Eire-Ireland, vol. 111, no. 2 (Summer 1968), pages 72-82, as one of the very few commentaries on Jeffers' Irish poems, Descent to the Dead, *and appearing in a Journal of limited accessibility.*

℘ Robinson Jeffers is so Californian and so Greek in his landscapes and his subject-matter that it is easy to overlook the Northern poems, both the British and the Irish. The number of Northern poems is not great, but some of these short lyrics with Irish, English and Scots background are among Jeffers's best and deserve more critical and popular attention than they have received.

Radcliffe Squires gives their due, although briefly, to the 16 poems of Descent to the Dead, Jeffers' 1931 volume with the subtitle, *Poems Written in Ireland and Great Britain*. "They may well represent his highest performance in the medium of the short poems," writes Squires, and "the language ascends slowly until the poems emerge harsh yet glowing, all their resonances intact."' Frederic Carpenter finds the poetry of *Descent to the Dead* and the succeeding volumes "increasingly self-conscious and intellectual,"[2] but Lawrence Clark Powell's study is more generous, devoting several paragraphs to the 1931 collection and praising the "wealth of local color and Celtic lore" and the "stately verse." Powell also quotes poet Orrick Johns as commenting on the Irish poems of *Descent to the Dead* that "no living Irish poet, not Yeats himself, could have made them more authentic. The Irish weather is in these poems, the black stones and the gray waters, and the dead that live."[3]

Except for contemporary review of *Descent to the Dead*, the Irish poems have attracted little attention from writers other than Melba Berry Bennett. Mrs. Bennett, Jeffers's recent biographer, entitles one chapter of her earlier study, Robinson *Jeffers* and the Sea, "Ireland," but has little praise for the poems, finding their chief importance in "their answer to the charge that Jeffers' work is narrow." She concludes that foreign travel left Jeffers "more self-contained, more morbid" than before. "Spiritually," she adds, "he had never left Carmel," and she points out that the visit was followed not by a long narrative set on the Irish coast but by the Californian *Thurso's Landing* and *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*.[4] But this book and Mrs. Bennett's later *The Stone Mason of Tor House* offer us interesting letters and other information about the Irish background of Una and Robinson Jeffers and their visits to their ancestral land.

~ Analysis ~

There was Irish blood in both Robinson Jeffers and his wife, Una Call. The poet's grandfather Joseph Jeffers had come from County Monaghan and two of Una's grandparents from County Down, though Jeffers wrote of them, "I fancy they were Scots."' In 1912 Una had gone to Ireland for a short visit. Ireland was not tourist country in those days, and Una went there alone against the advice of her London friends. "People just don't travel in Ireland, "66 was their warning, but she braved rough roads and uncomfortable accommodations, visited her mother's family in Killinchy, and went in a little train to Blarney Castle in the South. She even approached the County Mayo manor house of her idol, George Moore, who later wrote to her, imagining how her almost-visit might have materialized. Back in California and married to Robin, Una never forgot Ireland and dreamed of going back for a longer stay. Her husband has recorded her determination to return and to find every round tower in the island. Most of all, Jeffers felt, she was moved to see the land which Moore and Yeats had made magical — "a miracle," says the poet, "wrought in our own time, and without benefit of leprechauns. No doubt the miracle is somewhat tarnished now, but it still trails a light over that rainy island; and the mountains and waters, beautiful in themselves and in their names ... have added the significance of poetry."[7]

Jeffers had no desire to leave Carmel; he remembered childhood trips to Europe with little affection. But he yielded to Una's wish and, accompanied by their 12-year-old twins, Garth and Donnan, they left Tor House on June 6, 1929. They reached Belfast on June 23 and divided the rest of the year between Ireland and Britain, leaving Belfast for the long trip home on December 10. "Ireland was best," Jeffers wrote to Albert Bender, "and it was like coming home to come back to it before we sailed. Northern Scotland we loved intensely too, and the moors and searocks of Cornwall were very fine. We loved our travel."" To publisher Horace Liveright he sent a card saying that they had been in every Irish county but one, Wexford, and that they had gone twice to the beautiful ruin of George Moore's home by Lough Carra, and twice to Yeats's "feudal tower."

Robin and Una went back to the Islands for four months in 1937, making their headquarters Donegal Instead of Antrim, and Devonshire in place of Oxfordshire, and going as far north as the Shetlands and Orkneys off Scotland's farthest tip. In 1948 they made their trip by plane, but this visit to Ireland was marred by a serious illness which confined Jeffers to Kilkenny and Dublin hospitals for all but the first month of their three-month stay. Una was never to see Ireland again, but the poet took one last trip in 1956 with Donnan and Donnan's wife and children. The Donnan Jeffers family has since spent many months in Donegal, Waterford and other parts of Ireland.

Books about Ireland and the work of Irish writers were prominent in the library at Tor House, according to both Lawrence Clark Powell and Melba Berry Bennett. Both biographer-friends stress

~ Analysis cont. ~

Una's life-long devotion to George Moore, and Mrs. Bennett tells us that Una considered Yeats the greatest living poet. Jeffers's *1948* prose article, *Poetry, Gongorism and a Thousand Years,* reveals his agreement with his wife. "There has been a great poet in our time - an Irishman named Yeats, "'° Jeffers wrote, tracing Yeats's development from the best poet among the Decadents and the writers of the Celtic Twilight and a good, but not great playwright into the great poet required by Ireland's emergence into free nationhood. Synge was also in evidence on the Jeffers's bookshelves, along with the English Hardy and the Scottish Scott. Powell reports that on his visit to Tor House in the early *1930s* the Jeffers were reading *Twenty Years A-Growing,* Maurice O'Sullivan's story of his life on the Great Blasket. It seems likely that Ireland was of consuming interest to Robin and Una throughout their entire life together.

In *1954,* four years after Una Jeffers's death, the Ward Ritchie Press of Los Angeles published In a limited edition of *300* copies a Ritchie-designed book called *Visits to Ireland: Travel-Diaries of Una Jeffers.* Robinson Jeffers made the selections from his wife's journals and wrote a foreword for the book, which includes entries written by the poet and the twin sons as well as the more frequent entries of Una. Toward the end of the book Jeffers states that he had expected to make selections from Una's records of the later visits to Ireland but that space had restricted him to the diary of the *1929* trip. This, however, is the year which inspired all, or nearly all, of Jeffers's Irish and British poetry.

Jeffers apparently respected the poems of *Descent to the Dead.* He reprinted them all two years later in Give *Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems (1933)* and again in *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* in *1938. In 1941* he lectured at several places in the East, including Harvard and the Library of Congress. In this lecture, published in *1956* as *Themes in My Poems,* he quotes from *19* poems; two of them, "The Low Sky" and "Antrim," both quoted entirely, are from *Descent to the Dead.*

The first poem of *Descent to the Dead* is the brief "Shane O'Neill's Cairn" with its dedication to U.J. The poet recalls with Una, the earlier days when they had "hawked at" life in the "west of the world, where hardly/ Anything has died yet. " In those days they would not have been sorry to foresee the gray coast of northeastern Ireland, "the gray waters of the Moyle Below us, and under our feet /The heavy black stones of the cairn of the lord of Ulster,"" Jeffers was attracted to the violent history of Shane O'Neill, "a man of blood who died bloodily/Four centuries ago, " tricked to his death in *1567* by the English, who tarred his head and hung it in Dublin. Una writes in her diary for August *1, 1929,* how they went to see the cairn "in a high field beside the hilly cliff road to Ballycastle."12 In the sixth poem of the book Jeffers has Mary Bymes leave her drunken husband to meet her]over at Shane O'Neill's cairn. There on the stones she runs a knife into her lover's throat and cries:

~ Analysis cont. ~

> Oh Shane O'Neill, it's you I was loving,
> Never one else. You helpless and bleeding
> under the stones.
> Do ye weary of stretching quiet the four long
> centuries? Take this lad's blood to hearten
> you, it drops through the stones.[13]

"Osslan's Grave," the second poem, is the second longest of the book. "Steep up in Lubitavish townland," near Cushendall in Antrim, is a pre-historic monument, "a ring of great stones like fangs," and close by is an oblong enclosure of a grave "guarded with erect slabs." Osslan, the Oisin of Yeats, rests here "haughtily alone" in the only fame or burial which the poet envies:

> For this is the pure fame, not caged in a poem,
> Fabulous, a glory untroubled with works, a name
> in the north Like a mountain in the mist, like
> Aura.[14]

Una's diary reports at least three visits to Ossian's Grave in 1929 — once in June, once "in a soaking lane on a lonely hill" in July, and once at the end of August, when Donnan writes simply: "Rain. Father walked to Osslan's Grave."[15] The poem, In which the poet is a foreigner come to the country of the dead to "eat the bitter dust of my ancestors" and to drink water "shed for tears ten thousand times," celebrates both the splendor of life "in the brief light of day" and more "substantial" death when "we lie under stones / Or drift through the endless northern twilights/And draw over our pale survivors the net of our dream." The poem calls a roll of Ulster mountains — Trostan, Aura, Tievebullleagh and Lurigethan - and of Ulster and Connaught dead — Ossian, by the quick-tempered Moyle; Shane O'Neill at Cushendun; Hugh McQulllan in the bog on Aura; Maeve, "the great Connaught queen on her mountain-summit," under her high cairn on Yeats's Knocknarea. Here again, as in the first poem, Ireland is "a dim island of burials," a dead land of broken round towers, swan-haunted loughs, and black-faced sheep in the belled heather. In such a land, Jeffers writes in his third poem, "The Low Sky," one "to whom mind and Imagination/ Sometimes used to seem burdensome" is glad to lie down, for in that tomb

> Among stones and quietness
> The mind dissolves without a sound, The flesh
> drops into the ground.[16]

More ancient monuments occupy the next three poems. "The Broadstone: near Finvoy, County Antrim" has descriptive detail almost identical with that of the journal entries of Una Jeffers and the boys for August 19, 1929.[17]

Yet the poet's "bee-bright necropolis" lacks the lucky bunch of white heather found by Una, the grouse flushed by the boys, and the dim blue mountains and "smiling valley" which Una sees beyond and below the upland city of the dead. "The Giant's Ring: Ballylesson, near Belfast" describes the builders of memorials — Jesus and Caesar, Washington and Homer and

~ Analysis cont. ~

Shakespeare, and a nameless chief in the "Irish darkness" who worked

> to diadem a hilltop
> That sees the long loughs and the
> Mourne Mountains, with a ring of
> enormous embankment, and to build
> In the center that great toad of a dolmen
> Piled up of ponderous basalt that
> sheds the centuries like
> raindrops.[18]

The poet's entry in Una's diary for September *6, 1929,* speaks of this visit to the Giant's Ring with some of the very words that later appear in the poem: ponderous basalt, heavy stone toad, and brutal ignorant power.[19]

Jeffers's Irish poems generally reflect his *1929* residence in Antrim, one of the six counties of Northern Ireland, but his several explorations of the Irish Republic are represented in the book's sixth and ninth poems. The family spent August *6* and 7 in the counties of Louth and Meath, visiting Monasterboice, Mellifont Abbey ("beautiful and sweet as its name," Una writes, "and so quiet"),[20] Slane, Kells, Trim, Tara, Bective Abbey, Swords, and the great prehistoric burial mounds of the Boyne Valley. One of these latter is the scene of "In the Hill at New Grange," the sixth and longest poem of *Descent to the Dead.* The voice of a dead king in the hill questions the foreign visitor and they exchange visions of the Irish past — Mary Byrnes and her lover on Shane O'Neill's cairn; Norse pirates burning a round tower at Cloyne in the south near Cork; a starving woman on Slieve Mor to the far west on Achill Island; a rich merchant in his house at Dundalk on the site of Cuchulain's grave and that of a later Bruce; a tortured priest "high in Donegal, in the bitter waste north, where miles on miles of black heather dwindle to the Bloody Foreland." Then it is time "to have done with vision," and the poet praises the dead king's state — a long lying in the dark through a "night that has no glowworm."[21]

"Antrim" and "No Resurrection," the seventh and eighth poems, are companion pieces. In the first, the poet presents Antrim, a place of "perpetual betrayals, relentless resultless fighting" but now a land where "a few red carts in a fog creak flax to the dubs, / And sheep in the high heather cry hungrily that life is hard; a plaintive peace; shepherds and peasants." This is rural Antrim of which he writes, of course, and not of its city of Belfast. And in this earth of past violence and present exhaustion, the foreign poet lies humbled to "plot the agony of resurrection." But resurrection is too much agony, he finds in the following poem. "Dead man, be quiet," he counsels; only a fool of a merchant would "sell good earth / And grass again to make modern flesh."[22]

After the next two poems,)effers turns to England, Scotland and the wider world, but in "Iona: the Graves of Kings," he lingers briefly in the "stormenfolded, half Irish Hebrides" to meditate on this "beautiful and sainted island" made famous by the Irish saint Columbkille (Columba) and his suc-

~ Analysis cont. ~

cessors. The poet had visited the saint's village in the far west of Donegal, his beloved Derry, and his burial place at Downpatrick, but he is repelled by Iona, for all its beauty:

> I wish not to lie here.
> There's hardly a plot of earth not
> blessed for burial, but here
> One might dream badly.

This island, though often called holy, is the burial ground of uncounted kings "of fierce Norway, blood-boltered Scotland, bitterly-dreaming/Treacherous Ireland"; its shallow earth is "gorged with bad meat. "23

In "Delusion of Saints" Jeffers contrasts the old pagan monuments of uninscribed rock with the cross-bearing stones that "still foot corruption." The true saints, those "flamelike aspirers," have found their reward, a perpetual sleep not reached by the "laughter of unfriends nor the rumor of the ruinous churches." These churches he has seen, all ruined now, in August, *1929,* drives through the South and West, and he calls another roll: Clonmacnoise ("I shall never forget this place, such quiet," wrote Una), Cong ("beautiful abbey, such carvings!"), Glendalough ("the most perfect place in our whole lovely trip"), and finally, at Kilmacduagh ("utterly remote and desolate"), buildings

> All ruined, all roofless
> But the great cyclopean-stoned spire
> That leans toward its fall.
> A place perfectly abandoned of life,
> Except that we heard
> One old horse neighing across the stone
> hedges
> In the flooded fields.[24]

Here, too, the poem echoes words and detail from the journal in its account of a August 12 walk through the fields at Kilmacdaugh — ruins, spire, leaning tower, cyclopean stonework, and one old horse. It is interesting, however, that this journal entry is not Robin's but Una's.2[4] When Una Jeffers's travel diaries are all edited and published by her son Donnan, it is quite likely that more sources will be uncovered for the subjects, scenes and vocabulary of Robinson Jeffers's Irish and British poems.

Almost lost in Thurso's *Landing and* Other Poems, a *1932* book of two long narratives and seven short lyrics of the American West, are two more Old World poems, "An Irish Headland" and "Second-Best." The first recalls Fair Head, the northernmost point of County Antrim and of Ireland, a place often mentioned in the travel-diaries and at least twice visited by the]effers family in *1929.* Donnan's August *20* entry shows that he was chiefly impressed by the height of the cliffs, but the descriptive word most often repeated in "An Irish Headland" is "black," along with "dark" and "somber." Surely Jeffers liked this contrast with the euphemistic name of Fair Head. Una's September *2* entry calls

~ Analysis cont.~

Fair Head "dark and magnificent" and speaks of the "black throats of the caverns,"[26] and all three observers look across with interest to Rathlin Island off the northern coast. The poem compares the anger and anguish of the war chiefs of the past with the unchanging mood of Fair Head and finds "the most beautiful woman of the northern world," Deirdre, who once made landfall under these cliffs, less beautiful than the "black towers of the rock. "[27] It is no wonder that Jeffers was moved to write "An Irish Headland" after his return to Carmel, for he added to Una's diary for December 5, almost at the end of the months in Ireland and Britain: "If I had to live elsewhere than on the Pacific Coast I would try to buy a bit of bogland on Fair Head, and live where the sheep cry over the great precipice."[28] In the other poem from Thurso's *Landing,* the book whose title came from a town seen on Scotland's northern coast in far Caithness, the poet recalls his forefathers — Celtic spearman, blond Saxon, Norse voyager, and "hungry Gaelic chiefling in Ulster, /Whose blood with the Norseman's rotted in the rain on a heather hill." These were the ancestors of a "maker of verses" who in "this changed world" must only "write and be quiet."[29]

Jeffers's 1935 volume, *Solstice and Other Poems,* has as title poem a characteristically violent California narrative and adds a verse play from the Nivelung Saga and 18 brief lyrics. Only one of these, "Northern Heather," remembers Ireland: it is a 16-line poem in which the poet addresses the "treacherous north-Ireland beauty, beautiful as death" which calls him away from his bitter Pacific themes and the feverish involvements of the newer world, whispering

> Oh cease, come home. Resume
> darkness. Nothing
> Is lovelier than silence.
> Why will you climb up the turrets of
> another folly?[30]

The Selected Poetry o f Robinson Jeffers, published in 1938, includes several new poems, one of which recalls an episode in the Hebrides, which elsewhere he calls "half Irish." In the poem, "Now Returned Home," after many miles of road and sea, he remembers a "slender skiff with dark henna sail / Bearing off across the stormy sunset to the distant island / Most clearly" and has forgotten "the dragging whirlpools of London, the screaming haste of New York."[31]

The later collections of Jeffers have no Irish or British poems, only references here and there like his listing of Ireland on the honor roll of "The Neutrals" in the 1948 volume, *The Double Axe and Other Poems.* Here he praises Switzerland, Sweden and Argentina for being "honest enough/ Not to be scared or bought" and for being "too proud to bay with the pack," and he begins the list with "free Ireland, horse-breeding, swan-haunted."[32] Last of all the books is the posthumous *The Beginning and the End* of 1963, in which one late poem called "Patronymic" reaches back to 1929 and 1937. It is a poem about his name — "Godfrey — from which by the Anglo-French ero-

~ Analysis cont.~

sion Geoffrey, Jeffrey's son, Jeffries, Jeffers in Ireland" - and about the ancestors he likes to imagine in Ireland, "west Wales or wild Scotland" or "some forgotten British graveyard."[33] And this is all.

The Irish and British poems, like his reading of Moore and Yeats, Hardy and Scott, were Jeffers's escape now and then from the blazing sunlight, the wider seas and higher skies of his western world on the edge of the Pacific. In these poems he found the peace and relief, the temporary death to which the beauty of Ireland called him back in the lines of "Northern Heather" and of which he wrote in *Themes in My Poems:*

> Foreign travel is like a pleasant temporary death; it relieves you of responsibilities and familiar scenes and duties. Then, the light and the life in those cloudy islands seem to be keyed so much lower than they are at home; everything appeared dim and soft, mournful and old; and the past, in that year of peace, seemed to a foreigner much more present than the present. So it was easy to imagine myself a dead man in a country of the dead."[34]

From *Descent to the Dead* and the handful of other Irish poems, and from that five percent of Una Jeffers's travel journals which makes up *Visits to Ireland,"* it becomes clear that Ireland, after modern California and ancient Greece, is the third most important locale for Robinson Jeffers's work.

POSTSCRIPT 1991

This article was published in *1968.* Before my *1976 Una and Robinson)effers at Lough Carra, I* had the pleasure of reading an unpublished typescript edited from Una Jeffers's travel journals by Donnan Jeffers, as well as Donnan's account of his father's last visit to Ireland in *1956* and his own visits in *1964-65, 1966-68* and *1970.* The relationship of Ireland and the Jeffers family has been further extended by several Irish visits made by Garth and Brenda Jeffers, most recently in *1990.* Another kind of evidence of Robinson Jeffers's early interest in things Irish is offered by the *1989* Book Club of California volume, *A Book of Gaelic Airs for Una's Melodeon.* Una's collection of Irish airs is delightfully illustrated by her husband, whose drawings indicate an interest in Ireland in the early *1920s,* several years before his first visit to the ancestral countries.

Fraser Drew

NOTES

1. *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers* (Ann Arbor, 1956), p. 146.
2. *Robinson Jeffers* (New York, 1962), p. 108.
3. *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work* (Los Angeles, 1934), pp. 48-49.
4. (San Francisco, 1936), pp. 109-110.
5. Foreword to Visits to Ireland: *TravelDiaries of Una Jeffers* (Los Angeles, 1954),p. 5.

— *Notes continued at bottom of Page 26*

~ Insight ~

Una Jeffers-Mabel Dodge Luhan Letters, 1933: Excerpts

℘ ***Editor's note:*** Though the Newletter would prefer to continue publication of integral letters (from the series begun in *RJN* no. 77), strictures of space and economics must prevail. The following are excerpts of Una's letters to Mabel during the year 1933.

Friday, May 12, 1933

Yesterday your telegram about Rivera.1 I cannot undertake to organize the protest - but failing that did the best I could for you — took a copy of the telegram to Stef (who was asleep so I talked only to Dr. Suggett and left the copy for Stef) then I went to Weston who is a friend of Rivera's and a great admirer: — he said he would think it over. Then to Rhys Williams: he thought a protest to Rockefeller no use and said, if I was in an organizing mood, to band the American Indians together and get up a protest to Hitler!

I myself, Mabel, am no believer in the sanctity of art and artists and if Rockefeller doen't like Rivera's Cummunistic or impious designs there is no reason why he should have them on his premises. I think he has done fairly enough in paying Rivera the total sum he had promised for the entire work. I cannot say whether that mural is a great loss to the world — Certainly if an earthquake knocked off the fresco at the San Francisco Stock Exchange — with its droopy tired peon figure and its colors like an old shoe — twouldn't be a fearful loss! It's depressing and devitalizing and unreal for us! O dear, I'm sorry to disagree with you! I wish I had asked Blanche about the Radio City Hall. She had to go east day before yesterday because her aunt was dying - her mother's twin to whom she was utterly devoted. Her mother is ill too. They had just gotten things well established in the Field house which they liked terribly well. — I went with them to Paul Dougherty studio to tea to see his sister give an exhibition of Eurhythmics — a bore. And an exposition of a far-fetched rigid doctrine of vowel, consonant, and interval values in movement which can't hold water if you consider and compare languages. We were al I to go (only I did) to dinner last night at Lady Cootes — and afterwards people came in to hear Susan Porter tell some ancient Celtic stories. That is very interesting. She does it in a sort of impersonal, bardic recitative in her strange low-pitched clear voice. I must have her do one when you are here' sometime.

NOTES

1. This was the famous controversy over the murals of Rockefeller Center. Diego Rivera (1886-1957), the Mexican muralist, having studled Cubism In Paris and Renaissance frescoes In Italy, painted murals In Mexico City for the new socialist government's public buildings. From 1930 to 1933 he decorated the California Stock Exchange In San Francisco, the Institute of Arts in Detroit, and Rockefeller's Radio City Music Hall in New York.

2. Stef Is Lincoln Steffens, the "muckraker," and Dr. Suggett his personal physician. Edward Weston (1886-1958) Is the famous photographer. Blanche hlatthlas, Una's dear friend, lived alternately In New York, San Francisco, and CarmeLPaul Daugherty is an artist living locally. Susan Crelghton Porter (1877-1963) Is the fa-

mous story-teller of Gaelic and local Carmel mythology. From *1937* on she lived in Big Sur, a friend of Henry Miller.

August 23 1933

Speaking of cryptic writing - I have finished Murrys book' on Lawrence and will mail it back to you today. I wish you'd tell me, if you know, what he means by certain passages which I will note on the next page. I must confess Murry comes out better than Catherine Carswel I when all's said and done but— all Murry's hysteria is boring to tears. All his "my personal self and his and my impersonal self and his" etc.

A flabby, hysterical, nervy generation of Englishmen. No mistake if you consider Sassoon, Murry, Graves, etc. — And I dote on Englishmen really and hate to have them show up so.

Now what does Murry mean —

Page 165: Can you tell me anything at all about the brutal "devilish" letter he wrote to the sick Katherine Mansfield? Frieda must know.

Page 174 and 175: What basis did D.H.L. want Murry on? And how did Murry behave like a lunatic or trapped rat?

Page 176: What was Laurence's secret?

Page 177: "A living dead man," "leading a posthumous life" ghastly, etc.? He actually says that D.H.L. was a "zombie" (or some such word you know the South Sea Island or Haitian movie with soulless corpses going about).

Page 194: Who was the fourth person in the party that Murry couldn't stand? He can't mean Brett because she was there already and Murry knew it.

Jaime is improving but will have to stay in a hospital at least three months I am told. Nancy and the little girl have taken a cottage here for that time. I intend to go to see her and to see Jaime in hospital when a little more time has elapsed and I will tell you. Jamie certainly must have been in hell all those 18 hours. He was broken to pieces and conscious, lying directly on the body of his child and pinned there by the weight of the car. Did I tell you in my last that Robin talked to a man ploughing about the accident and he shuddered and could not talk of it and said "1 am one of those that got him out."[2]

NOTES

1. Una was somewhat distantly interested •n Lawrence, probably because of Mabel's former devotion to him and her friendship with his widow Frieda. John Middleton Murray, critic, husband of Katherine Mansfield, had written Son o(Woman: The Story o(D. H. Lawrence (Cape *1931);* Catherine Carswell was the biographer of Lawrence— Reminiscences *of* D.H. Lawrence (Chatto) and The Savage Pilgrimage: A Narrative *of* D.H. Lawrence (Chatto *1932).*

2. Jaime de Angulo, a Spaniard brought up In Parts, cowboy, anthropologist, M.D., professor at U.C. Berkeley, and author, lived on Partington Ridge below Big Sur. He was one of the Jetfers' first acquaintances In Carmel.

September 7, 1933

Lawrence Clark Powell' who wrote the Jeffers thesis at Dijon has been here and took a lot of time for a few days. He was a bit overcome when he discovered Robin had not read his book but found Robin glad to talk about the coast region and other people's books than his own. He let me have some pictures printed from film of Lawrence's grave.

~ Insight cont.~

I send you one. See how it is changed since the picture in the "Letters" Huxley edited.

Some long day we might have fun discussing our differences. Our likenesses are fun too. — I mean your quest for explanation of things and their goal — our complete acceptance of our belief that this cannot be known (if there is a goal) — but our happy delight in *speculating*— regarded as just a pleasant exercise of no importance but just fun.

NOTE

1. Lawrence Clark Powell published his thesis (the first ever on RJ) as a book, An Introduction to Robinson Jeffers (Dijon *1932)* and then edited It Into Robinson *Jeffers: The* Man and [its Work (Los Angeles: Primavera Press *1934).*

September 18, 1933

Langston Hughes' happened to come in. He knew Claire. He is the very nicest negro I've met. He is staying for several months as Noel's guest writing his Russian book — on Soviet Asia. He went down through Samarkand. Was there a year. Went to do films with a company of negroes. They had to abandon the film because the scenarios provided were so comical. They were supposed to treat of Negro versus white in U.S.A. Had situations like companies of negro girls marching through the streets of an Alabama town with guns over their *shoulders!*

Does Muriel know Langston and did she know Horace Liveright? He died a few days ago.

The nucleus of the house that John lives in now was the old Ritchel studio and house — the only house within a mile or so of that spot when we came to Carmel.[2]— You remember Ritchel and Nora. Do you remember she told us she often didn't sleep but got up to garden in the middle of the night? I thought she was spoofing but here is a funny story apropos. - Did you know the history of that shack by the big bridge toward Pt. Lobos where a cultivated English woman lives with a drunken Mexican? He was chasing her with a knife to kill her in the middle of the night recently and she fled through the darkness and out to the Highlands meaning to seek refuge with Nora Ritchel who had spoken kindly to her sometimes. She got to that wild wave-beaten bit of Ritchel coast, crept up toward the house when from behind a rock she met Nora rusing along with a candle in one hand, long knife in the other, black hair flying — the woman yelled to see another murderous opponent — but Nora was just gardening! and pruning!

NOTES

1. Langston Hughes *(1902-1967)* was the famous black American poet, editor, memoirist, and author of at least *15* volumes. He did some of his writing at *Noel* Sullivan's home in Carmel and Carmel Valley.

2. John Evans, novelist, Mabel's only child, lived for some time In the Carmel area. Ritchel was an early Carmel painter who lived In the Carmel Highlands a few miles south of Tor House. This Is a typical story of the kind that Intrigued Una and sometimes would get Into Jeffers' narratives.

Thursday, October 19, 1933

Garth's bed of big purple irises has 30 big stalks of flowers today here under the southwest window in courtyard almost my favorite flower. The yard is full of butterflies, the day is golden and sweet and fragrant.

~ Insight cont.~

This morning I finished a Greek romance by Heliodorus. The most famous there is except *Daphnis* and Chloe. It is beautifully written — perhaps you'd like to see it sometime. It has Greek and English on opposite pages. A beautiful clear literal translation. Haig has just had a bath and is lying with his head on my foot like a snow white lamb.

October 25, 1933

I had dinner with Lloyd's' beautiful and aristocratic grandmother (with whom we've had Christmas dinner the last two years (most grand) and are invited for this year! She — Mrs. Girvin — is just going up to San Francisco for the opera season. Is it possible that one still does this? Well, she and her sister Mary Eyre both told me a lot about Talbot Clifton who visited them a good deal during that early time in S.F. They lived in one of those big stuffy luxurious country houses in San Mateo that Gertrude Atherton describes in her book. The Atherton Eyres always intermarrying! Clifton was much liked by Mrs. Girvin and her sister but even then was very eccentric. — They told about riding with him on top of a big tally-ho down crowded Market Street. He was driving four-in-hand and having narrow escapes every moment. They were half-paralyzed with nervousness and he sat very erect and happy and said "I seem to shade it very close!"

He had a servant Betts who always went with him. He was getting passports and when the official asked the full name of Betts he said "Oh, just Betts" and so it was written on the passport "Oh, just Betts." Clifton was very Catholic at that time. He was a member of the Howard family — the greatest Catholic family in England — the Duke of Norfolk is its head. They haven't read "The Book of Talbot"!!

NOTE

l. Lloyd Tevis was a friend of Garth and Donnan; the local Tevis family lived just south of the Carmel Mission.

■

December 11, 1933

I'm interested in Thorton Wilder's visit.' Did you talk to him of his work? I think his last one "Woman of Andros" infinitely better than the Luis Rey sentimentality or the "Cabala." I think the "Andros" a beautiful piece of writing but I believe the book didn't sell and was remaindered. Isn't that discouraging but he must have made enough on the Luis Rey thing to enable him to write what he wants to for a long time regardless of sales I should think.

Love always from Una

Is he at all like E.A. Robinson? I somehow think of them as alike in being shy and reserved and self-suffering.

NOTE

1. Thornton Wilder, American novelist and playwright, was an occasional guest at Taos; the Jeffers spent part of summer there with him In 1938, the summer of Una's attempted suicide.

■

The following is from an undated letter by Una to Harcourt, Mabel's publisher, kept among the Luhan letters of 1933 at the Beinecke Library, Yale. It refers to a manuscript of Mabel's, written on their first acquaintance, which was finally published in 1976 as Una and Robin, edited by Mark Schorer, by Friends of the Banctroft Library, U.C. Berkeley (35 pages). A

~ Insight cont.~

number of versions have been reported, some more revealing than others, at least one being under restriction at Yale.

I seem to have wandered from what I started to write — that even though I like the sketch I'm not quite yet prepared to let it be printed. From what Ella Winter and others tell me I know there is much speculation and gossip about us and Mabel in N.Y. and I don't know whether they deserve to see us as we are — or, from another standpoint, whether the admiring readers of Robin who are now fearing he is somehow in Mabel's train and resenting it, will like it any better when they see him for all practical and amorous purposes in mine. It's a pretty intimate sketch really, and if a little later we let it go forth, I would first want you to let several people of solid substance read it and tell us their honest reaction. Robin is indifferent whether or no.

~ Analysis, cont.~

— *Continued from Page 21*

6. Melba Berry Bennett, The Stone Mason of Tor House (Los Angeles, 1966), p. 55.
7. Foreword to Visits to Ireland, p. 6.
8. Bennett, p. 131.
9. Bennett, p. 129.
10. *Poetry, Gongorism and a Thousand Years* (Los Angeles, 1949), p. 9.
11. *Descent to the Dead* (New York, 1931), p. 5.
12. *Visits to Ireland*, p. 33.
13. *Descent to the Dead*, p. 13.
14. *Descent to the Dead*, p. 6.
15. *Visits to Ireland*, pp. 14, 19 and 47.
16. *Descent to the Dead,* p. 10.
17. *Visits to Ireland*, p. 41.
18. *Descent to the Dead*, p. 12.
19. *Visits to Ireland*, p. 49.
20. *Visits to Ireland*, pp. 35-36.
21. *Descent to the Dead*, pp. 15-16.
22. *Descent to the Dead*, pp. 17-18.
23. *Descent to the Dead*, p. 20.
24. *Descent to the Dead*, p. 19.
25. *Visits to Ireland*, pp. 38-39.
26. *Visits to Ireland*, p. 47.
27. *Thurso's Landing and Other Poems* (New York, 1932), p. 126.
28. *Visits to Ireland*, p. 51.
29. *Thurso's Landing*, p. 134.
30. *Solstice and Other Poems* (New York. 1935), p. 142.
31. *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (New York, 1938), p. 612.
32. The *Double* Axe and Other Poems (New York, 1948), p. 133.
33. *The Beginning and the End* (New York, 1963), p. 55.
34. *Themes in My Poems* (San Francisco, 1956), p. 7.
35. Foreword to *Visits to Ireland*, p. 8.

Guidelines for Submissions
to the
Robinson Jeffers Newsletter

The Robinson Jeffers Newsletter will print short notes, notifications of work-in progress, announcements, requests for information, inquiries from collectors, bibliographic findings, etc. It especially welcomes short anecdotes relating to the poet and his works.

It has not been RJN policy to publish unsolicited poem tributes. Photos relating to Robinson Jeffers and family are most welcome and may be printed if not restricted by copyright.

The editors of The Collected Letters *of* Robinson and Una Jeffers are especially solicitous for any information about extant letters which have not yet come to light. Contact Professor James Karman, Department of English, California State University, Chico, CA 95929; (916) 898-6379.

Essays:
Place the title one inch\ below the top of the page, the author's name one inch below the title, the text two inches below the author's name. Affiliation of the contributor should appear at the end of the essay.

Notes, Book Reviews, and Bibliographies:
Follow the form for essays, except that the author's name (and affiliation) should appear at the end of the text.

References:
Consult the *MLA Style Sheet*, Second Edition. Mark references in the text with raised footnote number (not author-year citations in parentheses). Double space endnotes following the essay on a new page headed "Notes."

Quoting and Citing Robinson Jeffers:
The standard edition of Jeffer's work is now *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press, Vols. I, II, III:1988, 1989, 1991), abbreviated CP. Of course, for peculiar purposes, the original printings may be referred to, in which case the title in full or (when repeated) appropriately abbreviated, should be cited, along with an explanatory note. Until *The Collected Letters of Robinson* and *Una Jeffers* (Stanford) is available, references should be to *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Ann Ridgeway (Johns Hopkins, *1968)* or to the appropriate number of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*.

Submit two typescripts, double-spaced, on $8^1/2$" x l l" standard white typing paper. To have one returned, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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