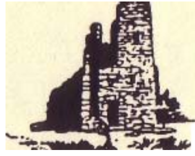

Robinson Jeffers
NEWSLETTER

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ON THE COVER:

Drawing by Ric Masten. Well-known as a speaker, humorist, artist, and musician, he lives in Palo Colorado Canyon of Big Sur. Accompanying his drawing, which first appeared in the Monterey Herald, *August 21, 1994, is the poem on the opposite page.*

The **Robinson Jeffers Newsletter,** co-sponsored by California State University, Long Beach, and Occidental College, is published quarterly.

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BIG SUR COUNTRY

By Ric Masten

it is called Big Sur Country where I live
and many men of letters have passed
through
none have denied its beauty
but few have felt at home here
old Henry Miller—city born
burned his bald head brown
trying to catch the color of the sun
at Partington
like Icarus he failed and in the end retired
to a cement maze south of here
more at home in an elevator
than at those dizzy heights

and Jack Kerouac
hitched his way along this granite coast
with no real sense of belonging
crawling here like an ant
he found the place
a graveyard
the offshore rocks
tombstones in a ghostly surf
on the road running like a child
in the dark
hearing things in the bushes
he hurried north
to hide in the mulch pits
of Marin County

and Richard Brautigan has come and gone
and others drawn to and driven off
by the size and silence of this place

but Jeffers knew
that soaring old predator—sharp eyed
he knew
if we could speed time up—fast enough
we would see that the mountains are
dancing and with us

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

■ Starting in 1997, the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter will* be upgraded to *Jeffers Studies.* The *Newsletter,* which has appeared occasionally and then quarterly from either Occidental College or California State University Long Beach since 1962, will culminate in fall 1996 with issue number 100. The new *Jeffers Studies,* partially funded by the Robinson Jeffers Association and incorporating its *Bulletin, will* begin with number 1 and will be issued quarterly in two formats. Winter, spring, and summer issues will have much the same features as the *RJN* but will be piloted by two editors assisted by *Jeffers Studies* editorial and advisory boards. There will be news and notes, abstracts, bibliographies, reviews, memoirs, "Una Jeffers Correspondent" series, updating of research library resources, and short refereed articles. Each issue will announce two scholarly articles appearing simultaneously at a Jeffers Web site on the Internet, which articles will elicit comment and perhaps rebuttal at the same site. These longer articles will then be gathered, all six, along with Web site response and comment, in a perfectbound *Jeffers Studies Annual.* Price of subscriptions, at least for the time, will continue at $10.00; for those in the Robinson Jeffers Association, this is included in the RJA annual dues. We hope to present the best of worlds: materials of general interest, aficionado updates, and scholarly studies.

NEWS & NOTES

■ The Robinson Jeffers Association Conference took place the weekend of February 17 and 18 at Occidental College, Los Angeles, in the Jeffers Room of the Mary Norton Clapp Library.

Panel 1, Saturday morning, featured papers: "A Sketch for an Aesthetic: Process, Value, and Moral Beauty in Jeffers" by Robert Zaller of Drexel University; "Sources and Purposes of Jeffers's Anti-Gongorist Polemic" by David Rothman of Crested Butte Academy; and "Courtesy in the Universe: Santayana, Freud, and a Context for Jeffers's Inhumanism" by David Morris of University of Washington, Tacoma.

Panel 2 heard "William Everson: Disciple and Polar-Opposite" by Robert Brophy of California State University, Long Beach; "Defenders of the Earth: Robinson Jeffers, Kenneth Rexroth, and the Greening of Modern American Poetry" by Christopher Cokinos of Kansas State University; and "The Prophetic Voices of Robinson Jeffers and W B. Yeats" by Deborah Fleming of Ashland University, Ohio.

Terry Beers of Santa Clara University and Rob Kafka of UCLA Extension offered a demonstration of "Jeffers on the Net" in an early afternoon session, demonstrating by computer and large screen the possibilities of Jeffers-related Web sites, use of Net reference tools such as Bible and Shakespeare concordances (anticipating also a concordance to the *Collected Poems* of Jeffers), and working with article hypertexts on the Internet. At the same session, the Robinson Jeffers Association conferred on Robert Brophy its first "Lawrence Clark Powell Award for Distinguished Scholarship."

One of two scheduled poetry readings followed (a "first" for an RJA conference), with Robert Zaller, David Rothman, and Bill Costley reading from their own works.

Panel 3 opened Sunday morning sessions with papers: "Toward a Reassessment of `The Women at Point Sur'" by James Baird of the University of North Texas; "The Fires of Apocalypse, Salvation, and Resurrection" by Peter Quigley of Embry-Riddle University, Prescott, Arizona; and "The Collected Letters: A Progress Report" by James Karman of California State University, Chico.

The late morning event was Poetry Reading 2, with Robert Brophy, Christopher Cokinos, and Deborah Fleming.

The afternoon session began with a membership meeting discussing RJA's growing numbers, the need to establish fees, and the appointing of an interim committee to assist in the transition from the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* after number 100 to *Jeffers Studies* in 1997.

Panel 4 presented papers: "Observations of the Influence of Los Angeles upon the World View of Robinson Jeffers" by Kevin Hearle and "Composing One's Confidant: Robinson Jeffers Writing `Una'" by David Sullivan of the University of California at Santa Cruz (his paper being read in absentia).

A reading by the conference's featured poet, Bernice Zamora of Santa Clara University, closed the sessions and led to a reception in Occidental's Morrison Lounge.

■ The Jeffers email Listserv can be accessed at <jeffers®unr.edu> by requesting inclusion by Steve Adkison at <adkison@unr.edu>.

■ The Robinson Jeffers Association World Wide Web Page (URL http://www-acc.scu.edu/--tbeers/rja.html) can be accessed for conference programs, special events, and new bibliographical information.

■ For information on membership in the Robinson Jeffers Association, contact Prof. Terry Beers, English Department, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95053, email <tbeers®scuacc.scu.edu>.

A WEB PAGE FOR ROBINSON JEFFERS

By Peter Quigley

■ As many of us have discovered in recent years, the World Wide Web offers a new set of opportunities for gathering and presenting information. For several years now, many of the members of the Robinson Jeffers Association have been discussing how exciting it would be to offer something like a Jeffers journal-version on the Web. The advantages are multiple: we save money and trees. In addition we are able to expose many new folks to Robinson Jeffers through this medium.

In addition to publishing refereed scholarly articles (two per *Jeffers Studies* number), we can offer an archive consisting of multiple sections: past articles, photos, maps, letters, and other material useful for research or for browsing.

We could, with appropriate permissions and safeguards, place some of Jeffers's writing, poetry or prose, on the Web as well. We also have a search engine that would allow a reader to work through many articles tracking down topics, words, or phrases, thus saving hours of research time. Our site would be linked to other similar sites, such as that of The Association for Studying Literature and Environment. This new technology would even allow us to run short films.

Another proposed section on our Web page is "Teaching Jeffers," which would include teaching tips and examples, syllabi, and outlines of courses in which Jeffers is central focus or part of a larger project. There will additionally be a place where readers could leave comments or ask questions. A directory of email and postal addresses of Jeffers scholars also would be listed.

Other sections being proposed: News & Notes, Biography (chronologies, who's who, etc.), Bibliography, and a place for poems.

Right now in the archive section, one can view photos of Jeffers and his extraordinary house and beautiful photos of the coast, taken by Terry Beers. There is a snapshot of several members at a Jeffers panel presentation during the May conference of the American Literature Association. For the purpose of demonstration, an article on Jeffers's *Double Axe* has been scanned and placed in view where the scholarly, refereed articles will later appear (see the *"Important Announcement"* earlier in this issue).

Embry-Riddle University, Prescott, Arizona, where I chair the department of Humanities and Social Sciences, has donated an entire server to this project, and Daryl Eisner, the best Web artist on campus, will be my assistant. The shape and content of the Web pages are totally fluid. We can continue to evolve rapidly, expanding to interests and suggestions of our readers. So please check the site and let us know what you think. Drop a line "snail-mail" (U.S. Postal Service) to the *RJN* or an email to the Jeffers Listserv. We think that this site will coordinate and intensify the study of Jeffers's poetry. We hope it will be an elegant and useful tool. The URL of the Jeffers Web page is http://www.jeffers.org.

REACTIONARY HUMANISM: ROBINSON JEFFERS AND THE NEW CRITICS

By Mark Mitchell

■ ***Editor's Note****:* This is the Abstract of a Thesis for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies (A.L.M.), Harvard University. Director: David Perkins.

Between 1920 and 1950, many readers of poetry believed that Robinson Jeffers would be one of the first American poets whose work would endure into the twenty-first century. Yet in the 1990s, few readers know anything about Jeffers's poetry, and to the extent that it is known it is perceived to be poetry written at great remove from the other major works of Jeffers's generation. How and why has this perceptual change taken place? Scholars such as Vardamis, Karman, and Beers have noted that the New Critics—especially Yvor Winters, R. P Blackmur, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks—denigrated Jeffers's poetry and excluded it from the canon they promoted during the 1940s and 1950s. But when we examine the New Critics' comments we discover that their most strident denunciations were not written in the spirit we have come to associate with the New Criticism. Instead of praising or finding fault with the internal tensions, paradoxes, and ironies that inform Jeffers's work, these critics railed against what they perceived to be the moral and philosophical faults in his work. Having exposed the ideological prejudices behind Jeffers's dismissal, we undertake a reconsideration of the poet's early work. Drawing from formalist, phenomenological, and hermeneutical approaches, we analyze a selection of Jeffers's lyrics from the 1921-1934 period, including "Continent's End," "Night," "The Torch-Bearer's Race," "Hurt Hawks," and "Inscription for a Gravestone." This analysis not only reveals the formal qualities that the New Critics suppressed, but also the unique, profoundly religious point of

view that informs Jeffers work. By comparing Jeffers's early lyrics to those of his contemporaries, T. S. Eliot and D. H. Lawrence in particular, we conclude that Jeffers was very much writing in a "modem" spirit and that he attempts unique answers to many of the same spiritual questions that other poets of the 1920s and 1930s were struggling to answer.

A MAJOR MUSICAL SETTING OF "NIGHT"

By Robert Kafka

"Night" by Elliot Weisgarber, text by Robinson Jeffers.
Vancouver Chamber Choir, John Washburn, Cond., with Bruce Pullan (baritone), Purcell String Quartet, and Wilmer Fawcett (double bass). Centrediscs CMC-CD 3790. *Available in the U.S. from Allegro Corp.,* 12630 *N.E. Marx St., Portland, OR* 97230-1059; *phone* (800) 288-2007.

■ While the *Schwann Opus* catalog has carried a listing of Elliot Weisgarber's expansive tone-poem "Night"—presumably since its issuance in 1990—its appearance seems not to have attracted the notice of the Jeffers community. This is regrettable because it is the most ambitious—and certainly one of the most successful and arresting—musical settings of a Jeffers poem to date.

Elliot Weisgarber (b. 1919) is a Canadian composer, teacher, and clarinetist of American birth, educated at the Eastman School of Music, who later studied under Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He has taught at a number of institutions and is now Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia, where he taught from 1960 to 1985. Though not apparent in the current recording, many of his compositions are noted for their internationalism, incorporating elements especially from Oriental music. Weisgarber has lectured and taught in Japan, Taiwan, and Iran, and mastered the Japanese shakuhachi (bamboo flute) —even touring Canada with a professional kotoist at one time.

In a letter to this writer, Weisgarber explains his encounter with Jeffers's poetry and his determination to render it musically:

> My first contact with Robinson Jeffers took place in 1940, in a class in British and American Poetry at the University of Rochester, when I was a student at the Eastman School of Music. Jeffers' work hit me like the proverbial ton of bricks. And when I read "Night" I knew that one day I would do a setting of that enormous poem. But that had to wait for many years-until 1973 for that matter, when John Washburn, the Director of that fine Vancouver Chamber Choir, approached me for a large work. And so the moment was seized and I set to work. First of all I contacted RJ's publishers who in turn referred me to *Donnan* Jeffers who was still living in Carmel. I will never forget his kindness. Full permission was given immediately and a letter from him was sent on to the *Canadian* Music Centre in Toronto where the work would eventually be on file. At the same time DJ granted me permission to set several songs including "Divinely Superfluous Beauty," "Natural Music," "Autumn Evening," "Evening Ebb," "Joy," "The Place for No Story," and "Hope is Not for the Wise." These songs*, Seven Poems* by *Robinson Jeffers*, are available from the *Canadian* Music Centre in Toronto.

Though a commercial recording of Seven Poems, set for voice and piano accompaniment, is not currently available, it should be noted that the setting of these lyrics served as pilot studies for the larger work, *Night.* There are numerous correspondences. For example, a little motif that emerges early in "Divinely Superfluous Beauty" works its way into the satisfying instrumental resolution of the final bars of *Night.* And from the the last of the *Seven Poems*, "Hope Is Not for the Wise," the thematic material in the baritone's lines beginning "Wise men hope nothing" is echoed in an instrumental passage toward the end of *Night,* just before the lines beginning "Have men's minds changed ..." There are elegant mimetic touches throughout: the piano accompaniment to the phrase "the bird-chatter of little rivers" in "Natural Music," for instance. And there are numerous surprises. One rather expects an Ivesian crash and dissonance in the lines "the storm of the sick nations, / The rage of the hunger-smitten cities" in the same poem. Instead, Weisgarber develops further the bird-chatter theme in the *accompaniment,* while the voice performs primarily in its upper register, suggesting tension: an interesting and appropriate rendering of the theme at this point—of an undergirding unity and beauty, including even the apparently ugly and *dissonant.* Though thematically varied,

the *Seven Poems* exhibit a unity of mood and tone—a unity which is once again apparent in *Night.*

Not surprisingly, most previous settings of Jeffers's verses, like Weisgarber's *Seven Poems,* have been art songs. But with *Night,* Weisgarber was faced with a stiffer challenge. Jeffers's magnificent and somber ode speaks of a vastness, timelessness, profundity, and emptiness which cannot be adequately rendered in song. That the composer wrestled with these subjects and their musical expression is attested by the scale of the work, and by a major revision. *Night* was originally set (1971) for baritone, chorus, and string quartet. In 1983 the work was extensively revised, and a featured part for a double bass was added—a part which plays such a central role in the recording that it is hard to imagine the work without it. Other changes were made as well. Again Weisgarber: "Many changes in the text setting were made, various lines were heightened in intensity. No changes whatsoever were made in the fundamental form of the work." The revision was dedicated to the memory of a friend and neighbor of Weisgarber's, Blair Griffiths, the photographer for the 1982 Canadian Everest expedition, who died in the attempt.

Night begins with an extended instrumental introduction—about a quarter of the work's nearly 33 minutes. The sweep of this section gathers depth from the part of the double bass against the string quartet. The text is given alternately to the baritone and chorus, and occasionally to both; the principle by which the lines are allocated seems to be extratextual. But the variation of texture achieved is considerable, from the solo voice to homophonic choral passages to quasi-fugal structures ("O passionately at peace ..."). The work ends with a meditative major resolution, with the quartet quietly rounding off the last phrase. The rendering of the expansiveness and remoteness and "deep nobility" of the subjects, and the consequent awe, is wholly convincing. It is a masterful artistic achievement.

On issuance, the CD was widely reviewed in Canada, and brought this reaction from William Wians in the November/December 1990 issue of *Fanfare:*

> With Elliot Weisgarber's *Night,* we move from the professionally expert [Beckwith's *Harp of David,* the other work on the recording] to another level entirely. Taking as his text a darkly profound poem by Robinson Jeffers, Weisgarber has created a somber fabric of baritone, chorus, and string quintet (made that much darker by the use of a double bass rather than a second viola). In the course of its

> thirty minutes it produces a terrifying emotional impact. Of music familiar to *Fanfare* readers, *Night* reminds me of Barber's *Dover Beach.* But I won't describe it further. It is stunning.

It may be of further interest to readers that Weisgarber's discovery of Jeffers more than fifty years ago led him also to the poetry of George Sterling. His setting of Sterling's poems for voice and orchestra, *Omnia Exeunt in Mysterium,* includes five other Sterling poems in addition to the title poem in a work that is richly varied and exciting. The drama of this orchestral setting, including an extensive array of percussion in the song "At the Grand Canyon," re-introduces us to Sterling with a reading that is breathtakingly original, and dampens our resistance to his outmoded diction. It is a magical work, entirely accessible. Sterling's poetry has never been better served in our time. Unfortunately, as with the *Seven Poems,* a commercial recording is not currently available.

Elliot Weisgarber has made a major contribution to the cross-disciplinary interpretation of Jeffers's work and has established himself among the foremost musical interpreters of Jeffers. It can only be hoped that a competent recording of his *Seven Poems by Robinson Jeffers—and* of his settings of Sterling's poems—will also be issued.

FILM REVIEW: "DON'T PAVE MAIN STREET"

By Robert Brophy

■ "Don't Pave Main Street," 133 minutes in color, narrated by former mayor, Clint Eastwood, is a remarkable if nostalgic view of all that has been and is Carmel—its human beginnings with coast tribes, San Carlos Borromeo, favorite mission of Father Serra, Christian outreach to the Ohlone tribes, Carmel's uncertain urban beginnings as a turn-of-the-century real estate bust, favored seaside escape for Stanford professors, its resistance to developers and developments (as the film title suggests) —a tale reflecting the Quixotic rear-guard protest and resistance to a dissipating "modernity."

Carmel's spirit, independent, unique, to some perverse, is personified in its storied artists' colony: writers George Sterling, Jack London, Mary Austin, Alice and Grace MacGowan, Fred Bechdolt, James Hopper. Its choice as movie set in the 1910s and '20s is illustrated in film clips. We see the scandal of evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson in her love nest, the Abalone Baseball League, the Carmelite nun hermitage, the Forest Theater, and Edward Kuster's Golden Bough. We are invited into the lives of this Eden's famous photographers; we see it as refuge of architects, a painters' paradise, examine its peculiar milk shrines, unnumbered houses, its sanctions for tree removal, its early airport, Lindberg's glider aloft from Sidney Fish's ranch. We see chronicled muckraker Lincoln Steffens's controversial retirement here and the turbulent history of Carmel's John Reed Club, John Steinbeck's hovering presence and American Legion aggressiveness against the perceived threat of Communism. The most substantial coverage is given to two famous Carmel artists: Edward Weston and Robinson Jeffers. Weston's art, his keen eye, his unerring and careful focus are celebrated along with the landscape he immortalized. Jeffers is seen to dominate that landscape, his

thought appealing to future generations and ranging forward through centuries. The usual topics are lightly touched: his dark thought and prophetic voice, his building of Tor House and planting of a cypress and eucalyptus forest, the "primitive" mode of his life (without electricity or phone till World War II and after), his grim and pained anticipation of that war culminating in *The Double Axe,* the "death warrant" to his reputation.

This film is an artful, sustained, comprehensive review of a city's history and life-force, presented documentary style through interviews with aging survivors, witnesses, descendents of the hall of fame. Yet it is never boring, an effective mix of old moving pictures and artful scanning and panning of still photos to give sense of movement and changing focus, with ever-shifting musical themes (one gets to singing to oneself the Abalone Song lyrics), alternating black-and-white with color film, life-vibrant photos of staunch boosters and even critics. This should be a prize-winning film, belonging in the archives of any individual or organization that values the unique "Carmel-By-The-Sea."

Produced by Julian Ludwig for Carmel Heritage, directed by Ludwig and William Cartwright, written and edited by Cartwright, photography directed by Bruce Nolte, and music composed by David Benoit, "Don't Pave Main Street" is distributed through the Tor House Foundation for $29.95 plus tax and shipping—PO. Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921, 408-624-1813.

WARD RITCHIE : IN MEMORIAM

By Tyrus Harmsen

■ Ward Ritchie shared with Larry Powell an early familiarity with Jeffers's poetry, and Jeffers was a significant influence in each of their lives. Ward died in January 1996 and leaves a rich legacy in the annals of Jeffers studies, printing and publishing, lecturing, and writing. He shared freely his recollections of Jeffers, printers he knew, and the whole era of his adult life in Southern California from the 1920s to the 1990s. Several years ago I wrote of Ward's role as a printer of Jeffers for RJN Number 74.

From his youth Ward was also a student of poetry and wrote several volumes of his own verse. We are grateful for all his contributions in the fields of book design and printing, book collecting, and the cultural setting he helped to form through his conversations, talks, and writings. He was a gentle man, good company always, and a rich source of information for many who sought his counsel. He will be sorely missed and long remembered.

Excerpt from "Robinson Jeffers and His Printers," RJN *Number* 74:

Ward Ritchie's star is high in the firmament of Jeffers' printers, for he had a hand in more than twenty publications by and about Jeffers. These he handsomely and charmingly chronicled in The Poet and the Printers, which he printed on dampened handmade paper on his Albion hand press in an edition of "about 50 copies" in 1980. Ward's first Jeffers printing is now a well-known rarity. He writes:

> In 1929, after having floundered in and out of law school in search of a career, I settled on printing and in trying to teach myself

> this craft I wrote to the poets I had admired for permission to print some of their poems in a series of small booklets. I was rewarded by permission from a generous handful and I experimented on Carl Sandburg, Leonie Adams, Archibald MacLeish, Hildegarde Flanner, and Louise Bogan before I dared undertake Robinson Jeffers. Under the title of *Stars*, I printed two sonnets of his which had appeared previously in *The Bookman*.

Eighty copies of the first printing were Ward's intention, but he reported on a tipped-in slip that only seventy-two survived the press run. When his friend, Lawrence Clark Powell, read his copy, a few errors were detected and most of the edition was destroyed. Ritchie recollects that about fifteen copies were bound in black boards. A second printing of 110 copies in blue wrappers appeared in March.

Here is Ward's account of his second Jeffers project:

> In 1930, with the inexplicable confidence of youth, I made my way to Paris expressly for the purpose of working in the atelier of Francois-Louis Schmied, whom I thought to be the most imaginative printer in the world. Perplexed and unprepared, Schmied couldn't find a graceful way to get rid of me and so I began an apprenticeship under his tutelage. I had brought along with me my batch of Jeffers' poems and while working there managed to set them in type and print thirty copies on the hand press in a bold Schmiedian style. This book was *Apology for Bad Dreams*, now almost lost in the obscurity of its rarity.

Upon his return to the United States, Ward's first commission came as a result of a visit to Elmer Adler at *The Colophon*. Ritchie encouraged Jeffers to write his account, "First Book," and had Paul Landacre do a woodcut of Hawk Tower which graces the opening page of the section.

Space does not permit listing or mentioning all of the books by and about Jeffers in which Ward Ritchie was involved. A few favorites cannot be passed by. In 1938 William Van Wyck submitted a short essay on Jeffers which Ward Ritchie designed, printed, and published. Since the text was not very long, Alvin Lustig, who was working at The Ward Ritchie Press at the time, was asked to add some ornamentation. His creative use of type ornaments, placed at the head of each page of text and printed in a variety of colors, made this into a most attractive little book, printed on Arak paper.

In the early 1950s Merle Armitage, impresario, editor, and designer, became engaged in a Jeffers project with an artist residing in Carmel, Jean Kellogg. She had executed a series of etchings to illustrate Jeffers' poem, "The Loving Shepherdess," and the man in New York who was printing the plates died suddenly. Armitage sought the assistance of Ward Ritchie and arranged with Random House to publish the book as a limited edition. It was two years in the making, and a lively and at times heated correspondence passed among Armitage, Kellogg, and Ritchie. In the end the book was printed in 1956 in an edition of 115 copies on Rives paper, hand set in Bembo, and signed by Jeffers. It is a noble and now scarce book.

Jeffers expressed his views on poetry in an article for *The New York Times Magazine*, "Poetry, Gongorism, and a Thousand Years," and it was later suggested as a separate book publication of the Ward Ritchie Press. Two hundred copies were printed in October 1949, set in Bembo by Caroline Anderson and Albert Yarish, and designed by Ward Ritchie. It was chosen as one of the Fifty Books of the Year.

From his long experience with Jeffers, as a printer, designer, and publisher, Ward Ritchie has written extensively about him and other authors and printers he has known. In the past twelve years from his home in Laguna Beach, California, he has issued a lovely series of books printed by hand on his Albion, most of which he has written himself. A 1978 publication was *Some Recollections of Robinson Jeffers* Laguna Verde Imprenta, with an engraving by Leo Wyatt. In the same year Tor House Foundation, which is engaged in preserving Jeffers' home, sought funds by having Ritchie print a Jeffers poem, "Whom Should I Write For, Dear, But for You?," in an edition of one hundred copies, with proceeds going to Tor House.

For a quick summary of other Jeffers items designed or printed by Ritchie, he designed Lawrence Clark Powell's *Robinson Jeffers*, *The Man and His Work*, The Primavera Press, 1934; printed two exhibition catalogs for Occidental College Library, 1935 and 1955; published Of *Una Jeffers* by Edith Greenan, 1939; published Una Jeffers's *Visits to Ireland* in 1954; printed Melba Berry Bennett's biography of Jeffers, *The Stone Mason of Tor House*, in 1966; and printed *The Poet and the Printers*, 1980.

EVERSON ON JEFFERS: A SIGHTING

By William Everson

■ ***Editor's Note**:* The following letter is from *Take Hold Upon the Future: Letters on Writers and Writing*, *1838-1946: William Everson and Lawrence Clark Powell*. Edited by William R. Eshelman (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, *1994), 10-11.*

Memorial Day, *1938*
Highlands Inn
Carmel, California

Dear Powell:

I am sitting in a cottage overlooking a bay so beautiful it is impossible, facing the woman who within these sixty hours is my wife, and the sight of Jeffers not an hour old. We circled the House: a window open: the pigeons flying: the late sun on the tower: the scene not changed from my 1935 one [when Everson looked from afar and wrote the poem, "Tor House"]. There was no one: there had been no one in the morning: some say he can at times be seen gazing from the yard. This time we cut over toward the River, found that last road running back toward town, skirting pastures, fields, the Mission dome showing over trees. We were watching nothing; there were people in the road ahead; coming on them as they walked, their backs to us, and we saw them actually as woman and man—then the dog: bulldog, white, on a heavy leash; they were any woman and any man until the sudden illuminating, devastating sight of that renowned dog: and Jeffers stooped, walking quickly, a bit bent-kneed, his wife quickly agile, Jeffers following that dog on the taut leash as active as it: energy: the dog quickly from bush to bush, piss-

ing. There was something similar in all their manners-the sense that every bush, rock, weed, stump, fence post, tree, corner, and stick was of importance.

All Jeffers' pictures show a young man, clean-featured, eagle-featured. This man old, grayed, the features, in the quick explosive quality of those sudden seconds, seemed almost passion ridden. Dark corduroy trousers—no boots—no pipe—light brown coat—the wide-collared Lord Byron shirt—evidently his only affectation. We were on them, and the woman turning to cross the road, waited our passing, looking up suspiciously, wary of intrusion. Jeffers not looking. Una hatted, hip-long full cape—a cane moving actively. Our eyes met—she was any woman you'd meet on a street. I nodded instinctively, and we were by, guilty to the heart's core for having stared, for intruding, for—whatever it is in a man that hungers, and does not wish the hunger to show. (Remember how Ashenbach hounded the boy in *Death in Venice*?). Through the mirror I watched. A block ahead we stopped, hating ourselves, waited, watched mirror. They knew our intent—suspected us of worse than we dared, turned up toward their home. The dog did not wish it, stood in the road envious of pasture, snuffing river-ward, and Jeffers poised to turn—the active legs planted, giving the dog time. It would not-it stood strained toward the open, so he dragged it, and went from our sight.

There is out of this window Venus like a huge lamp these days following the new moon into the sea. My wife is looking at me—it is bedtime—this is a honeymoon—I shall use this last empty half page for curtain, and tend to a husband's duties.

Bill Everson

HENRY MILLER MEETS ROBINSON JEFFERS

By Robert Brophy

> ■ What is it that makes one's problems (here in Big Sur) assume such a dramatic aspect? Almost melodramatic at times. This place itself has much to do with it. If the soul were to choose an arena in which to stage its agonies, this would be *the* place for it. One feels exposed-not only to the elements, but to the sight of God. Naked, vulnerable, set against an overwhelming backdrop of might and majesty, one's problems become magnified because of the proscenium on which the conflict is staged. Robinson Jeffers is unerring in high-lighting this aspect of his narrative poems. His figures and their manner of behavior are not falsely exaggerated, as some believe. If his narratives smack of Greek tragedy, it is because Jeffers rediscovered here the atmosphere of the gods and fates which obsessed the ancient Greeks. The light here is almost as electric, the hills almost as bare, the community almost as autonomous as in ancient Greece. The rugged pioneers who settled here needed only a voice to make known their secret drama. And Jeffers is that voice. (Miller, Big Sur 145)

One might be hard put to find two writers more dissimilar-in their personal philosophies, their style, their human focus, their concept of art—than Henry Miller and Robinson Jeffers. Miller lives in the "nitty-gritty" of the here-and-now; Jeffers in the quasi-eternal. For the most part, Miller seems only coincidentally interested in landscape, as a backdrop and contributing mood for human dramatics; Jeffers is almost entirely immersed in landscape; at the end of his life he writes: "My subject is what it used to be ... Mountain and ocean, rock, water and beasts and trees / Are the protagonists, the human people are only symbolic

interpreters" ("Old age hath clawed me," CP III: 484, also known as "My Loved Subject"). Miller's focus is the immediate, momentary; Jeffers is the astronomical ("Not man apart from that"). Miller's "Tropic" books have been called "autobiographical, confessional romance"; Jeffers dealt least in autobiography and eschewed romance after his first book of lyrics. Both were "enraged artist-prophets" describing the spiritual climate of America ("The Air-Conditioned Nightmare"), but each judged by largely different criteria. In fine, Miller is a commentator on the grotesque human comedy; Jeffers on inhumanist cosmic tragedy.

Yet it is obvious from the quotation above that Miller *was* moved by the Big Sur coast, with its expansive "proscenium," although Jeffers might have said the coast "minimized" rather than (as Miller has it) "magnified one's problems." Miller lived in Big Sur for a large part of his late middle life, from 1944 through 1960, age 54 to 69, marrying his third wife, Janina Lepska and having his two children, Valentine and Tony, there, finishing and publishing *Sexus, Air-Conditioned Nightmare, Remember to Remember, The Books in My Life, Plexus, The Smile at the Foot of the Ladder, The Time of the Assassins, Big Sur and the Orange of Hieronymous Bosch,* and *Nexus.* It was there that his ashes were strewn in the tide below Partington Ridge on what would have been his 92nd birthday.

He first lived in The Log House of Lynda Sargent in Big Sur, then in former Carmel mayor Keith Evans's cabin on Partington Ridge, almost a thousand feet above the Pacific, and subsequently in a shack at Anderson Creek once used by convicts when building the Coast Highway, then in the Jean Wharton home on Partington, all the while writing stories, essays, portraits, and sketches while painting and exhibiting water-colors—at various times commuting to Los Angeles and elsewhere in the U.S. and touring Europe.

Miller seems to have had a recurrent fascination with Jeffers, not as a kindred soul but as a phenomenon, both literary and enigmatically human. To Kathyrn Winslow he confessed that he had initially read Jeffers while in Paris. Winslow claims that Mary, the sometimes servant of Lynda Sargent, who first hosted Miller in Big Sur, "when a young girl, was the `California' of Robinson Jeffers's tragic poem, `Roan Stallion.'"

> The story that Mary told about herself and the stallion was that one night, during a bad storm, she was riding him across the soft mouth of the Carmel River when he floundered and fell. She struggled until daylight to get him to his feet, and, when she saw that

> she could not save him and that he was about to die there in the mud, she lifted her rifle and shot him. And then she lay down beside him and sobbed out her grief. From this one dark thread, Jeffers wove a many-colored tapestry. (Winslow 83)

Jeffers appears repeatedly in Henry's letters to Anais Nin: for instance, his recounting from Dijon in February 1932 that the head of the university's English department (Lawrence Clark Powell's mentor, Charles Cestre?) claimed Jeffers as one of his favorite American writers (17); or in remarking on his own sexual persona: "I don't mind at all saturating my work with it—*sex* I mean—because I'm not afraid of it and I almost want to stand up and preach about it, like that nut in [Robinson Jeffers's] *The Women at Point Sur*. He was cracked and people forgive that, but I am quite sane, too sane almost, madly sane." (31)

He reacts violently to Mabel Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos*, written as a letter to Jeffers: "But this book is so extravagant—such a burlesque—that I feel Knopf put it out as a joke on the public.... I want to be paid handsomely for i—for the privilege of spitting on her, on her Taos, her Tony, her California, her Jung, her Gurdjieff, her esoteric twaddle. O, I'm raving-and I still haven't finished the book. The idea of saying—'you know Jeffers'—on every page. What sort of man is Jeffers to permit this?"
(44)

From Hollywood, after a depressing visit to the studios ("The actors [are] nothing.... You feel sorry for them-they're like performing mice"), he writes: "Guess it will be San Francisco next, though I'm not sure. May stop off in between at Big Sur about which Robinson Jeffers wrote—the wildest part of the Pacific Coast." (265) He missed Jeffers in Carmel but writes on June 24, 1941: "I didn't go to see Jeffers—thought I better not to, but he knows I'm out here and was looking forward to my visit, I was told." (269) On August 1 he writes "Am leaving this evening on the weekend trip with the [Jake] Zeitlins. He is going to introduce me to Jeffers—can't seem to avoid it." (274) And finally in April of 1944 he moves to Big Sur: "The other day I was offered a little house on a mountain [Partington] —quite isolated—difficult to get to on foot (and I have only my feet to use).... And I am more at peace with myself. I don't know if you realize it, but this is the country Robinson Jeffers writes about. He lives in Carmel, but I gather he has walked and ridden all over this mysterious region. I met him one day. A very strange person—almost like a wounded animal—or a victim of shell shock." (326)

Here is Miller's witness to the meeting, written to the art and liter-

ary critic Rudolph Gilbert, who wrote the second full-length hook on Jeffers, *Shine Perishing Republic: Robinson Jeffers and the Tragic Sense in Modern Poetry*. In the letter, he writes, "Maybe another time I'll have a better go at it." There was no other time.

Big Sur, Calif.
Sunday

Dear Rudolf Gilbert,

I don't have time to really read the way I'd like to. I read a little here and there, that's all. I pick up your last book between times and flit thru it. It always excites me, the way you write, these magnificent allusions of yours to all the great spirits. Some day soon I'll write you a real letter--from my new mountain home, to which I havenot yet moved. I go Monday to San Francisco for a few days, then come back and open the new house. Address remains the same.

That little book which you express interest in--Plight of the Creative Artist in the U. S. A.--will prove disappointing to you, I fear. It's composed of four or five Open Letters, that's all. But the last letter may be worth everything. I've just written it, while the printer holds up the printing.

That Pantheon Press, N. Y. wrote me recently to give them something to publish. No answer from them yet. But meanwhile they sent me Fechner's Life After Death, which I find tremendous. I knew of Frechner only thru that English writer who wrote "The Bright Messenger"--do you know that book?

My meeting with Jeffers was rather brief. He was pleasant and cordial but did not open up. Una came in after a few moments and from then on it was hopeless. Though she is a great woman. But she drowns out everything, I feel. Jeffers spoke warmly of you, I must tell you. Maybe another time I'll have a better go at it. But he's a difficult man to reach.

About my new books. I want to give them to you as they come out. If I forget, just remind me, please. More anon.

Henry Miller

Please give me once again the name & address of the lady who bought my picture, won't you.

HEN-RY MIL-LER

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT ALF AMERICAN EDITION
THE PLIGHT OF THE CREATIVE ARTIST IN THE UNITED STATES
SEMBLANCE OF A DEVOTED PAST • THREE NEW TITLES •
GOTHAM NEW YORK • ARGUS CHICAGO • SATYR HOLLYWOOD

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JEFFERS'S "THE PLACE FOR NO STORY " : AN ONTOLOGICAL READING

By Jose Garcia

■ Being means presencing.... To let presence means: to unconceal, to bring to openness.... Presence means: the constant abiding that approaches man, reaches him, is extended to him.

-Martin Heidegger (OTB 5-12)

"The Place for No Story" is a conspicuously odd and hauntingly unique poetic utterance in the oeuvre of Robinson Jeffers It is my contention that this poem explores in both subject and strategy the process of Being's unconcealment and withdrawal back into concealment. Martin Heidegger uses the term "clearing" to denote the lucid experience of Being unconcealing itself to individuals. "The Place for No Story," without ambiguity, though tacitly, enacts this encounter between the poet and the "clearing." Though explicit confrontation with the ontological occurs in several of Jeffers's poems, this poem's intensity of focus into this encounter is unprecedented. In no way am I suggesting that Jeffers was influenced by Heidegger; however Heidegger's notion of "clearing" will assist our reading of this poem.

The Place for No Story

The coast hills at Sovranes Creek:
No trees, but dark scant pasture drawn thin
Over rock shaped like flame;
The old ocean at the land's foot, the vast
Gray extension beyond the long white violence;
A herd of cows and the bull

> Far distant, hardly apparent up the dark slope;
> And the gray air haunted with hawks:
> This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen. No imaginable
> Human presence here could do anything
> But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion. (CP II: 157)

Seemingly nothing happens in this poem. There is no story because what the effaced speaker (until line 9) describes is seen as being outside the habitual human categories of time. Perhaps the beauty, or grandeur, of the natural landscape rests on that Being's perpetuity most nakedly embodied and most perceptibly unconcealed there. This poem, to make any sense at all, can only be read as an enactment of the poet's profound encounter with Being's presence. Instead of offering a plot here, the poet offers us a view of what Aldous Huxley calls "Mind at Large," wherein one experiences almost unfiltered perception of the world (23), which can engender a freedom from, or indifference to, linear time and return the requisite "perceptual innocence" (25) necessary to apperceive the *presence* of Being. This clarity of perception is evident in the images of Sovranes Creek discreetly presented in lines 2-8. Each image receives its own line, so that more than just being laconically described, each image is more posited—revealed *as a thing present.* In some fundamental way each aspect of this place, experienced in this way, has meaning in itself. This is not simply a poem describing the beauty of an austere landscape. Reverent astonishment is the poem's tone as the place discloses presence here. The poem enacts the apperception of presence, or what Heidegger calls the "clearing"; "... [in which] rests possible radiance, that is, the possible presencing of presence itself." (BW 445) In accord with the way the poet endures this encounter in the "clearing," George Steiner explains

> [The task is] to immerse oneself in the full "thereness" of things; for it is only in their unconcealment that Being, though itself hidden, is revealed. Every inanimate and animate presence, ontologically wondered at and thought "through".... becomes a "clearing," ... in which Being declares itself-like the light that plays around objects in the dark of the wood even though we cannot place its source. The light itself is neither subject nor object: it is a process...." (67)

Though it is possible to read "The Place for No Story" as a loose free verse sonnet (with lines 1-9 being the argument, the turn occurring after the word "seen" in line 9, and then the last sentence serving as the conclusion), structurally it is more important to note that the poem is comprised of two sentences. In the first, the poet as "Mind at Large" apperceives each aspect of the landscape, yet the totality of the place, its presence, is grammatically articulated as a unity, as a single sentence (lines 1-9).

The poet's personal voice enters the poem with the assertion in line 9, "This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen." As compelling as the landscape appears to be from the description offered, this does not explain the deep reverence and astonishment of the speaker here. This poem records an encounter with Being as presence: that is, presence rooting each component of the landscape, disclosing it to the speaker, and making itself evident as an omnipotence extending beyond the sum of the landscape's components and their beauty. In this encounter the speaker is witness to Being's unconcealment embodied in the nonhumanness, and palpable otherness of the landscape. Presence discloses itself within the speaker's apperception of the place which exists principally in non-human categories of time.

Heidegger writes, "As it reveals itself to beings, Being withdraws." (EGT 26) In the poem's concluding sentence the speaker comments with bitterness on his estrangement from Being. The speaker's personal voice enters the poem, in line 9, marking the beginning of Being in the process of its withdrawal. This leaves the speaker with his "lonely self-watchful passion," that he projects onto the landscape. With the self-consciousness of line 9 marking the speaker's diminishing "Mind at Large awareness," bitterness emerges to further dilute the encounter. The "lonely self-watchful passion" is not the landscape's: its otherness is being imbued here with the speaker's estrangement. Perhaps as humans we can only attain glimpses and fleeting encounters with Being's unconcealment, after which its withdrawal leaves us projecting our longing for unity with Being onto the natural world. The encounter with the vividness of presence, its otherness, its serene intensity, captured in the poem's first sentence, cannot be sustained. This dissatisfaction with human limitation leaves the speaker with his lucid estrangement—this "lonely self-watchful passion." In the process of apperception one is part of and engaged with the thing apperceived: herein lies the difficulty of the poem's last line. As Heidegger writes, "... Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from man." (BW 234) The speaker's nearness

to presence disclosed as place can explain the perceptual error of projecting his estrangement onto the place: this nearness (sentence 1) creates an ambiguity of border between speaker and place which seemingly does not resolve itself entirely as the poem ends, so that the speaker projects his "lonely self-watchful passion" onto the place. Though the "clearing" is the place for no story because it is not principally of human categories of time, this "clearing" engenders an ontological drama between the speaker and presence. As the speaker is compelled to enter the poem in line 9, Being begins its withdrawal. "No imaginable / Human presence here [that is at the edge of the "clearing"] could do anything / But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion." Even a poet's intense receptivity, let alone any more habitual or blind manner of human conduct, can't do anything but dilute the perceptibility of presence.

It would be facile and simplistic to read Jeffers's "The Place for No Story" as a poem about the beauty of nature. This poem records the witnessing of Being unconcealing itself and then withdrawing. The true subject of the poem is not nature, but rather presence: presence evident in the landscape's natural beauty, but further—this vividness of things disclosing a wordless glimpse of their unconcealed source—Being. This kind of poem, perhaps we could name it a "lyric of pure presence," is an artifact, even if necessarily fragment-like, of the poet's encounter with presence. According to Heidegger, poetry "is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world." (BW 199) This is precisely what happens in this lyric: the unsayableness of Being is as profoundly present as the landscape and the reverence of the poet's voice.

The two-sentence structure of "The Place for No Story" mirrors the structure of this encounter: the first sentence positing, with a laconic disembodied voice, Being's unconcealment; the second sentence marking Being's withdrawal back toward concealment and the speaker's commentary which projects his estrangemement onto the place. The second sentence serves to authenticate the encounter, in that the speaker articulates his presence at the scene, which brings the timeless encounter into human time. The commentary ending the poem tacitly asserts the encounter's profundity, and value. The second sentence also creates the poem's necessary tension: presence's otherness and timelessness are set against man's estrangement from this in human time. According to Heidegger, poetry is "measuretaking, understood in the strict sense of the word, by which man first receives the measure of the breadth of his being." (*PLT 222*) The poet measures himself in this encounter against

Being's unconcealment. In this act of measuretaking the nearness and simultaneous rareness of being become painfully clear. Tacitly the speaker understands that there is a limit to Being's knowability. This poem bravely confronts that limit.

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WORDS OF PREY

By Alan Malnar

■ In the poem "Birds," when Robinson Jeffers wrote "[t)he fierce musical cries of a couple of sparrowhawks," he was not referring to a "hawk," but, instead, to the smallest of North American falcons: the American kestral *(Falco sparvarius).* Although the kestral is often called "sparrowhawk" the reference is, nonetheless, a misnomer. Commonly, a falcon is nicknamed after a quarry that it has been known to pursue. Hence, we have "duckhawk," which is really a peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus);* and, "pigeon hawk" or merlin falcon *(Falco columbarius).* But while all birds of prey belong to the order Falconiformes, both "hawks" and "falcons" are categorically divided into different families and genera. Falcons—belonging to the family Falconidae and to the genus *Falco*—are characterized by having long, pointed wings, long tails, small circular scale patterns on their feet, and a serrated edge on the upper mandible. Hawks, which we will discuss later in this essay, are quite the contrary.

Chances are, you've heard the "fierce musical cries"—the "kily, kily, kily" of the American kestral. Often residing in small lots, parks, and palm trees in urban and suburban locales, kestrals range over the entire United States. Spunky little falcons that often perch on telephone lines, they can easily be identified by the innate habit of pumping their tails and bobbing their heads. They also like to hover like mini-helicopters over the open fields as they scan the weeds in search of food. Nature has surely crafted a masterpiece in their ornate and detailed markings, for kestrals are undoubtedly the most colorful of American falcons. Though their diet consists primarily of insects and mice, kestrals can easily overtake small birds on the wing. I once observed one snatch a sparrow off a vacant schoolground with such skill that I can easily understand why

these small falcons are called "sparrowhawks." One of my fondest childhood memories is having owned a pet kestral. To my delight, "Bosco," untethered and singing in the sky, swooping and darting at terrified birds, followed me, as I, delivering the daily newspaper, rode my bicycle over the crackling autumn leaves.

Did you know that Hawk Tower was named after a "sparrowhawk"? While Jeffers was erecting his famous granite construct, a kestral perched daily on the scaffolding. Hence, the name: Hawk Tower. But now that we know that a "sparrowhawk" is really a falcon, was George Sterling correct, when, in his book on Jeffers, he referred to the stone structure as "Falcon Tower"?

A true sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) belongs to genus *Accipiter,* the only group of "true" hawks. Characterized by short, broad wings, long tails, and transverse scutes on the feet, accipiters—the "gray" hawks of Jeffers's poetry—are mainly forest dwellers and extremely adept at gunning through pinewood and deciduous trees. While the "true" sparrowhawk is indigenous to Eurasian soil, we have three species of genus *Accipiter* in the United States: the goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), the Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and the American counterpart to the European sparrowhawk, the sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*).

Do you remember the tethered and tortured Cooper's hawk in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks"? Or Reave's mother in "Thurso's Landing," stumbling in the mud, "lifting her yellow / Asturine face: as when a goshawk is caught in a steel trap at a / Pole's end." In the poem "A Little Scraping," when Jeffers wrote that "[t]opaz-eyed hawks have the white air," he could have been referring to a young accipiter: their eyes, yellow in the immature birds, turn ruby red as an adult. Also, note "The Bloody Sire": "jeweled with such eyes the great goshawk's head." Jeffers could have been thinking about the adult goshawk when he penned this line—the fiery-red eyes of the adult "gos" are demonic! I have heard, on more than one occasion, this large accipitrine hawk referred to as "hell on wings."

Another classification of raptor, one frequently winging its way into Jeffers's poetry, is the buteo. Characterized by having long, broad wings and short, stubby tails, many species of genus Buteo reside in the United States. But although buteo is Latin for a "kind of hawk or falcon," these "hawks" are really "buzzards." Another misnomer is calling vultures "buzzards." True "buzzards" are really buteoine hawks.

Our most common buteo is the red-tailed hawk. These large, conspicuous raptors come in many different subspecies and are often seen

perching on telephone poles, fence-posts, and dead snags. Subsisting mainly on rodents and reptiles, red-tailed hawks, if given the occasion, will kill pheasants and ducks. These seemingly sluggish "buzzards" can be lightning fast if presented with the golden opportunity to feast on a feathered meal. Spiraling up the funnel of a warm thermal, red-tailed hawks love to soar on summer days and vanish into the great wide blue. The poem "Hurt Hawks"—in which Jeffers wrote his famous line, "I'd sooner except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk—was inspired by a wounded "great redtail" that he unsuccessfully tried to rehabilitate. Consequently, the poet shot the hawk and buried it in the courtyard of Tor House.

Now that we know some of the various classifications of birds of prey, let us acquaint ourselves with a few of their behavioral traits and hunting techniques.

Accipitrine hawks, or, as Jeffers says, "gray hawks," are commonly very shy raptors. "[Y]ou / are not a flock bird," says Fayne to Lance in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks," "but alone in your nature / Separate as a gray hawk." Also note Jeffers's line in the poem "The Inhumanist": "old men and gray hawks need solitude." Surely Jeffers—isolate that he was-could have felt a kinship with the accipitrine hawk on this premise alone.

With the exception of the Cooper's hawk, I have rarely observed wild accipiters unless I was diligently searching for them. Though the sharp-shinned hawk is one of the most abundant of all hawks, they are seldom seen—unless, when during migration, in certain parts of the country, from specific vantage points, they can be observed riddling the sky.

Goshawks—very aggressive, high elevation birds—are usually more often heard than seen. Many times, while traversing the Rocky Mountains in my jeep, I could hear their distant, high pitched "yak, yak, yak." Apparently, Jeffers too was familiar with the raspy cry of the goshawk: in "Thurso's Landing," when Reave's mother found Mark hanging from the sycamore tree, she cried a "dry scream more goshawk's than woman's." Boldly assertive in defense of their nest, these large hawks are extremely shy. But during the winter when snow is thick and game is sometimes scarce, I have observed goshawks hunting for local birds and house cats in the middle of small mountain communities bordering the edge of the forest.

Distinctive hunting behavior, too, comes with each classification of bird of prey. Certain buteos—such as red-tailed hawks—love to quarter the hillsides, spreading their wings effortlessly on the updrafts, com-

manding superior aerobatics while searching for food. Red-tailed hawks are also seen perching conspicuously on poles and snags while waiting patiently for nibbling rodents to saunter into the open brush. Accipiters, while scanning the flora with superior vision, camouflage themselves in trees and wait for either fur or feather to present itself as a hearty meal. Often, while skimming the forest floor a few feet above ground level, these hawks—known by falconers as "short-wings"—surprise their victims with a quick death-pounce. And while the larger falcons of the prairie and plain often overtake their prey by a swift chase over open range, falconers train various species—such as the peregrine—to hunt on the "stoop." When a peregrine falcon "stoops," it dives vertically from the sky, and, with outstretched talons, collides with its prey at incredible speed. To witness a peregrine "stoop" from one thousand feet at two hundred miles per hour and smack a mallard duck is awesome! These falcons, referred to in "Bixby's Landing" as the "voice of the headland," possess a serrated edge on their upper beak. They often use this distinct feature to snap the neck vertebrae of their victim. Next in the ritual feeding frenzy, as if to celebrate wild victory, they, like most birds of prey, pluck, feather by feather, the breast of the limp carcass lying slain at their feet, before tearing into its bloody feast.

All raptors possess a deadly grip, but buteos and accipiters commonly dispatch their prey by clutching them in the head with razor-sharp talons. Mother nature, taking care of her own, has gifted these beasts with incredibly strong and fast feet. Do you remember when the tethered accipiter's "long-fingered / Lean yellow hand reaching up out of ruin / Plucked at the red king's breast" in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks"? "The yellow hands / Easily made him what could never any more / Chirp over bright corn to the hens or subdue a rival." Evidently, Jeffers was familiar with the quick and deadly slash of the hawk's foot; Lance's gamecock was no match for the "yellow hands" of the Cooper's hawk!

Jeffers's passionate affinity to the bird of prey has manifested itself as a frequent image in his poetry; from "The Condor" to "The Vulture," many hawks have flown. In his book, *Themes in My Poems,* he states that hawks can be called a "characteristic theme" in his poetry because they are "diverse and multiform" in their application as symbol. A comprehensive study of this unique imagery reveals that Jeffers elevated hawks to a status of primacy in his poetic symbology. They represent the clean vision of the Inhumanist; a vision that one must aspire to in order to see beyond the egocentric self. They symbolize the organic impulses in man that have been stymied in civility, for, man, unlike the hawk—accord-

ing to Jeffers—has separated himself from his true nature.

Jeffers was fascinated by the stark elemental forces of nature; not only by the physical presence of the hawk itself, but by what the hawk represented. Though one can hardly argue that this noble creature, with its "fierce consciousness," acute vision, and superior aerobatic skills, is nothing short of magnificent, Jeffers was more concerned with the sacred essence behind the slash of its claw, the flap of its wing, the abstract, intangible truth behind its mere physicality—the truth that all men are forever trying to grasp. Clearly, the hawk, for Jeffers, acted as a conductor through which these omnipotent forces flowed. The simple concrete stuff of beak and feather enabled him to receive this energy, or, if you will, this truth, and transform it into art. While most landowners of his day considered birds of prey to be vermin, Jeffers absorbed their poetic energy and created a symbol that was intrinsically connected to the design of his entire philosophy. Could it be that, in some oblique way, the hawk, for Jeffers, was an extension of himself, a metaphor for his own life? Upon examination of his canon, one can find that the aesthetic evidence clearly and reasonably evokes a positive response. Whatever the case, these noble birds, emblematic of the beliefs that underscore his brilliant artistry, created a Godhead for Robinson Jeffers.

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CONTRIBUTORS

William Everson (1912-1994), also known as Brother Antoninus, a Californian often connected with the Beat Poetry movement in San Francisco, wrote tributes to Jeffers all through his poetic career. See special *RJN* issue *William Everson: Remembrances and Tributes*, Winter-Spring 1995.

Tyrus Harmsen is emeritus librarian for Occidental College and director of their Book Arts Program. For many years he helped edit and publish the RJN.

Robert Kafka, an administrator at UCLA Extension, has edited Point Alma Venus, early version(s) of "The Women at Point Sur" (1977) and Where Shall I Take You To: *The Love Letters of Una and Robinson Jeffers* (Yolla Bolly Press, 1987). He has provided key articles on Jeffers's early publications and has worked extensively on collecting and editing Robinson and Una Jeffers's correspondence.

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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'/" 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 *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.*