



# Robinson Jeffers

## NEWLETTER

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**ON THE COVER:**

*Robinson Jeffers on a hillside of the Victorine Ranch, nrmel-Big Stir, with fog descending. Horace Lyon photo [see accompanying memoir]. Photo courtesy of California State University Long Beach Library Archives.*  
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The **Robinson Jeffers Newsletter**, co-sponsored by California State University, Long Beach, and Occidental College, is published quarterly.

**Editor:** Dr. Robert J. Brophy, Department of English, CSULB.

**Design and Production:** CSULB University Press.

**Subscriptions:** \$10 per year. Charge for Backfile: \$175. Checks and money orders should be made out to *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*.

**Subscription requests and non-editorial correspondence should be directed to:** *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*, c/o CSULB University Press, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., University Library, Rm. 306 , Long Beach, CA 90840. **Send all editorial materials to editor.**

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## ***NEWS & NOTES***

■ THE JEFFERS FESTIVAL, OCTOBER 1993, featured two main programs: 1) The George White Memorial Seminar, 10 to noon, with Lindsay and Una Jeffers Honscheid recalling "Life With Grandfather," mostly during the 1950s, in the "Robinson Jeffers as We Knew Him" series [reported elsewhere in this issue] and 2) The Aurora Theatre Company of Berkeley performing a dramatic reading of Jeffers's "The Inhumanist," Part II of *The Double Axe*. Both were enormously enlightening, the first full of vignettes from a child's point of view, the second involving the audience in intense, almost painfully prophetic narrative, the voice of the Inhumanist being very close to Jeffers in his foresight of mankind's future self-destructiveness. The annual Jeffers festival banquet, held at Silver Junes Restaurant in The Barnyard, Carmel, culminated with a reading of selected poems by the Aurora troupe. The annual Jeffers Poetry Walk and Picnic, Sunday morning, from the Mission Trail to Stewarts Beach below Tor House, officially closed the festival.

A side feature to the Saturday Sunset Center sessions was visual: "Context: a watercolor exhibition: an exploration in the texture of words and colors featuring poetry by Robinson Jeffers" by Jennifer Catherine McRae a graduate of California State University, Long Beach, with a double-major in Art and English, who in the spring of 1993 took part in a Jeffers seminar and class fieldtrip to Carmel/Big Stir.

■ "Robinson Jeffers and the Female Archetype," a panel presentation sponsored by the Robinson Jeffers Association and chaired by Robert Zaller, which took place in May at the 1993 Conference of the

American Literature Association in Baltimore will appear as a chapter in a new collection of critical studies, *Robinson Jeffers: Dimensions of a Poet* (New York: Fordham University Press). To the original panelists, Mark Jarman and Mark Mitchell, with contributions from Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, will be added responses by Diane Wakoski and Betty Adcock.

■ The RJN regretfully notes the death of William Stafford, August 28, 1993. He will be best remembered for his warm participation in the centennial celebration of Jeffers's birth, first at the October 1987 conference at San Jose State University and then in a panel discussion with Gary Snyder and others at the Tor House Festival of that same month. His poem, "After Reading Robinson Jeffers," can be found in Robert Zaller's gathering, *The Tribute of His Peers: Elegies for Robinson Jeffers* (Tor House Press, 1989).

■ Jeffers scholarship also mourns the loss of James Radcliffe Squires who was very helpful in the establishing of the RJN and a faithful subscriber. His dissertation, "Robinson Jeffers and Inhumanism," earned him a Ph.D. at Harvard in 1952. His provocative and far-reaching book, *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers*, occasioned the infamous and distorted response from Kenneth Rexroth, under the misleading title "(n Defense of Jeffers" (*Saturday Review* Vol. 40, 10 August 1957). His was a ground-breaking study, relating Jeffers's themes and philosophical base to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Spengler, Freud, Lawrence, the Existentialists, Wittgenstein, and Lucretius. Controversial but challenging, it offered a wide reading of Jeffers texts. Squires will be remembered as a distinguished scholar, educator, and poet,

■ Yolla Bolly Press has published *The House That Jeffers Built*, a two-volume edition comprised of *The Building of Tor House* by Donnan Jeffers and *Memories of Tor House* by Garth Jeffers. Both volumes include a generous selection of family photographs appearing here for the first time. The limited edition: both volumes bound in German bookcloth over flexible boards, the covers bearing a label from wood blocks by Ric Olsen. 175 copies, 150 for sale :u \$245. Yolla holly Press, Covelo, CA 95428. 800-242-6130. A paper-bound set comes under the imprint of Tor House Press, each volume \$10. Tor House Foundation, P.O. Box 2713 Carmel, CA 93921. 408-624-1813.

- The Tor House Foundation for several years has offered occasional lectures and poetry readings on wider subjects. The season 1993-94 featured Mark Strand, Fred Setterberg Robert Bly, and Galway Kinnell, among others. Supporting grants come from the Monterey Cultural Council and the Readers' Digest Fund.
  
- J. S. Porter has written an appreciation and assessment of Jeffers, "Robinson Jeffers and the Poetry of the End," for the *Antigonish Review* (Vol. 92, pages 25-31) in which he traces Jeffers's themes and symbols, religious and philosophical views, career and enduring qualities.
  
- The advertising copy for Charles Bukowski's *Screams From the Balcony: Selected Letters 1960-1970* notes "frank opinions about writers living and dead, from Buk's heroes Pound, Celine, Hamsun and Jeffers to dubious contenders like Ginsberg, Creeley, Allen Tate and `the Dickey boys.'"
  
- *California Studies*, Newsletter of The Center for California Studies, CSU Sacramento, and The California Studies Association, Volume 3, Number 1, includes a short article on the poet's relationship to the state, "Robinson Jeffers," by Robert Brophy, pages 4-5.

# ***LIFE AT TOR HOUSE:***

## ***THE GRANDCHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE***

By Isabelle Hall

■ ***Editor's Note:*** The following is taken from Robinson Jeffers family, "The Cannel Sun newsweekly for October 14, 1993, pages 1213. With permission from the publisher.

His grandchildren depicted a simple, somewhat isolated, sometimes lonely life on Cannel Point in the 1950's at Tor House, the home of the poet Robinson Jeffers.

They remember the house always being Cold, the living room fire always being lit, no electricity, picnics on the coast, wild winter storms off the Pacific, reading constantly and always searching for the rocks and stones Jeffers used to build Hawk Tower and the sprawling house.

"We had a sort of isolated life on the wild land, the headland, with the storms and blackout conditions," said Lindsay Jeffers, 46, a redhaired, amiable English teacher at Robert Louis Stevenson School. A resident of Pebble Beach, he also is a Tor House docent.

"It was very cold," was the way he described the dark dining room with its stone floor. "Keeping that room warm required building a fire early in the day to start to heat the walls. The chairs beside the fire were places of honor. You always ate as soon as you got your plate because it's (the food) going to be cold. Women wore long skirts. Tile floor never got warm."

"The sunsets were nice there through the window," said his sandyhaired sister, Una Sherwood Jeffers, 41, who is named after her grandmother and is the Subject of one of Jeffers' poems called simply, "Granddaughter." She wore a plaid skirt and had a look of Ireland where she was educated. She and her husband Dieter Honscheid live in Sunnyvale.

The grandchildren spoke of what they remembered of living with the poet in his later years at the opening session at Sunset Center of the annual Jeffers Festival [October 9th]. The knowledgeable audience comprised many of the docents who volunteer to conduct tours of the famous property.

The pair are two of the children of Donnan Jeffers and his wife, Lee, who was also in the audience.

"Grandfather was quite a tall person and I was quite a short person," Lindsay recalled.

"Grandfather was very quiet. I don't recall his voice being raised unless it was about an animal or if I was getting after my sister. He was calm and reserved."

"The only thing I remember is sitting on his lap," said Una. "He smelled of tobacco. He hand-rolled his cigarettes. I remember him making his own cigarettes. How he smelled and how his jacket looked. That's about it. My memories are of the house and my brother.

"I must have had a good childhood because I don't remember it. I remember climbing around in the trees. I felt very big when I could follow (her brother). I have a strong memory of the house not having any electricity. Later I learned that actually electricity was installed a number of years before I was born. The things I have remembered were when the electricity went out. There were huge storms on the ocean. We'd do things by candlelight, pop corn in front of the fireplace. We did jigsaw puzzles. I used to hide the pieces in my socks."

Lindsay said his grandparents had a lot of visitors but "we didn't know who they were" until studying them in high school or college and "it was a little amazing." Neither grandchild had any recollection of the literati who came to call such as George Sterling, Edgar Lee Masters, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Mark Van Doren, Van Wyck Brooks and Sinclair Lewis (however these came mostly in the 1920s, '30s and '40s).

Una remembered once when her uncle Garth and his family came there were so many in the house that she and her brother were sent to sleep in the small tower bedroom used by her grandmother. "Lindsay got the bed. I got the floor. He told me ghost stories. I didn't last. I went down the secret staircase and spent the rest of the night with my parents."

But she said most of her memories were of her brother. "I don't remember I had a lot of friends. There weren't too many children on the point at that time." She followed her brother and his friends to the tidepools and discovered "all the wonderful things in it. We had a

Oujia Board. We did puzzles. We had a simple game with cards. I think we were read to probably by grandfather or daddy."

Una had Unpleasant memories, however, of being singled out each year when school started because she was Jeffers' granddaughter.

"At River School by the Mission, the teachers kept making me stand up. They'd say, 'Look who we have in class.' Nobody really cared about grandfather except the teacher. The only person to whom this was new was the teacher."

When her parents moved to Ireland, she said, "It was a relief. Nobody had heard of Jeffers. Jeffers was banned in Ireland and nobody knew about him. I was me."

Asked about that, Una said, "I never figured out why he was banned in Ireland. We went there because we always had an attraction as a family for Ireland. My father was trying to write a book."

Lindsay said he attended the University of Ireland [sic] "and they had heard of Jeffers. The church had a lot of control over what was allowed to be read."

"He liked storms," Lindsay recalled. "We all liked storms. That was the most fun thing. We could hardly stand up" walking the coast in a storm. "We were supposed to be having fun."

The grandchildren did recall that "there was a constant stream of building going up" as Jeffers built his unusual home Of stone With his own hands.

"I was the gopher," Lindsay said. "I'd go and get a stone or two, clean up the mortar." But he wasn't allowed to do the actual building because, he said, "it was very much an individual activity. Once he got the stone, it became a personal sort of puzzle-making for him. We all gathered stones."

"I still have that urge," Una said. "I was allowed to put lily shell collection in wet cement in a little frame. One is in a window sill."

"How do you feel about Jeffers inhumanism?" they were asked. "The Inhumanist," written in 1947 after World War II, was performed Saturday afternoon at Sunset Center. "Quite honestly I haven't read much of grandfather's poetry," Una said. "I prefer prose."

"I feel it's something I grew up with. Basically that's a way to look at the world," Lindsay said, explaining that his high school students today think Jeffers' views were somewhat strange.

"He was talking about my house, my mountain lie said. "I'm not at all an expert on what the views were. It's like asking a fish, what is water?"

Lindsay said he recalled great arguments about grammar and punctuation in the house between his grandfather and his father "arguing back and forth about the placement of commas."

But, he said, "Nobody ever said 'take a look at this, your grandfather was a great writer.' Death, murder, incest, and rape made him an attractive poet in the '20s. He was exploring the same areas as D. H. Lawrence. He was a popular writer and he did manage to support himself. He only went out speaking once, and he hated it.

"I have some recollection of him writing with a pencil and going over and over the same thing. It looked to me to be very hard work. I think he always was a heavy editor of his own work."

There was no television in the house for most of the period they lived there, but Lindsay said they did have a radio and his grandfather had a radio, in his room which he immortalized in his poem, "The Bed by the Window," written in 1925 long before he occupied it in his later, failing years.

There were always a lot of animals at Tor House, dogs, chickens, geese, rabbits, moles and voles and a lot of wild animals that Jeffers would take in "before there was an SPCA," Lindsay said.

Although he wrote a poem called "The House Dog's Grave," and Una recalled the names of all the family dogs, many buried at Tor House, she said they never had funerals or "a small service before the fish is flushed down the toilet, no. We never did that."

In fact, she said, "We as a family don't like funerals. We find them morbid. We avoid them."

Lindsay said among the issues that concerned his grandfather in the '50s was the buildup of the area around his house, "the encroachment of houses in areas where we picnicked and were described in poems. I didn't realize the poems came from 20 to 25 years before. The same things were (still) being discussed."

Tor House was "a very tree-enclosed area. You couldn't have the beautiful garden that is there today because there was so much shade" from the trees his grandfather had planted. "We owned the entire block."

As for growing up in Tor House, he said: "It was a house designed without electricity or modern conveniences in mind. There was little space. Other houses were warm. You didn't have to build fires all the time and carry out ashes I was a wood-gatherer. The living room fire was burning most of the time. The tower was most of the time off limits. Una's room in the middle of the tower was almost always off



limits. The dungeon area [first level] was fun. We played there. There was a romantic feeling of being below ground. The most fun we had as children was wandering around in four acres of woods by the ocean."

As he grew up, Lindsay said, his grandfather "tolerated the fact I had a teenager in the house. He never bothered me about loud stereo or late hours."

Asked what books were in the house, Lindsay recalled the Waverly novels and Thomas Hardy which he said "were read aloud" to, his father and uncle.

"The first long piece of poetry I read was "Hiawatha [by Longfellow]. I remember the slightly pained expression on grandfather when I told him. It was in the house but there was all kinds of books.

"The Oz books weren't there," Una interrupted. "I read all 20 of them."

Mother read the 'Water Babies' to me," Lindsay said, then observed that his mother was shaking her head at him. She corrected her son—Jeffers' first grandson—only once during nearly two hours of recollections by her children.

But when he needed to look up something in the Bible for a high school project, Lindsay said, "I went all over the house looking for a Bible. There was none in English, just German and Latin. On all the window seats were stacks of books. Most of them seemed to rotate around."

Asked about holidays, the grandchildren recalled a lot of rosemary around the house at Christmas with a creche and "innumerable cousins" while Thanksgiving was a big event and birthday parties were a big thing.

"My parents would put on marvelous, occurrences at birthdays," Lindsay recalled. "They flung toys off the tower. They had more fun than we did because we had to dress up."

Jeffers born in 1887, died at Tor House in 1962. He began construction of the house, naming it for the craggy knoll, or "tor," on which it was built, in 1919.

The poet apprenticed himself to the building contractor to learn the art and, in 1920, started construction of the Hawk Tower which he built by himself in four years.

# *JEFFERS AS SUBJECT*

## *FOR THE CAMERA*

By Horace Lyon

■ **Editor's Note:** The following is excerpted from an article which appeared in RJN, Number 18, June 1967. When observing Jeffers as captured variously by the camera, one might wonder at the circumstances: who was taking the photo; what was its purpose; what was going on in the poet's mind. The memoir of Leigh Wiener in RJN 87 suggested some of that photographer's experience and approach to Jeffers as camera subject. Leigh managed to stay over for several days and catch photo-occasions quickly and casually, often while speaking with the subject. Did the cameraman's techniques make a difference or the presence of Una or the time-frame (1935 vs. the late 1950s, shortly before Jeffers's death)? Wiener's results can best be discovered in Ann Ridgeway's *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers* (1968). Lyon's photos have been a staple in presenting Jeffers and his landscape since the mid-1930s—in book, periodical, and newspaper. His art can perhaps best be appreciated in his *Jeffers Country* (1971). The reader might also choose to compare Edward Weston's reflections of Tor House camera-occasions in his *Day Books*.

I had begun making a set of photographs of scenes along the coast south of Carmel which Robinson Jeffers had used as actual settings for episodes in his narrative poems, or which could have inspired certain passages in his writings. We [Horace and his wife Edna] showed some of the photographs to Una to enlist her help in identifying other sites, and she became intensely interested in our project. She suggested locations and also accompanying passages from his work, and in time Robin lost his early indifference and became genuinely interested in seeing how the camera might catch the character of the rugged and beautiful country that meant so much to him.

As I lived only a few minutes away, Una began to ask me to take simple photographs of their home, views of Tor House and Hawk Tower, the asphodel she had planted, views of Point Lobos from their windows, their dog, and finally informal photographs of herself, the boys, and Robin. Una's quick, decisive nature necessitated prompt action and she would drop in at our house at any time of day with a request or for some discussion, or Robin would stop in to leave a note from Una, with a soft spoken explanation. More often it would be a phone call from her that brought us to Tor House, with or without a camera. Una was always bustling and outspoken, Robin, when present, was quiet and reserved. With her we could discuss any subject and she would talk at length on his poetry and philosophy, subjects we never discussed with him and which he never volunteered. On any nature subject—birds, rocks, tides, meteorology—he talked freely and with deep understanding, but most of what we learned of his thoughts and motivation came from her.

Una was naturally photogenic and completely at ease under any circumstances. The boys were quite indifferent to the presence of the camera, but I found Robin a very difficult subject for even the most informal photograph. When I showed up with a camera he would immediately become tense and self-conscious, almost belligerent in his expressions, and utterly unlike his usual gentle and courteous self. I never felt that the belligerence was directed at me but rather at the prospect of being photographed. Even though Una had requested it, it was a rank invasion of his privacy and the thought of his image being held up to public gaze was repugnant to him. His feelings are evident in many of the photographs and the problem was always to get him to relax. He would obviously be making a great effort to please Una in something she had wanted but his efforts were all too often unnatural and forced. His strong personality would be a challenge to the most experienced portrait photographer, and I have never seen any photograph of him that I thought did him justice.

He could be a very different person when either Una or Haig, their bulldog, was also in the picture. I have a charming photograph of him kneeling beside Haig who was supposed to be the real subject. Robin had quite lost his self-consciousness in his desire that the dog appear to the best advantage, though Haig needed no help. He was a natural "ham."

On another occasion they were planning a trip abroad and Una asked me to take a passport picture of them both. They sat close to-

gether outside the house where the light was soft, and Robin really seemed to enjoy it. And why not? This was not to give the public a peephole glimpse of their companionship, or to hold a bit of his private life up to public gaze. This was a necessary preparation for their happily planned trip to Ireland, to smooth their journey and add to their companionship. The result is no dramatic portrait of a major poet and his wife, but a charming picture of a devoted couple.

Una wanted some photographs of herself and Robin together in their living room. I do not know what she may have told him of what she had in mind, but unlike other occasions when she was in the picture with him, he was stiff and self-conscious, and could seem to do little more than strike artificial poses. Una sat at her little desk by the window with Robin beside her, seemingly intent on what she was writing. I made two exposures and there is not the slightest change in posture or expression on his part. Then Una sat at her melodeon, with Robin on the settle behind her with Haig, and again two exposures show that he hardly moved a muscle. What could he wrong when both Una and Haig were in the picture with him? I could only guess that for some purpose Una wanted photographs of their home life, and that, to him, was an intolerable invasion of their privacy—seated together at her desk while she wrote some important letter—he seated by the fireplace with Haig while she played some favorite music. Such moments of companionship were precious and very personal to him, and to have the camera hold them up to public view was just too much for his sensitive nature. Robin made a great effort to play his part because his beloved Una had asked him to, but he was plainly suffering.

On one memorable occasion he and I drove down the coast together to Victorine's ranch below Mal Paso Canyon where Una wanted a photograph of him looking out to sea from a hillside (see this issue's cover). He was relaxed and almost chatty on the way, but as soon as we had climbed the grassy slope and I unlimbered my camera, he froze. He had his knobby Irish stick and his leather puttees and he tried so hard to appear to be walking leisurely in the hillside pasture, but he was stiff and unnatural. I made a couple of exposures hoping he would relax, but the results were not good. Suddenly I realized that something was attracting his attention and I became aware of the throbbing sound of a passing trawler out at sea, unusual only in its peculiar broken rhythm. For a matter of seconds he forgot himself in his concentration of the sound and I snapped the shutter. As I did so

he said: "It sounds like a three cylinder Diesel." He had a strong feeling of kinship for the fisherfolk of Monterey whose lives were so deeply involved with the ocean lie loved, and for a few seconds he was with them in that passing trawler. The result was probably the best photograph I ever got of Robin and one that Una particularly liked. I He was a marvelous subject when his privacy was not being Violated and he could forget himself.

I never took a photograph of Robin without his knowledge. There were occasions when a "candid" shot of him could have been very revealing of his complex nature, but to do anything surreptitious with him was unthinkable. Una never suggested it, for while she strove in every way to enhance his public image, she was too deeply devoted to him and too conscious of her role as his protector, to permit any subterfuge.

When Robin was building one of the additions to their house, Una asked me to come over to get some pictures of him at work on the stone walls. He was actually a remarkable stonemason and could lay the difficult, rounded boulders from his beach into a wall that had character and beauty, no mean achievement for the most experienced professional stonemason. I felt that this would be one time when he would be so engrossed in what he was doing that he would forget me and my pesky camera. And it did help. Una would make a suggestion and he would strike a stiff pose until the feel of the stone under his hand and the poised hammer would begin to intrigue him and he would gradually relax.

But on another occasion Una had him standing beside an old mill-stone at the base of Hawk Tower. The fine stonework made an extremely effective background for Robin, but for some reason he simply could not seem to relax. The photographs I got were not too bad but they could have been so much better.

In addition to our photographic session, my wife and I saw a good deal of Robin and Una at purely social functions, delightful gatherings at Ellen O'Sullivan's or Noel Sullivan's, or very small groups at their house or ours for tea or port. They were always fascinating company, Una outgoing and vivacious, Robin quiet and speaking only when lie had something worthwhile to say. But it was our all-day excursions with them into the back country that we found the most delightful, such as the most memorable visit to the Limekilns tip Bixby Creek to photograph the beautiful ruins, since burned over. Robin was completely at ease and natural, interested in seeing if the camera could

see what he saw, and suggesting shots. The camera was never pointed toward him. And always on such trips, his first thought was of Una's comfort and welfare. It was a delight to see him guiding her along the rough path or helping her across the stream over logs or stones, and on the way home, arranging a robe or scarf about her in the car. On longer rides he would usually sit with his arm around her.

Their beloved bulldog, Haig, was growing old and Una wanted me to take some photographs of him. They were both particularly anxious to get him in certain characteristic attitudes by the front door. Haig, as usual, was quite willing to oblige and the results were satisfactory. When Haig died shortly afterward, he was buried among their flowers with a rough stone marker, and Robin wrote a poem, "The House Dog's Grave - Haig's Grave," which was published in a limited edition with one of the photographs of Haig at the front door. It had probably all been planned by Una when they realized that his days were numbered. Their affection for him was very genuine, and Una told me afterward that when she and Robin looked over the photographs together to select one for the book, the tears streamed down their faces.

March, 1967

# ***NOTES FROM A***

## *JEFFERS COUNTRY FIELDTRIP*

■ *Editor's Note:* The following is a sketch of adventures and responses during a class fieldtrip from California State University Long Beach by eighteen members of a senior seminar in Robinson Jeffers, October 22-24.

We start before sun-up Friday morning: some have begun the night before, one car already broken down At San LUIS Obispo. Our load: for each a tent, sleeping-hag, pillow, overnight case, survival food, lantern assorted flashlights, a bottle of water, a change of clothes. A chosen few have been assigned fire-wood and food. My ride swings by at 5:00 and we are off into spotty traffic—through Long Beach L.A., the Valley, a climb into Los Padres Forest, Castaic, Tehachapi Mountains, Gorman, Tejon Pass, Grapevine, and the great valley floor that stretches from Bakersfield past Sacramento. On the map we trace Highway 5 to 46 to 101 to Coast Road 1, coming out at Cambridge and San Simeon and pursuing the remaining miles up the California tide-line against a bleak but beautiful Pacific morning sun, past Piedras Blancas, which Una writes about in certain letters, Gorda and Pacific Valley (tiny towns). The road is tortuous and slowed by Unpassable campers. Riding high on cliff-hugging two-lanes, we stop repeatedly to gaze back and ahead to precipitous headlands, surf boiling around rocks beneath. Soon Lucia, Slates Hot Springs, Gamboa Point, and Anderson Landing slip by as we read to each other "The Coast-Road," "Orca," "Distant Rainfall," "The Beaks of Eagles," "Oh, Lovely Ruck," and "Flight of Swans."

Tassajara Hot Springs are inland to the east, then Ventana Cones, cliff-hanging Nepenthe restaurant with curios and books, Henry Miller

Library, Julia Pfeiffer Park, and Big Stir. Andrew Molera Unimproved Campground is just short of Point Stir; we hurriedly walk the half-mile sand-path, bowed under equipment which seems more excessive and irrelevant with each step. The camp is a wide, deep, flat meadow just a hundred yards from the Big Stir River Mouth. The river swishes and broils beside us. No electricity, no bathrooms, no car access. Several outhouses and fire-rings, spaced spigots, scattered picnic tables. Tents up, lest we be caught by dark. 11:00 AM. The remaining twenty miles to Carmel are filled with roller-coaster loops of road past beaches and creeks, around ragged points, each opening upon a staggeringly dark, bleak, craggy, breathtaking vista. Names from Jeffers's poems leap out to us from road and bridge -markets: Point Sur Coast Guard Station and Lighthouse, Little Stir River, Hurricane Point, Bixby's Landing, Mill Creek, Notley's Landing, Palo Colorado Canyon, Rocky Point, Kasler Point, Garrapata Creek, Soberanes Point, Mal Paso Creek, Yankee Point, Wildcat and San Jose Creek, Mission San Carlos, Carmel River.

And we have arrived at Tor House, just in time to join the first tour of the afternoon. Carmel is bright and clear. Stone, stone, stone. Its hard grain is everywhere to the eye and touch. How unique, strange, and compelling a house: low ceilings, fireplace-upon-fireplace, books, shelf-crowding-shelf, we have no time to look (glimpses of Hardy, Yeats, Scott, Moore, Lawrence). Redwood paneling, dark but warmly colored moms, the famous bed by the window, scattered woodpanel inscriptions Stoooped doorways, low ceilings against roof-wrenching storms, a steep and narrow staircase to cramped living-quarters and Jeffers's walking/writing chamber. Congenial, knowledgeable, dedicated, informed docents. We are a challenge, having read and argued so many poems.

Then time to reflect, sitting on sea-surrendered rock -outcroppings opposite the house at low tide. A shock: how crucial the landscape, sea-air, and wave-sound now seem for the poem's rhythm. What do people, we, do without it! We read more poems, passing a book hand to hand. It's almost painful, the page calling us to scene and vice versa.

The October afternoon wanes, so we drive south again forty minutes to our open-field campsite blinking at each new vista; much overwhelmed with wilderness and unmindful stone and water. Parking in the appointed Forestry Service circle, we walk the fraction-mile trail alongside a noisy Stir River, looking for the ghosts of April Barclay and Clare Walker; none appear.



The first evening's fare is spaghetti and salad, French bread and burgundy (the group has been self-declared vegetarian). All are sufficiently hungry, and awed, perhaps overburdened with scenery the likes of which many of us have never seen. We read more poems, then hike with flashlights to the little promontory at the Sur River-mouth, overlooking the sea. The sky is full of stars. Orion rises in the east. The Milky Way arches overhead; we don't see it in Long Beach. It recalls childhood wonder.

Raccoons of course are out, but not in the rumored numbers. They act as though the camp were theirs, we the invaders. Not much purpose in arguing. The cooks leave a pile of spaghetti out as a truce-offering and bribe. One visitor, a recent Ph.D. from UC Berkeley, who has joined us late, sleeps in the open and wakes to find a raccoon, humanlike, unzipping his back-pack; it takes the masked bandit less than a minute. Who says animals are not intelligent! Later we will watch sea otters in a cove below Lobos, floating on their backs with stones to crack shells.

All sleep deeply; after some gaiety, guitars and voices are muted by exhaustion.

Instant coffee and hot chocolate fuel us for a fast start up the coast; it's Saturday and the sun shines benignly. We plot out Cannery Row, the 17-Mile-Drive (for some), Carmel beaches, State Beach, and Carmel River Lagoon, all with designated poems to read: "The Purse-Seine," "Point Joe," "Hurt Hawks," "Boars in a Fog." We agree to spend two hours at Point Lobos wandering among twisted cypress groves and exploring coves, beaches, and rocks covered with seals and sea lions. We then gather at 2:00 for a five-car caravan down the coast, reading more poetry to each other, appropriate to about seven headlands and creeks en route back toward Point Sur: "Continent's End," "The Place for No Story," "Fire on the Hills," "Wind-Struck Music," "Vulture," "Apology for Bad Dreams," "The Caged Eagle's Death Dream," "All the Little Houfprints," "Give Your Heart to the Hawks."

We lose a few sojourners but the remnant manage repeated stops, reading more poetry (we are assured) than any like troupe has done before. There has been a pit-stop at Safeway off Rio Road so picnics are snatched along with scenery. The afternoon wanes. We read "Tile Eye" from Hurricane Point, from which the Pacific is convex, the horizon curved like an eye-ball, as Jeffers says, with hemispheric continents, Asia and the Americas, as lids.

The afternoon bleaches as we round Little Sur River and pass the ghostly "Point" out on its sand-spit, where the U.S. Navy dirigible Macon went down in 1935 with its five trapeze-launched fighter planes. No time to regroup at camp, we snake darkly through Big Sur redwoods, against the failing light, again alongside the rushing Sur River, and follow Sycamore Canyon to Pfeiffer Beach, our ultimate stop, where Alan Jardine of the Beach Boys (who set to music "The Beaks of Eagles") has a ranch-house, and where Fayne, Michael, and Lance Frazer drank Prohibition liquor from Drunken Charlie's jugs and acted out the Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel stories in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks." The island-like rock-formation, which splits the beach at tideline, invites six of our crew with its sharply perpendicular chopped footholds. I can't look lest they fall! And then a most amazing sunset, red melding into purple. Sacrificial; more Jeffers than Jeffers.

Back at camp all are exhausted; the lost sheep stray in; the Saturday night cooks have gotten lost going for supplies, much to everyone's dismay. Skirting mutiny, we are rewarded with burritos and beer. Since all are poetryed out, we tell ghost stories and other tall tales, remembering Jeffers's capacity for ingesting the macabre legends of this Sur landscape: parricide and strychnine poisonings, incest, fratricide, castration, drunken cremations, visions, Doppelgangers, and other hallucinations. A camp-ranger comes to quiet us down, and eventually we trail off to tents. One party stays up to trudge the dark to the Sur Rivermouth and read poetry by flashlight till 2 AM!

The rest is anti-climax: decamping Sunday morning amidst drizzle. Where else to go, what highway to take home, how to write that term paper due Tuesday? We load our cars and again drive Highway 1 through Big Sur toward San Simeon. The lip of the road all but tips us over the continent's end; the vistas are more spectacular going south.

It has been a weekend of enthusiasm, practical jokes, landscape-injected poems, level upon level of appreciation. The best three days...! Of course the problem on return is decompression. It will take days to focus again, to reel-in that far-away stare, to not be thinking of huddled stone buildings, rock, hard sand, salty wet winds, violet sunsets, craggy headlands, hovering hawks, oak and redwood, fern-hid deer, canyons and creeks, Lobos blow-holes, lichen on twisted cypresses, and a country that breathes poetry.

# ***HEARING THE NATURAL MUSIC:*** ***A COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS*** ***OF JEFFERS, FROST, ELIOT, AND POUND***

By Ted Olson  
University of Mississippi

■ For about a decade—from the mid 1920s to the mid 1930s—Robinson Jeffers was one for the most popular poets in the United States, albeit one of the most controversial; he was, for example, the first American poet to receive a cover story in *Time* magazine, April 4, 1932. Many literary critics, however, did not share the popular interest in Jeffers's work, in part because the poet's aesthetics—his insistence on thematic directness, stylistic concreteness, and moral and political confrontation—ran counter to the prevailing aesthetics of the day.

Some critics lauded Jeffers for his breakthrough collection of 1924, *Tamar and Other Poems*; they acknowledged the poet's powerful, decidedly individualistic poetic voice. Yet when Jeffers in subsequent volumes revealed a darkening poetic vision, most critics abandoned their support. And to be sure, the themes of Jeffers's poetry were troubling: the poet composed a series of narratives portraying violence and incest among rural Californians, themes meant as thinly veiled criticism of modern man's narcissistic preoccupation with himself and his civilization. Put off by Jeffers's increasingly stark message, some critics refused to read his poetry at all, while others, refusing to read Jeffers's poetry as the poet intended it be read, condemned his work for the "immorality" and "inhumanity" of its themes.

By the late 1920s, unsympathetic critics began to attack Jeffers's poetic style as much as his themes: one critic found Jeffers's poetry to be "prosaic" (Vardamis 77); another accused him of "a laxity of language" (75); while a third critic expressed distaste for the poet's "copious barren phrases and ... deplorably verbose and stringy rhetoric" (68). Perhaps most damning of all, the influential New Critic Yvor Winters in the early 1930s claimed that one of Jeffers's poems had

"no quotable lines" (78), and that one of the poet's collections was "capable neither of the fullness ... of fine prose nor the concentration and modulation of fine verse" (90). From the 1930s onward, as the New Critical approach to interpreting literature gained favor, Jeffers's prosody and his use of language were scrutinized by critics mercilessly.

In demanding that a poem be a self-contained linguistic statement, a world unto itself, the New Critics felt justified in discrediting Jeffers: after all, the poet did not share the poetic aesthetics that the New Critics valued—neither the ambiguity, the allusiveness, nor the introversion. Even as they rejected Jeffers, the New Critics championed other Twentieth-Century poets, such as Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, whose aesthetics were more consistent with New Criticism and whose messages were less threatening. As a result, the latter poets were widely anthologized while Jeffers was generally neglected.

Yet this adverse reception did not silence Jeffers: instead, it encouraged him—because of his contrary nature—to explore further his chosen themes according to his own poetics. He continued to compose his utterly unique poetry until his death in 1962, all the while isolated from the jabs of critics and the various schools of literary fashion—just as he had been during the writing of his first critically acclaimed collection *Tamar and Other Poems*.

Recently, there has been an increased scholarly interest in Jeffers, highlighted by the commitment of Stanford University Press to publish his entire poetic oeuvre. Yet he is still largely ignored by the literary establishment; for example, the influential *Norton Anthology of American Literature* represents Jeffers noticeably less than it does Frost, Eliot, and Pound, three "canon" poets whose work in the Third Edition of that anthology receive 32 pages, 34 pages, and 27 pages, respectively; Jeffers is granted only 5 pages.

Were the New Critics correct in their assessment of Jeffers—that as a wordsmith he was clearly inferior to his more heralded contemporaries, however original his poetic vision may have been? Or did the New Critics, perhaps with the intention of discrediting the poet's work, project unfair standards in assessing Jeffers's poetry? Were these critics simply evaluating the poet's work with aesthetic criteria alien to Jeffers's intentions? This linguistic analysis will attempt to determine whether or not Jeffers's best work is stylistically inferior to the best work of Frost, Eliot and Pound, in order to support or disprove the claims of the New Critics regarding Jeffers's lower position in the literary canon. I will compare the prosody and the use of language in

four often anthologized poems, one by Jeffers ("Hurt Hawks"), one by Frost ("The Death of the Hired Man"), one by Eliot ("The Hollow Men"), and one by Pound ("Homage to Sextus Propertius"). The four poems compared in this linguistic analysis are linked by a common theme: "death." "Hurt Hawks" by Jeffers and "The Death of the "Hired Man" by Frost are modern examples of "traditional" narrative poems—their primary goal is to tell a story; while "Homage to Sextus Propertius" by Pound and "The Hollow Men" by Eliot are examples of modernist poems self-consciously freed from the "traditional" poetic values that Jeffers and Frost tried to preserve in their narrative poems. I will examine in each of the four poems the basic components of the English language: vocabulary, phonology, orthography, dialect, syntax, stress, and morphology. A comparative linguistic analysis should reveal whether or not Jeffers's poetry is stylistically and linguistically inferior to the work of three "canon" poets.

Jeffers's poem "Hurt Hawks" features a vocabulary comprised of an equal number of words from Old English and Norman-French origins. Words found in the poem that derive from the former source include many nouns from Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse languages, especially geographical terms (such as "hill," "foreland," and "sky"), ornithological terms (such as "hawk," "wing," and "bone"), as well as a few concept nouns ("freedom" and "God"). Words in the poem that descend from Norman-French origins include the majority of the poem's adjectives (such as "arrogant," "terrible," and "savage"), some nouns (such as "talons," "river," and "reality"), as well as a few verbs (like "torment" and "remember"). Although Jeffers always displayed a wide vocabulary—partly attributable to his knowledge of several European languages—he tended to favor Old English words, a result of his life-long interest in the Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultures (Jeffers visited the British Isles several times, and while there he wrote a number of poems celebrating Anglo-Saxon and Celtic cultural history). One might conjecture that Jeffers would have relied more fully on Old English words had a larger variety of Old English adjectives survived the arrival of the huge Norman-French vocabulary during the Norman Invasion of England. Because he valued description, Jeffers employed adjectives liberally, and thus used many adjectives descending from Norman-French origins.

Since Pound saw himself as a humanist, he identified more with "Western Classical" than with Anglo-American culture; this led him to utilize words primarily from French and Latin origins, the primary

languages of "Western Classical" culture. Two lines from "Homage to Sextus Propertius" demonstrate Pound's preference for French and Latin words over Old English words: "The Parthians shall get used to our statuary / and acquire a Roman religion" (86). The theme of the poem—the death of Greek Civilization at the hands of the Romans—further suggests Pound's fascination with "Western Classical" themes. Eliot tends to value Old English words more than Pound, perhaps because he was an adopted Englishman who self-consciously affected both a British accent and British manners; for example, of all the words used in the following lines from "The Hollow Men," only one word is not of Old English origin—the word "final" (57): "Let me be no nearer / In death's dream kingdom" and "Not that final meeting / In the twilight kingdom."

Frost values a vocabulary derived from Latin and French sources, though he uses such words intentionally and even ironically, rather than habitually and self-consciously like Pound. An example of this from "The Death of the Hired Man" is when the husband and wife discuss the predicament of the hired man. The wife compares this relatively uneducated farm-worker to the man's old friend, Harold Wilson, who had subsequently earned a university degree and presumably given up the difficult life of farm-work; in talking about Harold, the wife inadvertently slips into a more "educated" speech, whose words tend to be from Latin and French—rather than from Old English—origins. When referring to this former friend of the hired man, the wife says, "Harold's young college boy's assurance piqued him. / ... Harold's associated in his mind with Latin. / He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying / He studied Latin like the violin" (51). The wife then reverts to the more colloquial speech she had used before, using more words from Old English origins. Here, Frost is quite conscious of how economically privileged members of society manipulate vocabulary to distinguish themselves from less educated people.

Phonologically, Jeffers's and Frost's poems are quite similar in that they both utilize alliteration to infuse a sense of movement into the language of their narrative poems. Both authors use alliteration in two ways: the alliteration of consonant sounds throughout the poem to bind the whole poem together; and the alliteration of consonant sounds to bind two phrases or sections together, but not the whole poem. In "t Hurt Hawks," the consonant sound "w"—as in such words as "wing," "waiting," "worse," "wild," "wandered," "what," and "was"—and the consonant sound "f"—as in "forever," "freedom," "fore-

land, "feathers," "fierce," and "flooded"—recur throughout the poem, serving to thrust the reader's attention ahead from the poem's pensive beginning (the description of the hurt hawk), to the poem's inevitable conclusion (the death of the hawk). On the other hand, the consonant sound "in" occurs only towards the ending of the first part of the poem—in "mercy" and "remember"—and at the beginning of the second part of the poem—in "man" and "misery"; this alliteration serves specifically to connect both parts together, thus unifying the poem's two disparate actions (the poet freeing the hawk in the first part, the poet killing the hawk in the second).

Frost repeats throughout his poem the consonant sound "w"—as found in such words as "Warren," "wooden," "wages," "winter," "Wilson," "water," "woods," and "worthless"—to lend the poem a unity of design, a sense of cohesiveness from beginning to end. He also uses alliteration at specific points in the poem for singular purposes: for example, with the alliteration of the opening lines—"Mary sat musing ... / Waiting for Warren (49)—the poet draws the reader's attention to the predicament of the couple: they feel they must make a decision over the fate of the hired man, a decision which they don't realize, until the last line, is actually out of their control. The alliteration in Pound's poem is more understated: he does not repeat consonant sounds throughout, but does occasionally repeat individual words within a single stanza, perhaps to emphasize the importance of that word to the overall meaning of the poem: for example, "in vain, you call back the shade, / In vain, Cynthia. Vain call to unanswering shadow" (87). Rather than find synonyms for "vain," Pound senses that the word itself is potent with allusive power (i.e., the Book of Ecclesiastes) and that it represents an idea crucial to the poem's theme (that, once dead, a person or a culture cannot be resuscitated).

Eliot combines techniques: like Jeffers and Frost, he employs the alliteration of consonant sounds both within individual stanzas—such as the "k" sound in the line "Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves" (57)—and overall, such as the "d" sound staggered throughout the poem in such words as "dried," "death's," "dream," "disguises," "dead," "dying," and "descent"; also, Eliot like Pound repeats individual words and phrases, such as in "death's dream kingdom" and "death's other kingdom," to emphasize to the reader the poem's theme. In general, it can be said that, whereas Pound and Eliot manipulate the phonics of words to make explicit to their readers their poems' themes, Jeffers and Frost use alliteration as an organic stylistic device far subtly unifying

their poems, leaving their themes implicit, decipherable but not obvious.

Any variations in orthography among these four Twentieth-Century poets can be attributed either to the differences in spelling between British and American English, or to the poet's own idiosyncrasies (though there are virtually no examples of this in any of the four poems). The orthography of the English language had been largely standardized to its present form by the time of World War 1, which is roughly the beginning point for each of the four poets' literary activity. A few variations in the spelling of a few words remained, though, usually the result of British English retaining remnant unpronounced vowels (which remained from French-influenced Middle English) and of American English discarding them. Although born and reared in the United States, Eliot emigrated to Great Britain. Consistent with his adoption of British culture, Eliot in his poem uses the British English spelling of "colour" (which retains the "u") and of "paralysed" (American English substitutes a "z" for the "s"). Frost likewise utilizes British English spelling, such as in "harbour" (which, like "colour," retains the "u") and in "recognise" and "sympathise" (for each of these, American English substitutes a "z" for the "s"); this is easily explained: Frost's poetic models were for the most part British, and he lived in England during the period in which he composed this poem. Later, upon returning to the United States, Frost resorted to writing in American English, as evident in the poem "The Investment," where "color" appears without the "u" of the British English spelling.

The four poets have remarkably different attitudes towards dialect. Pound and Eliot, because they allied themselves with the "Western Classical" elite culture, do not often use dialect in their poems. Jeffers was certainly as well-educated and as well-read as those poets, but his different allegiances—especially his commitment to place—led him at times to depict the vernacular speech of the California coast's early settlers and folk cultures, though no example of Jeffers's employment of dialect appears in "Hurt Hawks." Frost, probably less formally schooled than the other three poets, was of the four poets the most interested in dialect, particularly in his narrative poems. "The Death of the Hired Man," however, though it concerns the plight of a dying farm-worker, does not involve any dialect, because the speakers are a "schooled" farm couple talking about the hired man, who remains "off-stage" and never speaks a word. One need only page through Frost's other poetry, though, to discover the poet's skillful use of dialect; for example, in the



poem entitled "In the Home Stretch," Frost attempts to capture the non-standard speech of a French-Canadian character: "Then there was a French boy / Who said with seriousness that made them laugh, / 'Ma friend, you ain't know what it is you're ask'" (142). Frost is not being condescending with this use of dialect; rather, he is attempting to do what narrative poets have traditionally done (but what today has been largely relegated to novelists): he is letting his characters "speak for themselves."

The poets exhibit remarkably different strategies in their use of syntax. Both Pound and Eliot utilize a largely artificial syntax for their poetry—that is, they produce poems highly dependent upon other artistic sources for their syntactical form; whereas both Jeffers and Frost, in their attempts to fit words together to tell an original story, work with a more organic syntax, one that has no direct literary model. The syntax in Jeffers's poem is noteworthy for its energy. Because of his Calvinist upbringing, the carnage of World War I, and his identification with the rugged Pacific Coast, Jeffers believed that the world was inherently violent; thus he championed poetry that honestly reflected violence, stylistically as well as thematically. Thus, the words in "Hurt Hawks" are arranged in order to thrust energetically off one another: for example, in lines 4 and 5 of Part II, Jeffers balances two shorter sentences in which the poet is the subject, with one longer sentence in which the subject is the hawk: "We had fed him six weeks, I gave him freedom, / He wandered over the foreland hill and returned in the evening, asking for death" (198). In the poem Jeffers repeatedly sets shorter and longer sentences off against each other (see, for example, lines 1 through 3 in Part II), creating a hypnotic sense of repetition; thus he commands the attention of his audience like a storyteller.

Like Jeffers, Eliot uses syntactical repetition, but with more didactic intentions. A moralist, not a storyteller, Eliot represents reality subjectively, not objectively—he reorganizes reality to fit his moral purposes. Thus in "The Hollow Men," he parodies the repetitive refrain of a traditional nursery-rhyme in an attempt to persuade the reader to recognize the moral and spiritual poverty of modern man: "Here we go round the prickly pear / Prickly pear prickly pear / Here we go round the prickly pear / At five o'clock in the morning" (58). Frost likewise utilizes repetitive syntax in his poem. Since the poet conveys the poem's plot through the conversation of two characters (a husband and a wife), he employs believable repetition of phrasing to make the poem convincing (Frost understands that human speech follows syntactical

patterns): "Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk, / And nothing to look backward to with pride, / And nothing to look forward to with hope" (52). Pound favors a more formal and stilted syntax than the other poets; in his poem Pound echoes the mannered English translations of Greek and Latin poetry that he himself read as he was learning to translate poetry: "Nor at my funeral either will there be any long trail, / hearing ancestral lares and images; / ... Nor shall it be on an Atalic bed" (87). Pound's poem is in part an intellectual exercise, a conscious imitation of the style of Classical Greek and Latin poets; because of that, his syntax, like Eliot's is controlled by the literary influences to which he is alluding.

Because none of the four poems utilize end-rhymes the stressing of words plays a crucial role in providing these poems with structure. Each poet stressed certain words to clarify the intended direction of his poem; and toward this goal, stress often works together with syntax. In Jeffers's poem, immediately after the narrator shoots the severely wounded hawk, there is a log-jam of heavily stressed words to represent the death, the symbolic falling-to-earth, of the once majestic hawk; this is followed by a relaxation of stress, as the poem ends with the suggestion that the "spirit" of the hawk soared away: "I gave him the lead gift in the twilight. / What fell was relaxed, / Owl-downy, soft feminine feathers; but what / Soared: the fierce rush: the night-herons by the flooded river cried fear at its rising / Before it was quite unsheathed from reality" (199). Frost stresses words at key points in his poem to suggest a character's psychological condition. For example, when the wife in her pity for the hired man accidentally states that he has come "home," her husband mocks her; her response reveals her confusion over her responsibility toward a former employee: "Yes, what else but home? / It all depends on what you mean by home. / Of course he's nothing to us, any more / Than was the hound that came a stranger to us / Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail" (53). The awkward syntax of her speech and the uncertain stressing of her words reflect the conflict between her own wish to help the hired man and her husband's persuasion to avoid that responsibility.

Eliot manipulates stress as he did his poem's phonics: to cue the reader to the fact that an important point is being made. In part 4, Eliot essentially repeats the first line, "The eyes are not here," but changes it from active to passive voice, "There are no eyes here," thereby subtly shifting the stress from "eyes" to the word "no." He is critical of the absence of "vision" in the Twentieth Century and asserts

that Western culture must face its negativity, its decrepit condition. Pound likewise repeats words and phrases in order to stress strongly their importance to his theme; examples of this are the first line of part 6 of his poem, "When, when, and whenever death closes our eyelids" (86), as well as the fourth line in the third stanza of part 6, "Enough, enough and in plenty" (87). Like Eliot, Pound wants to make his message explicit; unlike Eliot, Pound does not consider himself prophet so much as historian. In his poem, Pound is attempting to recapture the aesthetic dignity and stylistic formality of the Greek and Latin classics he so loved.

All four poets are fascinated with morphology, and they tend to be interested in the same morphemes, though they manipulate them quite differently. One example is in the morpheme "eye." Eliot uses the more conventional form of this morpheme in the line, "The eyes are not here" (58) —Eliot uses it as a plural noun. Jeffers uses the less common adjective form of that same morpheme: "Not like a beggar, still eyed with the old / Implacable arrogance" (198-99). Pound uses the morpheme "eye" in a compound word—"eyelids," a plural noun. And though Frost does not use any variant of the morpheme "eye" in his poem, he uses a similar compound word, "earshot" (meaning, "tire distance within which something can be heard"), out of a related morpheme, "ear." The emphasis on eyes and ears in these four poems reflects the obsession of modern writers with the nature of both spiritual and intellectual perception—with the conflict between "vision" and "blindness."

Need it be said after the above comparative linguistic analysis that, despite his relative unpopularity with critics, Jeffers's poetry is fully as complex as Frost's, Eliot's, or Pound's poetry, stylistically as well as thematically? Jeffers's usage of language is equally as worthy of study and admiration as that of these other, more laureled poets.

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# ***CALIFORNIA:***

## ***JEFFERS'S "DROP-OFF CLIFF OF THE WORLD"***

By Robert J. Brophy  
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■ Place, for California's premier poet, was twenty-five miles of dramatically perpendicular coastline, headlands, and promontories, which stretched south from Point Pinos to Big Stir and the Ventana Cones. There are narrow beaches here on the California coast, but mostly they look up on near-thousand-foot drops and are inaccessible.

What did this place, this continent's end, mean to Jeffers and, through his interpretation, what does it mean to us? An end to three thousand years' migrations, the final sum of Western Civilization's hegira toward the setting sun—with its anxious need to conquer and subdue environment, convert natives, and exploit resources.

Jeffers was at one level embarrassed to be an American, to be of European stock. He shunned Asia for its denial of the hard, real, beautiful earth, but he despised his own heritage of busyness and exploitation. In poem after poem, he turned to the coast as the Divine Beauty in things, existing here before us, long to survive us.

The Big Sur Coast, in all its rugged majesty and inhuman, inhospitable dynamism, was to him the measure which the mind needed to understand the larger world of galaxy and universe ("Night"). He saw this place as happily unmanageable, giving the final "No" to the human demands for submission.

He saw it ("The Continent's End") as the crisis point, called it in the voice of one of his protagonists the "drop-off cliff of the world" ("Tamar") from which we must confront our destiny in the solar system, Milky Way Galaxy, and Cosmic Oscillations. He saw the coast as a vantage point from which to judge our past ("A Redeemer") for its rape of the land, repudiation of animal siblinghood, and annihilation of native populations.

He celebrates the coast ("Torch-Bearer's Race") as the hinge on which to swing outward, the blast-off point into the stars, breaking the incestuous bonds of humankind and finally joining in spirit and in fact the universe of our origins and destiny. From this tide-line we can return to Asia too, completing the circle of mythic migrations, acknowledging one race, one planet, one destiny, but only after vaulting the Pacific, the eye which looks outward into infinite space.

This place for Jeffers is archetypal (a thesis first pursued by William Everson), the epitome of the American West in its violence, loneliness, frontier essence, and finality. All else, American and human, looks to it, is reflected in it, explained by it. It is the WILDERNESS which is needed by the human mind to survive, to not choke on itself. It is the antithesis to cities, those cemeteries of the soul.

In this final space, this primordial place, Jeffers could reconcile American and human culture. He did not deny his humanity nor the contributions of great minds and artists of his race. In his prophetic, excoriating voice he might seem to be, but he was not in the end a negator, not a nihilist. Ultimately he was an integrator and celebrator.

What was best and valuable in our human world would survive, could be sorted out whole when calcined by the extra-human violences of sea, storm, fire, and quake which epitomized his coast. The best would find serenity, free from the race's preoccupation with doing and with subduing, in the landscape where ten miles between neighbors is still almost possible.

Jeffers migrated from Los Angeles to Carmel/Big Sur. His wife once said that he ground his teeth in his sleep days after visiting San Francisco. Cities were unnatural, or rather natural only as signs of the cycle's devolution, the "Fall." He offered Big Sur Coast as antidote, as epiphany, theophany, kratophany. The subdued landscape and the "civilized" race were horrors to him in their unreality, their deprivation, their complicity, their blasphemy ("Subjected Earth"). Asphalt, concrete, sewer lines, and cemented creekbeds kill place.

The solution for Jeffers must be either an apocalypse ("November Surf") or conversion of mind and soul. This place, this paradigm, this end of migration could teach us much. For him it represented our final chance. Open your eyes, he would say ("Signpost"): "Things are so beautiful, your love will follow your eyes; / Things are the God, you will love God, and not in vain, / For what we love we grow to it, we share its nature."

# ***UNA JEFFERS, CORRESPONDENT:***

## *THE LUHAN LETTERS*

### *EXCERPTS, 1938*

■ ***Editor's Note:*** Una's letters Of 1938 record continuing voices and events at Tor House—a first contact with Judith Anderson, Una's Occidental College talk on Ancient Irish Music, her sage motheradvice to Mabel, reservations about Shan-Kar, Charlie Chaplin at dinner, the family's trip to Death Valley, Jeffers flying in Hamilton's biplane, Donnan's opting for Hollywood, Garbo's interest in "The Loving Shepherdess," etc. But by far the year's most significant event has to be the family's visit to Taos during which Robinson succumbed to a siren's song and Una attempted suicide.

The powerful revelation in Una's August 3rd letter, a response to the Taos events, is the nature of her surprising vulnerability (from what is known of her bursts of passion, one would expect her to shoot the offender, not herself). It appears that she became momentarily suicidal not because she discovered that her husband had been sexually unfaithful but because he had listened and given credence to the young woman's charge that his problem with creativity was to be found in Una, that he was not writing because his wife managed him so thoroughly. This supposition of course would render valueless, even poisonous, Una's early and continuing decision to subordinate her talents, desires, and career dreams to making life viable for the poet. As she says: "Really when I heard from him that he had *listened* to her I felt so desperate a wound & unhappiness that I could not think—(everything for the last 25 1/2 years considered!) that I cared to make one more gesture toward living." Una testifies in this letter that she and her husband have regrouped and strengthened their marriage and that she is convinced that the "strumpet's" viperous contention has no foundation. An examined life is worth living.

The editor has included Una's greetings and complimentary closes to these letters. Her customary epistolary greeting retreats from "Dearest" to the conventional "Dear"; closing phrases are cooled from "Dearest Loved" to "yrs." The "Jeffers" (in parentheses) added after her usual signature in several letters is unexplained and has been dropped; it seems not Una's and might have been inserted by Mabel.

As discussed at the beginning of this Luhan series, Una's decision to continue correspondence (the August 3rd and following letters) seems startling, given the circumstances. When did Una accept the stark fact that her trust in friendship had been violated and that Mabel was in some way part of the seduction process by Hildegard (whom Una characterizes on the back of the family's summer snap-shots as "the snake")? Later she would write to friends who had warned her, conceding that her confidence had been misplaced. The best explanation seems to be that Una was in unconscious or conscious denial. Clearly she could not admit that her and Robinson's love was of common metal, as Mabel clearly wanted to make it seem, being envious. Ever self-sacrificing for her sons, Una might also have wished, for Donnan's sake, to keep channels open for Mabel's considerable contacts in the film industry. And possibly also for Garth's sake; a few months later he was to work on the Bell Ranch through Mabel's influence. At any rate, the near-tragedy and the continuing relationship would seem to be impervious to satisfactory explanation.

— *[NO DATE: TURN OF THE YEAR, 1937-8]* —

Dearest Mabel—just a few words in a great hurry. Awful confusion here in house with unpacking lying about, the house dusty etc.[return from Taos & Deep Well Ranch after Ireland & England]—I must tell you of Sally [Flavin]. No trace of her altho' hundred CCC patrol constantly. Apparently she focused her camera on a tripod at edge of cliff & then backing away from it fell backwards into the sea—That is the way they have reconstructed it but no one saw her fall. They found her camera there on tripod & a day after her shoe & sock washed in. The pictures were developed in camera—all of sea. She had never taken seascapes before & had just gotten the assignment to take some from the camera club. She was gone 5 hrs. before they began to search. Martin [Flavin] sent for R & me to come out yesterday & talked 2 hrs. about it. He is planning what to do. First he thought he would leave the place but now decides to stay & carry on. He dramatizes the whole

thing & talks & talks. (So different from inarticulate Sidney [Fish regarding Olga He certainly loved her very much & is overcome with sorrow. Phyllis Griffin is staying there a few days & the 3 children are home. Aren't you surprised that Sally was 54.

Noel brought Haig to us the night we returned. He had telephoned me from San Palm Springs & found when we came [sic]. A terrible storm was raging. He & Haig came in at 10:30 P.M. I cried when I got hold of Haig. He is so sweet. We drove 475 mi. that day in the rain!

Awful looking letter-so hurried. Another tonight if I can. York died a few weeks ago. Dearest love. Una

— *January 25, 1938* —

Dearest Mabel—Just a few lines this morning before the mailman comes by. I have made a vow not to go up the village every day—just alternate ones & this is my at home one. Trying to save time for things I want to do—there never is half enough. —Ben Lehman has just been a week-end at Noels. His new wife Judith Anderson he left playing Lady Macbeth in London—He has had enough experiences now with the stage to write several full-length novels! Seems as enamored of his wife as ever & somewhat more optimistic than he was at their beginning, of making their marriage last. His pride in her acting helps. Noel had a (16) dinner party for him. Mostly ones you know. Sidney & Natasha & Vaseli & Jeanette Rose & Clare & John & the O'Sheas. (I don't think the latter would have been asked for this particular dinner except they & the Evanses were going to a Chinese restaurant in Monterey that night & he wished to have Ben & the Evanses meet). It was a lovely dinner. The Romanoffs spent 14 months in England & brought back his grandmother's letters which he went for. Zoe Atkins is to help him make something of them: They are very nice, particularly Natasha, whom all the men like tremendously. She is beautiful & often interesting.

Blanche M. sent me a leaflet of 8 letters from Georgia O'K[eaffe] to Strieglitz written last summer from Ghost Ranch. Nothing in them of moment but written very spontaneously & mostly filled with plans for pictures & interesting as showing something of her energy & concentration on painting.

Do you remember me telling you of the weekend at Lady Tweedale's & the company there & the tall slender dark *older* woman, Lady Mas-



sarene, a great London hostess now living in the Hebrides & how I was told she had come to be near that German Baron-an affair. My late Irish paper gives her obituary. Her sudden death in the Isle of Mull gave us a start. She was full of power & dash & fire. Time to stop. We think & talk of you constantly. Tells us how Tony progresses & is there hope of you coming here [?].

All love from your devoted Una.

If you have these pictures already put in envelope and send to Mrs. Melville Eshman/ 661 Stone Canyon Road/ Bel Air/ Los Angeles

— CANDELMAS DAY [FEBRUARY 2, 1938] —

Dearest Mabel: I have to go to Occidental College next week [February 10] to talk on *Ancient Irish Music*. Can't think why I promised to do it. Until yesterday, I imagined it was for the last of March—& feel very dreary about it tonight. Have to jab myself at it when I've a *million* agreeable things waiting for me to do. Of course if I were in New York I would first of all connect with the Clapps. You'd really like them if you allowed yourself. She is very knowing and vastly amusing and knows everything—and him I've loved for a life time. Ask Dr. Brill whether he knows the one friend of Robin's young manhood—Dr. Byron Stookey N.Y.C. He is tops, nerve surgery & neurologist.

How long shall you stay in New York? I wish you'd fly out here when you return—long to see you & gossip.

Blanche and R[ussell] have just left Savoy-Plaza & are coming here with Shan-Kar to Peter Pan but go to England May 25. O if I could be in two places! I *adore* England & belong there—partly. Dearest Loved Una

— FEBRUARY 3, 1938 —

Dearest Mabel-Your letter & John's came this morning & interested us very much naturally. There isn't any time tonight to answer it properly but I thought I'd best get these letters back to you in case you wish to refer to them.

What can I say about it all? First that I love you better than any other woman and *part* of that love is born of admiration of certain strong points in your nature & one of the strengths is the way you have carried the Indian thing & fitted it together with your needs. You will understand me, —(knowing beforehand that most men are less than

shadows or straw men to me since I got Robin) —when I say Robin is in many ways a weight to carry & I cannot expect to receive many Obvious *supports* from him that gentle feminine creatures like Blanche receive every moment of the day. —Cannot even expect the comfort & luxury that women receive married to men whose whole being isn't worth a hair of Robin's head —well, I say this to explain the fact that I have consciously & so incessantly made such a number of adjustments in order to make our union function because it seems to me so worthwhile that when I have watched you in your adjusting I have been vastly entertained & admiring. I don't mean entertained lightly—shall I say *interested—absorbed*

—In a certain way I understand John's point of view & I think you are wrong not to consider his age. -Would you have understood at his age the psychic support & satisfaction & reliance you know if in contradistinction to that deep need of *body* as he calls it & body's loyalty? —I wonder whether you have ever noticed that I seldom audibly analyze my deepest motives & arrangements with life? Perhaps that is why you call me discreet. Well it's not because I'm not interested in them or milling around in my mind everything every minute —it's because everything is so liquid & changing & the instant you announce some rockbed foundation, the waters begin to beat against its base & the people looking on see the menace of the tide but don't know the enduring rib of granite down beneath you. I really mean it. —Contrive to let it entertain you for certainly he can't see what you are leaning on—depending on. Just let it be an interesting discussion. I give you my word I'd be happy to get as would-be disrupting a letter as that from Garth & Donnsan!

The calm & "well what of it, just another gyration" way they listen to my most murderous talk. It's like living with a couple of lamas or Buddhas. I'd relish having them howl as John did—something human & scared or mad. (You *may* catch this yet. I've told you Sandy has their look in his eyes—I've only seen him a few times tho') so look back at yourself & think how many experiences you digested before you arrived at your present view-point. Don't for a minute let any reaction develop, be glad he wants to help & don't resent his differing.

I hope Brill [eminent New York psychoanalyst and American editor of Freud] fixes you so you can write again if you wish! Another really nice thing about you that I like tremendously. You are yearning to write *for your own sake!* Heavens, what a relief. I'm certain no work of art is indispensable except to its maker. There is much too much of

everything already—and no one needs to suffer & strive, if he is honest, except for his own heart's sake!

John's boredom here as told in his letters surprises me! Its true that we see them very seldom & he often speaks of his love for his Maine farm, but they both seem to have a wonderful time at Noel's & lots of fun with Lee Crowe. John & Claire, John particularly, are very nice & friendly to us but we all seem busy & pushed. They *look* well & calm. I don't think Claire really likes me much though.

Dearest love from           Una.

— FEBRUARY 18, 1938 —

Dearest Mabel—We dashed down to Los Angeles on Thurs. I gave my talk at Occidental College—all very satisfactory. We spent Thurs. night at Hazel Pinkham's, Beverly Hills & Friday at President Bird's, home in another downpour on Sat. with two 20 mile detours—near King City & Salinas, bridges out. It was a sort of adventure and rather fun but home is more fun.

We haven't seen the boys since we left them there at Berkeley Jan 15. & begin to feel pretty desperate. We intend to get them a week from today. Ellen had them for dinner a week ago tonight in San Fran. Says they are looking just fine. Donnan is playing badminton for his exercise & Garth wrestling. he is wrestling tonight. Makes me nervous (a big bout) but I don't tell him.

Robin has suddenly decided not to go out anymore. says it distracts his mind, that it's pleasant enough but not nourishing, etc. & I guess he's right. Also that I am to go as much as I like & come home & tell him & that all these years when he didn't go & I did was much better for his work—easier for him. O dear, I wish things could be easy & simple but they can't Well, I'll go sometimes but home is fun & never enough of it.

Sidney Fish arrives back tomorrow from his jaguar hunt in Mexico, so yesterday Robin & I walked up to Olga's grave, not to make him sad, as he gets at thought of her—It was magnificent up there, a wild stormy evening black clouds with bits of sunset rose in patches. Several enormous trees split open by the gale were near the little picket enclosed space. It's on the side near the top of that high rounded knoll by the Carmelite nunnery overlooking the cove where Sallie's pour remnants washed in.

Tomorrow night Shan Kar. Everyone faints in ecstatic delight at the thought of him. I suppose I'll be enchanted but I think the picture of turn most unpleasant. I saw Blanche in Los Angeles. She was about to have him and Krishnamurti to lunch together. They were eager to meet. Krishnaji has been in retreat for six months.

Ben Lehman & his wife Judith Anderson are to spend this weekend at Noels. He left her in London playing Lady Macbeth and making a great hit. She has just arrived home. They are madly in love and both very temperamental. Hard to shake down.

A letter from Erskine Wood--he will be 86 on Sunday.

I went (without R) to John Evan's to dinner night before last. They had a young man from Bermuda named Reed (here for two days).

Tomorrow night I shall have for night Bess O'Sullivan. We stayed with her in London. She is on the way back from South America going to London.

What of [Dorothy] Bret? Wish I could hear you & Brill.

Devotedly. Una

— MARCH 8, 1938 —

Dearest Mabel—You can imagine I am following all your activities in New York with excitement, & know what fun I'd have doing the like! but then I have equal fun tucked away in solitude if I can *see scenery!* O dear, I sound like such a sunny lighthearted person (which means to me shallow & lightheaded).

I was awfully interested in your conception of the Clapps although it made them sound like the fin de siècle people in Max Nordau's "Degeneration" —& Mallarme's "The flesh is sad, alas, & all the books are read." There's more than that. They can be real fun too and know just everything although they reject almost all!

We have been in S.F. at Noels for several days. Robin had to be one of three judges for the \$1000.00 Phelan award as he was last year. There were 34 Mss, some very long, all but 5 were novels, a biography. R read from 2 PM one day until 4 am in morning to get his opinions fixed. I helped & read at least half & talked them over. Then two hours with the judges. I think R enjoyed the conference—very keen literary judgments & discussion.

I went that evening with Bender to *Porgy & Bess* (the Gershwin opera, not the play). It was *wildly* exciting. I don't know when I've enjoyed the theatre more. And the most thrilling set I ever saw.

Such awful rains in Southern California & much up here-but today the sun shines.

I haven't seen John & Claire [Evans] since we were in S.F. They intended to go up to San Jose last night to Porgy & Bess. Unfortunately there was to be just a "concertized version" with no stage set or orchestra. Claire has had her hair cut. She looks younger & pretty but trivial. Her old way had such distinction.

Bennett Cerf spent last weekend with us. He wanted a letter to you. You might enjoy him. He is very amusing & likeable & keen.

Edgar Wolter, the sculptor, just died in S.F. very suddenly. He was a great friend of Maurice S[terne, Mabel's 3rd husband] —I can't remember whether you knew him.

Did I write you about going to dinner at Alice Toulmin's in Monterey and sitting next Charlie Chaplin at dinner. He is extremely nice and very out-going (They do say his social excursions are very handpicked but once he's there he is very gay & friendly).

Blanche & Russell were here for a few days. We saw Shan-Kar. I enjoyed him but it wasn't a soul-shaking experience for me. Afterwards at Noels he talked very simply and earnestly about his art project in India.

I sat down at once and read through "A Graft from the Golden Bough" as how could I not when the first words I saw were "the wood of the Unicorn." I liked this book for its symbolic import & the lovely evocative writing. Thanks—

Now away to the village.

Dearest love always. Una.

Thanks—I hope we can come for June. I'd love it. It depends a little on boys' plans. They might—or at least Garth might go on some expedition—anthropology—but none has presented itself yet. I hope to know the Hoveys well.

On Sallie's birthday, Martin gave a big tea party! 60 people I guess. Terrible storm raging—Last year we were all there & cocktails & all of us planning a trip abroad. —I couldn't beat to go this year.

Write about everything if you have a spare moment.

Alice Toulmin's *mot* after dinner: "Did you notice me looking like David Garriek at dinner? Sitting between the tragic and comic muses."

— [NO DATE: BEFORE MAY 11] —

[First page(s) missing] John [Evans, Mabel's son] seems to be looking forward to seeing you. He leaves here, as you know probably on May

15. On May 11 He & Robin & Garth are going into the hills on a walking trip for 2 days. Donnan & I will take them to Tassajara & pick them up two days after at Big Sur. I am sincerely attached to John as if lie were a blood kin. We get on awfully well together. I think he is happy Mabel. He really was *sick* when Tony was here & for a week after bronchitis & a low fever and I must say he & Claire seem most deeply in love & congenial & they have *darling* babies. I never saw a child, after my own, as attractive to me as Sandy. To be perfectly honest I have not gotten close to Claire. I see her—very pretty & efficient & with a most amusing turn of speech sometimes & consistently tolerant in her appraisal of people (which I am *not* & reproach myself for) but I have not any *intimacy* with her & never feel quite sure she *really* likes me. But if things keep on for them as they are now you may feel well content that lie is satisfied & happy.

I do hope we can come to Taos, can't say yet.

Did I tell you we went to Death Valley. Robin flew down with Hamilton & boys flew back.

We stayed two nights at Furnace Creek Ranch & motored all over the valley. Its thrilling but I wouldn't go twice!

The Matthiases are going to Ireland & so are the Barkans. Wonder Whether they will like my mouldy stones.

Devotedly, Una

— [MAY 11, 1938] —

Dearest Mabel: Well I *want* us to go to Taos & no! the Marie [Short?] thing didn't matter. I very much hope you will always keep on being frank about everything that concerns our friendship!

Now—we've been in trouble about Donnan. 2 things: 1. He thinks he has fallen in love madly with a just divorced young woman. 2. He has been suspended for 6 mo. from college because he & she went up to call on a friend in the men's side of Int. House & that is not allowed. It is possible we could get this fixed up & get him back but he himself wishes to try something else for 6 mo. I asked what & he said Hollywood. Several people have talked to him—& suggested he might do it well. —He wanted to start right in to try to get a test. So I had to tell him of your & my plan for him to meet your friends. Can you tell when they will he there? And if they shouldn't be coming after all what other strings could we pull.

This is all very boring. I mean this college escapade but if he has talent for Hollywood & wants to work hard at it all right. I do believe he could do it!

One way & another I've had a very nerve wracking year. Donnan & I took John [Evans], Garth, & Robin to Tassajara this morn. & left them starting away with heavy packs on their backs. Very gay for a 2 day walk. They must be sleeping by their bon-fire now; it's 10:30 pm.

Random House is bringing out a Selected Edition of Robin in 1 vol. (big) as they did with Eugene O'Neill and he has had to do a preface. He hated to do it but now he has gotten going at it [he] isn't minding so much. It will be about 5 pages long but wants careful doing.

Don't forget anything about New York. Lots to talk over. Devotedly, Una

— [NO DATE: MAY-JUNE 1933] —

*Editor's note:* This letter is entered here as illustrative of the blind side of Una as to the potential betrayal and the ruthlessness of Mabel Luhan. The irony is obvious in light of Mabel's apparent setting up a seductress for Robinson and watching the ensuing events precipitating Una's suicide attempt in the summer of 1938.

Dearest Mabel: I just loathe anyone coming to me & saying they've been *defending* me— it seems ill-bred to do that (tell I mean) but anyway I'm enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote Sara because people are at me and at me about you & us. Jealousy I think often. Here it is—

We expect to leave for Taos June 15 Love Una

(Copy)

This brings me, Sara [Bard Field], to something we discussed a bit Saturday and a talk I had with Ella Winter brought it vividly to my mind so I must not let it pass without a few more words. Of course I do not think you need reassuring about Mabel's hurting us actually, if you do not believe she "appreciates" us ask Noel what he thought of her little sketch of us [Una and Robin] — or ask Stef Lincoln Steffens], he saw it.

I resent really if anyone who knows us thinks our substance so tenuous that it couldn't remain intact even surrounded by a battalion of Mabels.

Ella hinted dire talk about its in New York but couldn't be pinned (town to anything except that Robin's readers hate having him associated with Mabel in Lorenze (Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos* detailing her thoughts about h. H Lawrence, addressed to Robinson Jeffers published in 1932] because they have a very special respect for Robin & don't want him to seem in her train. I am afraid Our New York friends have forgotten their classics & if they were reminded of Lucretius' "De Rerurn Natura" addressed to Memmus & of Horace's odes written to a hearer wouldn't be impressed. It is possible they have just heard of Eckerman's "Conversations with Goethe or Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" or Mediums "Conversations with Byron" or my own adored George Moore's "Conversations in Ebury St." (He even made up the listener's answers to—)

I do not think the classic model demands an inquiry into the comparative nobilities of addressor or addressee. I call your attention to the fact that in no case does Mabel pretend to note any reaction on Robin's part to her long explanation of Lawrence—he simply listens without response I cannot be indignant at her addressing Robin.

We saw the ms as it was written, read it page by page & made no resistance about his name It would be our fault rather than hers— if there were a fault Mabel has always raised storms—& often with reason pitiably & I am not going to take time to fight her battles although I happen to know she is often credited with things she hasn't had a finger in.

We have now been intimate friends for three years without one second's cloud & I cannot for a moment deny my respect & love for her; the Mabel we know is always warm hearted, generous, considerate, rollicking (hut with a curious correctness of demeanor almost hyper-conventional. Besides there is in her a whirl wind of mental & physical energy that I can't resist participating in.

Ella also hinted at gossip of scandalous relationships in our family, with her. I think Ella knows from watching me in action how warmly I would take to my breast any female trying to break up my household! So I shan't bother to speak of that. I suppose she informed N.Y. One other point. While Robin enjoys Mabel his preferences for solitude would rarely carry him to New Mexico (or anywhere). But Robin is not the only member of the Jeffers household although for the world tile must important (up to now but perhaps the boy[s?] later?) — but Robin would lose in the greatness of character that is his if every detail of our precious life together revolved around him. It is part of his life & form



to think of the boys pleasure & doing things with them & the trip this summer— if we do even half of what we've planned is worth a years school-apart from the fun

— *MAY 31, 1938* —

Dearest Mabel: Of course we will come. Hoveys or not. I hope we can somehow get an introduction from them for Donnan or suggestions how he shall proceed. Perhaps I shall have a note from you this morning whether the date I suggested will suit you. So many things to talk over. What was it about Myron [Brinig]—well I shall hear when I come. Did you receive the Kodaks Garth sent in his letter of Sandy [John Evans' child] etc I hear that Claire hardly got off that Sunday. I went to say goodbye in the morning. She left in a taxi for San Francisco at 2:30 expecting to rest at hotel an hour or so before taking Oakland train at 8:30. —Didn't arrive in Oakland (slowed up by Sunday traffic—for we make it always in less than 3 hrs) until 7:30 and then discovered her train left at 8 & not 8:30. Also she went off without her hat! Wonder how John managed with his load of dogs.

I enclose clipping about your embroidery woman. I can't imagine her lifting herself out of that dark, melancholy, lifeless studio to marriage & adventures in another land, can you?

Sidney just gave Robin and me to read a little memoir of George Milburn, one of his dearest friends, brother of Devereaux of Buffalo—you must know them, friends of Seward & Cary. Talk to you of that too—but the most curious sentence Sidney wrote on the fly-leaf sounds like Gertrude Stein. "The man his soul & deeds are in part part of me don't in part commit murder" signed S.F. A play boy par excellence.

I hope Willa Cather will see Yehudi M[enhuin]'s wife and describe her. Everyone thinks his playing has gone off so much the last year; perhaps now it will be all the better.

I am eager to talk over John & Claire with you. A bit puzzling.

Write and tell me whether you would like to have the new giant in the Modern Library series, "The Basic Writing of Sigmund Freud with introduction by Brill" just out. You know it mostly I suppose but it's a handy compression of a great deal. Its about 1000 pages long. Random House sent me 2 copies & I want to give one of them to someone who would like having it. Also have you read the "Out of Africa" by Gothic Tales woman [Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen John Evans borrowed my

copy & was so crazy about it he read & read it till he wore it out & brought me a new copy. Tell me & I'll bring it for Robin to read aloud if you haven't read it yet. I haven't yet. Garth dipped into it & said it reminded him somewhat of you.

Devotedly Una

I can afford to finance one way—so wait with check until we return.

—Any of the houses will be fine. You decide which is most convenient.

— *AUGUST 3, 1938* —

Dear Mabel: We have been home a week today & Robin & I have been alone practically every moment for Donnan went off to Berkeley at once & has sent blissful letters about *Her*—he arrives home today. I wish you could have seen his sparkling happy beautiful face as he set forth

Garth went at once to Bakersfield with Lloyd Tevis, Jr. & Sr., to rescue a crazy servant & then a day later he went off on a six-day trip with Lloyd Jr. photograph condors. I had hoped Robin would go on this jaunt but he didn't want to spend more than three days at it.

Thanks for the nice things you did for us. Much of our stay was very pleasant & would have all been so if that mischievous person hadn't been there tip-toeing around talking through her nose. To Garth goes the credit of smelling her out the first day as he did with Von Maltzahn. Her continual boast of her selfishness & cold indifference to her children did not endear her to me not her squirming itch to get Robin aside to detail her adultery. It was only the last day I found out what had been going on all the time although I sensed her malice before. Did you know that she was trying to pry Robin & me apart with her sympathy—eloquently expressed—for him for his great unhappiness being *managed* by me! She told him he was being ruined & so on, & pressed him to come & stay at her house in New Haven to escape my attentions! Really when I heard from him that he had *listened* to her I felt so desperate a wound & unhappiness that I could not think (everything for the last 25 1/2 years considered!) that I cared to make one more gesture toward living. It happened that she caught Robin at an accessible moment for he has had difficulty the last year with his writing & as he had always given me the credit for inspiring & spurring him on up until now, so when he had a slump I got the blame for it. I

have felt as unhappy as he for his trouble—(which we have spent days now in analyzing & which we think we are going to circumvent).

That strumpet who had so long made a cuckoo out of her husband was attempting a little more than she could handle when she tried to separate us. Three nights before she made her proposition for him to go to New Haven (at the Indian dance)—if she could have heard upstairs she would have heard these words from Robin to me "I love you so & I *admire you so!*" & I said "Why admire?" — & Robin said "For one thing that you have made such a success of our marriage!" One of the impertinent things she said that last day to me was that she & R. Could have had wonderful talks if I hadn't been around & if I didn't take care what I did she'd stay another week (with the inference of further getting his ear).

It was very kind of you to suggest psycho-analysis which would be very interesting any time if one could afford it but I didn't need Dr. Brill to tell me why I was so unhappy & indignant. Robin says if I needed psycho-a-, he needed it worse. Well, I hope things are going to go smoothly now. Certainly I've never felt Robin's love more deeply than now—he has proved it. If I can be more selfish & self-indulgent, & less loving & thoughtful toward him, I shall fare better.

I shall get pictures of Donnan soon & also send the one *YOU* wanted of Robin. Yours, Una  
Greetings to the Wilders [Thornton & sister]. I liked them so much.

I enclose a review of Lawrence book my English friends praise so highly.

— *AUGUST 25, 1938* —

Dear Mabel: I had a nice letter from Adrienne [Myerberg] about Donnan. I am having Hagemeyer pictures finished & Donnan is looking forward hopefully to his venture. He intends to succeed if trying will do it.

He has just come back last night from visiting his sweetheart in Santa Maria, her hometown. Before that she was here for a week. We like her very much (Tho' he is *still* too young!)

I am glad your eyes are all right again.

Dickie Tevis has a sail boat & keeps us all scared.

The weather is wonderful here & all the fruits ripe at once. Such peaches & plums, the fruit stalls more beautiful than the flower stalls almost, with the color and texture of bloom on fruit.

Sidney & Stuyvie return from Easthampton in a fortnight.

I'm feeling gay & bursting with energy after my rest. I need to, there is so much going on. I've been hearing a good deal of music, & work never ends. We lunched at Noels yesterday-his swimming pool is very beautiful now, bordered with sand & shells, & gay parasols about and the enclosed walled garden beyond. It's always sunny at his farm-not that that is a recommendation to me! but some folks pine for the sun.

Yours Una

Did you receive the photograph of Robin you asked for the theatre. I sent it and clipping and kodak of Taos.

— *October 10, 1938* —

Dear Mabel—I enclose Donnan's letter & telegram & will ask him to write you more fully about developments. Please return these to me. We took him down & left him at the Myerbergs' for several days. Then he went over to stay with Hazel [Pinkham] at Beverly hills. The Myerbergs live about twenty-five or thirty miles from Hollywood way up in La Canada in the foothills. In my day this was a barren mt. side; now it is a forest of trees, *deodars* [tall cedars] mostly-you perhaps remember the magnificent avenue of them in Altadena. As these trees have long heavy branches from the ground up they form a seemingly impenetrable forest. —All the houses are seen only by tiny fragmentary glimpses. Most difficult to find one's way about in the short winding roads. Adrienne and Michael were most cordial, such nice natural acting folks. He looks much healthier than when we saw him in Taos. She is even more decorative. Most curious impression one has of their house —it is practically unfurnished. I gathered that money is scarce with them. It's a big house set in spacious grounds rented by them a year ago. In the dining room there is absolutely nothing except chairs & table & in the big drawingroom only a piano, one chair & a sofa. The bare floors, & walls & uncurtained windows make your voice resound! They have an *adorable* baby, big & blonde & healthy & most admirably cared for. Yrs. Una.

— *DECEMBER 8, 1938* —

Dear Mabel: You spoke of writing to Donnan in your letter to Inc. Did you send it? It did not come. If you had any other suggestions for him, please repeat. He is taking diction three times a week with a good man

and he has had a small part in a play. Last night he had a small part in a radio play broadcast from KDON, Monterey and we were extremely pleased with the way his voice came over. Very good timbre for that & every word distinct. Several people—I believe Michael for one—have thought his radio voice might be good. Best of all he has gained eight pounds!

How fine if Garbo got interested in the *Shepherdess* !

Were you here the winter when Dr. Max Morgenstern had a house here? I just had a letter from Blanche saying he had been *murdered* in N.Y.C.! —The murderer not known yet. I guess that's the first person I ever *knew* who was murdered.

I had a lot of people here for tea today when Chester Arthur [president's son] walked in. I hadn't seen him for over a year. He looks more & more like a statesman! He bore a book from Ella Young—her new one—poems. He & Esther are coming tomorrow & going on to S.F. afterwards.

Robin and I are going down the coast for all day but have promised to be home at 4:30

Edith Kuster Greenan is living in the Beck with house.

I saw Nancy De Angulo yesterday. She says she feels like Jaime's grandmother — he has gotten so young & spry! The judge suspended his jail sentence of a year when he pleaded that he was a real claustrophobe & would die or go mad confined. I believe he would.

Wasn't it abominably hot down there? The papers said so.

Ever. Una

## Guidelines for Submissions to *RJN*

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.

Significant letters from or about the Jeffers family are equally welcome, as are drawings, maps, family-tree annotations, and reports on cultural allusions to the poet, use of his poems, and difficult-to-access articles.

### SUBMISSIONS

Whenever possible, please make submissions by computer disk. IBM and Macintosh programs are both acceptable—identify software and version number used. Along with the disk, submit two typescripts of the piece, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" standard white typing paper. To have disk and copy returned, include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Address correspondence to Robert J. Brophy, editor, *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*, Department of English, California State University, Long Beach, CA 90840; (310) 985-4235.

#### 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 be included.

#### 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.

#### Citations and Notes:

Consult the *MLA Style Sheet*, Second Edition. Citations should be to author and page number in parentheses within the text referring to an attached bibliography, "Works Cited." Double-space endnotes (explanatory, not citations) following the essay on a new page headed "NOTES."

#### Quoting and Citing Robinson Jeffers:

The standard edition of Jeffers'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, in the case of Una's letters, to the appropriate number of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*.