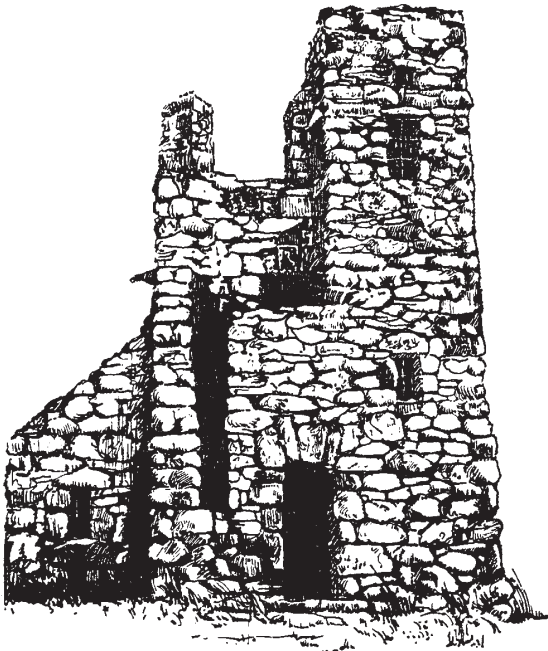


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EDITOR'S NOTE

If the last issue of *JS* could be called the “geology issue,” our current number might be considered the “apology issue.” *Jeffers Studies* 8.2 presents readings of “Apology for Bad Dreams,” arguably Jeffers’s *ars poetica*, by two of the poet’s foremost critics. In 1973, Robert Brophy concluded his landmark book *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems* with an extensive chapter on this uncanny poem, and here he returns to it with a still-fresh sense of its contradictions and its power. Along with Robert Zaller’s close analysis, which posits the poem’s unity even as it does not deny its irresolution, this pair of articles offers readers of Jeffers a chance to return to this poem and discover its complexity for themselves.

Steven Chapman’s article is an impressively thorough consideration of Jeffers’s ideas about science as they appear in “The Inhumanist,” and it is a major contribution to the discussion of this narrative, the most “ecological” of Jeffers’s long poems. Our managing editor, Rob Kafka, has tracked down two intriguing portraits of the Jefferses from Carmel denizens Ella Winter and Richard Broughton. I hope *JS* readers will enjoy these two lively remembrances, even if they might reveal more about their authors than their subjects. Along with a book review and the News and Notes section, *JS* 8.2 reflects the range of questions and concerns that continue to motivate the discussion of Jeffers’s work.

RJA BULLETIN

PETER QUIGLEY, RJA PRESIDENT, 2006–2008

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This installment of the RJA Bulletin has us looking back at the 12th Annual RJA Conference held in February at the Big Sur Environmental Institute on the stunning Brazil Ranch. We were all pleased to have Scott Slovic join us; he delivered a wonderful keynote focusing on place and the materials of location. We were all talking about the texture, qualities, and politics of stone for days. Please see the web site for pictures from the conference. The site documenting this last conference is still being edited, but there are some good shots of the conference.

This conference confirmed for many of us the fact that Jeffers has been a faithful thinking companion for all seasons. His work has been important to many of us through our personal growth as well as our professional and political lives. The best poetry it seems acts like a companion teaching us how to see beauty (in Jeffers's case a rough beauty) but also teaches us how to win over and over again the independence of spirit and of thought which in each passing year proves more precious to maintain. Emerson of course linked the two, perception and independence, by stating that "Our hunting for the picturesque is inseparable from our protest against a false society." And so it is with Jeffers who insisted on a strong link between learning how to see beauty from his inhumanist point of view and cultivating an independence that is rare. In fact (it is never possible to quote Emerson without Thoreau as well), Thoreau put it this way: "I had walked over those . . . fields so many Augusts and never . . . recognized these purple companions . . . Beauty and true wealth are always thus cheap and despised. Heaven might be defined as the place which men avoid." Jeffers carved out a hard beauty and a lonely shore for us to walk. In poems such as "We Are Those People" and in sentiments expressed such as "their beauty has more meaning," Jeffers risked much. The rewards for the reader are high: "love your eyes that can see."

With Big Sur behind us, planning for the next conference moves along swiftly. At this moment, W. S. Merwin has agreed to be our keynote speaker! The location for the conference will be Hawaii. Hawaii ends up being about the same flight distance from California as an East Coast destination. I am lucky to have some help from colleagues at the University of Hawaii to plan the conference. Frank Stewart and John Cusick have already been helpful. Frank, in fact, knows Merwin and has been the key to securing his participation with us. Eric Shaffer, a poet from Maui, will also be assisting. David Rothman was here in March and Ron Olowin will be here (Hawaii) in a few days (early May) to help me with the venue.

Jeffers looked out to the western watery horizon as he thought about the world and its troubled inhabitants. Hawaii will give us a chance to enjoy Jeffers while surrounded by the Pacific Ocean he loved so well. In addition, we will talk about Jeffers within the graceful cultural context of a native people who stack stone and love the sea and the earth (aina). You can't be anywhere in Hawaii without also being makai (oriented towards the sea) and mauka (towards the mountains). I have recently been in contact with scholars (such as Neal Bowers) who have written about Jeffers and Merwin. Hopefully we will see them at the conference as well.

My next message to you will be about the precise location for the conference and accommodations. I am going to see if I can find any dorm packages, especially for our student participants. Keep checking <www.jeffers.org> for updates on these details.

All best wishes.

ARTICLES

ROBERT BROPHY

JEFFERS'S "APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS" REVISITED

"Apology for Bad Dreams" originated from the episode of the woman and her sons torturing a horse, a thing which happened on our coast. Cruelty is a part of nature, at least of human nature, but it is the one thing that seems unnatural to us; the tension of the mind trying to recognize cruelty and evil as part of the sum of things is what made the poem. (CP 4: 394)

The story ["Point Alma Venus"] grows rather intimately from the rock of this coast. Someone said to me lately that it is not possible to be quite sane here, many others feel a hostility of the region to common human life. Immigration overpowers a place, at least for a while, but where the coast is thinly peopled it seems really to have a mood that both excites and perverts its people.

Letter to Donald Friede, April 24, 1926 (SL 68)

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
(The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite cliff the gaunt
cypresses crown
Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what Titan? The hills
like pointed flames
Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the sun, what
immolation?)
This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and like the passionate
spirit of humanity
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths, the horrible trans-
figurements: I said in my heart,
"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you
Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place."

"Apology for Bad Dreams" (CP 1: 209)

My concern in this essay revisits what has been for me a career-long question: What did "Apology for Bad Dreams" mean to Jeffers? And what does it mean as we attempt Jeffers explication? The poem is generally viewed as his *ars poetica*, written in the white heat of his discovery

of the authentic art form that was to give his work originality and its subject, the mono-myth of eternal return, a focus that would thenceforth be his *Weltanschauung*. It reflects the true beginning of his career and came, we can imagine, in the midst of the conversion that Una spoke of that was like a religious one (*SL* 213). It encompasses his aesthetics, philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and theology.

"Apology" was first published in an unlikely place, in James Rorty's Marxist *New Masses* for May 1926. Rorty was the editor and literary critic who "discovered" Jeffers in 1924, having been sent the volume *Tamar*. The title "Apology for Bad Dreams" translates as "The reason why I write what I must write—turbulent, violent, bloody, horror stories." At the time he had written only "Tamar," "The Coast-Range Christ," "Roan Stallion," "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," and the fragmentary "Point Alma Venus" that was to become his most controversial and notorious "The Women at Point Sur," yet it was as though he saw his future series of narratives articulated in a new mode that would make his reputation and be his legacy.

Here was and still is my question: Of all poets I know, Robinson Jeffers is the most rational, the most inspired and the most bound in by science, science being the ultimate criterion of what is and what is not. His three years of medical studies at the University of Southern California seemed to be aimed at and probing the questions, paraphrased here from those of his character Arthur Barclay in "The Women at Point Sur" (*CP* 1: 253) and "Theory of Truth" (*CP* 2: 608): Is there a God and of what nature? Is there life after death? How should men live? His answers were: There is a God who is the universe itself in process. Life after death is a chimera. Men should live in cosmic harmony, as a fleeting, infinitesimal part of the cosmic whole, worshipping that God. In his view there was only the material world and science was its verification. All phenomena were reducible to forms of energy.¹ Yet his propositions in this *ars poetica* "Apology" would seem to be contra-scientific and to be both psychologically and metaphysically outrageous.

Let us look at the poem. In strophe I, Jeffers says, implicitly at least, that moral evil and insane cruelty are natural. (The same appears in the quote that opens this exploration.) The woman's sadism toward the horse parallels the landscape's dynamism. Ruthless violence becomes natural, Jeffers seems to say, as we draw away from facial contortions and the vicious motives that are the close-up of human violence. Notice the parallels that appear between natural and human actions:

- The headlong convexities of forest are drawn in together / the woman ties the horse to a sapling
- The ocean is like a stone cut to a sharp edge / the whip cuts into the horse
- The light of the setting sun beats / the woman whips; the light beats
- The furnace of incredible light flows up from the sunk sun / the son nooses the swollen tongue

Jeffers quotes the Bible shockingly to state that such cruelty (and all this beauty) is God's doing. Isaiah has given him the line "I create good; I create evil: I am the Lord" (Isa. 45.7). This, we will see, is Jeffers's God: the effecting of both good and evil is that God's way of discovery, a concept to be understood and made strikingly clear in the "Hanged God" section of "At the Birth of an Age" (CP 2: 481–84).

In strophe II, Jeffers writes that all beautiful places demand tragedy, that is, catastrophe. (We might protest: would that he meant only literary dramas that go by that name! And that he were only speaking of his stories!) The cliffs demand victims; the bare hills demand immolation, painful deaths, horrible transfigurements. He asserts that there is a personal choice for the artist: Better to find strategies to avoid personal suffering and to shun beating horses. He insists that we humans are more liable and sooner vulnerable and cruel than other creatures, that we are especially susceptible in the areas of sustenance, shelter, safety, and self-control, that pain and terror are essential parts of being, that insanities of desire are our, as it were, Original Sin, proneness to evil that we are born with, that these things crowd up from the core of human condition and from the human psyche, that there are "wolves" on the prowl for him and his, but he can create diversions by imagining victims.

In strophe III, he attests that landscape contains antidotes to this suffering, the victimhood, the terror, the insane desires, the wolves. All about him are salutary relics, lessons in vulnerability from a dead race, the local Ohlone Indians. These have paid for the future luck of the country: they remind us of our mutability, mortality, and thereby are our redeemers. He has created Tamar Cauldwell to remind him. As she interprets the land and seascapes, thus he is made more ready for the reality behind their burning presences and threat.

In strophe IV, finally he makes the following outrageous assertions. In creating, God and the poet are one (the "he" refers to both). As God flays humanity for the savor (of discovery), so does the poet. Jeffers the artist does with his bad dreams, his horror stories, exactly what God does. God and the artist both purify humanity with tears,

deform it, make it horrible to itself. Both create epiphanies, reveal life essences, even as it is, as it were atomized and reduced to ultimate molecular, atomic, and subatomic components. The artist in his work cries out to God: I have discovered my humanity. He becomes, as it were, Pontius Pilate declaring “Ecce Homo,” “Behold the Man” (to be crucified for discovery). He says: It is myself that I abuse in my paper victims but I have done something equal to the supernova. I as artist know God’s ways and they allow no explanation—for violence and pain and the endless cycles are only what they are. There is no “meaning” to look for in the world, except that these crushing moments are the ways of God’s love. I make them my ways. The cosmos is magnificent in its passion and the craft of its being, but not reasonable, not providential, not made to any purpose at all. The only “thought” apparent in creation is in the human’s mind. Outside is only incredible, ever-returning beauty. It is as though Jeffers says: As artist, I become priest and acknowledger for God, imitator and co-creator with God. And thus I learn how the world works and what to expect daily, each moment. I choose not to beat horses or commit Tamar-like incest though those may also be natural. And I partake as mimic and con-celebrant in the rituals of God that we call tragedies.

My first grappling with this poem was in a graduate American poetry class at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1961. The assignment, given overnight, was to explain it to the professor who didn’t, as it turned out, know the poem’s meaning himself. As I chose Jeffers for further study, I became in a way obsessed with the poem as though it was the key to all understanding of him. Trying to find a resolution for the apparent contradictions of the poem, I hunted down James Rorty on a farm in New Jersey, I sought out William Turner Levy, professor at New York City College and Episcopal priest, and I visited Frederick Mortimer Clapp in a high-rise facing Central Park. I found Larry Powell in his office as Dean of the UCLA Library School and Ward Ritchie at his press, approached Jake Zeitlin in his Los Angeles Red Barn bookstore, visited Benjamin Lehman in retirement at Montalvo close upon the Santa Cruz mountains, co-interviewed Sara Bard Field in Berkeley for the Bancroft Library’s Oral History Department, and met Frederic Ives Carpenter also in Berkeley and Brother Antoninus/William Everson in Oakland.

None had an answer, an explanation. Strangely, most of them had not even thought there was a question. But for me it was as though the author had for a moment stepped outside the curtain of his mythmaking stage and explained everything, but made it purposely so cryptic, so opaque, that the audience either suspended its need for explication or dismissed it, and read the poetry each for his own interpretation.

I worked at breaking the poem open over three years and distinguished three possible readings which I incorporated into my dissertation, later to become the book *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems*. In various modes and interwoven intervals the poem seemed to be working on three levels.

The most obvious level to me is its educational intent. In this interpretation, "terror" becomes a key term; the writer hopes to escape "terror" but not necessarily "pain," which is physical or, if mental, specific and focused. His stories thus are an attempt ever more deeply to understand the nature of this physical world and adjust to it as beautiful yet at the same time hazardous, and not to let possessions, elaborately protective shelter, investments, pensions, health insurance, and all such fenders against disaster provide an illusion of safety. "Tamar" in this reading warns against taking, as it were, the "fetal position" (lately termed "denial") in response to reality. Her lesson is wide-open acceptance, embracing as large a beauty (and being) as possible and assenting to all consequences however painful. At the conclusion of "At the Birth of an Age," the "Singers" responding to the "Hanged God's" speech, say, as though in Jeffers's own voice, "Forever if I could: [I would be] his intelligencer / Spying the wild loveliness" and, after resting a moment, "[would be] willing to eat the whole serpent again" (CP 2: 484), that is, accept life with all its destructiveness and pain. And in "Going to Horse Flats" Jeffers writes that the person turning from man to God "will remain / Part of the music, but will hear it as the player hears it" (CP 2: 543). This was to read the term "catharsis"—in Aristotle's definition of tragedy from his *Poetics*—to mean acceptance, enlightenment, consent.

The second level for understanding is therapeutic, somehow confronting and sublimating into verse narratives the "insanities of desire," that is, one's subterranean, "from the core" instincts, desires, aggressions, and cruelties, "lest you martyr some creature." It would involve a strategy of fantasy-release and avoidance therapy. Through it, metaphorically, he will not beat horses. It is perhaps most commonly recognized in Freudian terms and strategies.

The third level of meaning is ritualistic. This is the most challenging to understand in Jeffers's poem but possibly most significant. He writes in a myth-ritual mode always, it seems to me, it being something that he gratefully received from the cultural anthropologists of his time, Sir James Frazer, Jane Ellen Harrison, F. M. Cornford, and especially Gilbert Murray, and brilliantly developed by Ernst Cassirer, Mircea Eliade, Northrup Frye, and Joseph Campbell. Note the unusual word-symbols chosen: "cypress crown," "Titan," "immolation," "God's pain," "transfigurations," "chosen agonist," "martyr," "burn sacrifices,"

“magic horror away,” “pain for bread” (as though sacramental communion), “paid for luck,” “redeemers” “our salvation.” In this reading Jeffers enters into the ritual sacrifice by which God, the God of cycle, endures and discovers as he creates. Each poem con-celebrates *being* with God. I choose to label it Jungian.

Having processed this threefold discrimination and allowed that, in individual poems, one explanation may be more meaningful than another, I know I have not yet grasped the full significance of Jeffers’s “Apology.”

Consider the questions. Why did Jeffers seem to keep the meaning secret to himself? “Apology” appeared in the unlikely *New Masses* in 1926 and in Louis Untermeyer’s *American Poetry, a Miscellany* in 1927, but then not again (and to most readers for the first time) till the 1935 Modern Library *Roan Stallion*, skipping over *seven* successive volumes of poems where it could have been collected.² Thus, if it was written as a consummate explanation of his mature beginnings, why did it not appear integrated into and speaking for his verse till almost his mid-career?

Was it because it was so unusual, so beyond the others that it would not fit among them? Was it intended as a riddle to challenge and confound his readers and critics? Was it an almost totally private poem, to be understood only by himself? Why did it go uncollected for so long, and then appear casually in his “Foreword” to the *Selected Poetry* of 1938 (CP 4: 394)? Was he possibly writing himself a personal note, allowing its enunciation to be overheard? Was he silent all along because no one seriously asked? In a parallel case, he let critics disparage his poetics as inexplicable “free verse,” waiting for Herbert Klein’s 1932 Occidental College thesis to reveal the true nature of his prosody as accentual, complex, and consistent (SL 173, 174). True, he wrote briefly about “Apology” in letters to Powell (SL 181, 182, 199) and Carpenter (SL 195, 196) but did not elaborate, perhaps because their questions were crimped and other-focused.³

Indeed we know that he did not renounce its principles but spelled them out, confirming them more bluntly toward the end of his life, where he confronted his surrogate targets again in a posthumous but seemingly finished poem that Melba Berry Bennett titled, according to his wont from a key line, “But I Am Growing Old and Indolent” (“I have been warned,” CP 3: 447). It was a poem he had chosen not to publish, but was selected by Bennett for the posthumous *The Beginning and the End*. It is as follows:

I have been warned. It is more than thirty years since I wrote—
 Thinking of the narrative poems I made, which always
 Ended in blood and pain, though beautiful enough—my pain, my blood,
 They were my creatures—I understood, and wrote to myself:
 "Make sacrifices once a year to magic
 Horror away from the house"—for that hangs imminent
 Over all men and all houses—"This little house here
 You have built over the ocean with your own hands
 Beside the standing sea-boulders . . ."

We pause. Jeffers seldom quotes his own poetry, and here he misquotes it, substituting "Make sacrifices" for "Burn sacrifices" and "standing sea-boulders" for "standing boulders." How has he been warned? By some external mentor, by an untoward event, or by his own intuition? The "thirty years since," if taken literally, would place him shortly past 1956, four years after his final book *Hungerfield* (1952)⁴ appeared, a narrative, framed with a painful confessional lyric to blunt, assuage, confront, or process the catastrophic loss of his wife to cancer, surely a most terrible wolf that he had not decoyed away.⁵ He was sixty-eight in 1956, going blind from cataracts, and six years from his own death.

He continues the poem:

So I listened
 To my Demon warning me that evil would come
 If my work ceased, if I did not make sacrifice
 Of storied and imagined lives, Tamar and Cawdor
 And Thurso's wife—"imagined victims be our redeemers"—
 At that time I was sure of my fates and felt
 My poems guarding the house, well-made watchdogs
 Ready to bite.

But time sucks out the juice,
 A man grows old and indolent.

Once again, Jeffers is not quoting but paraphrasing his lines in "Apology." "Imagined victims be our redeemers" conflates lines of strophe II: "I imagined victims for those wolves" and strophe III's "remembered deaths be our redeemers; / Imagined victims our salvation." Jeffers's readers have seen this "Demon" before, spelled with an "ae" and not capitalized in "The Bed by the Window" (CP 2: 131), who "Thumps with his staff and calls thrice: 'Come, Jeffers.'" Was he hearing things from spirits?

As discussed in an early paragraph and in endnote 1, Jeffers dealt with preternatural phenomena as a scientist. Yet it seems that he attended a séance at least once, seemingly visited by spirits, and that he dramatized one séance in "Come Little Birds" (CP 3: 5) and another in "Bowl of Blood" (CP 3: 85–100). He also experimented with *Doppelgänger* appearances as a dramatic technique in "Mara" and "The Inhumanist." Is the poem's "Demon" anything more than a dramatic convention? Perhaps it represents his sane self and its conviction. A dictionary definition offers little help. A "demon" is a "persistently tormenting person, force, or passion"—from Latin (*daemon*) a "spirit" as also from Greek (*daimon*), a "divine power, fate, god."

Jeffers does repeat the word "magic" here from "Apology"; surely the word hovers over the poem. Did he believe in magic? Was he grandly, if privately, superstitious? It seems impossible. Did Jeffers really think that writing "storied and imagined lives" would have kept Una from dying? More incredible, would he have preserved himself and her from aging, from reaching a stage when "time sucks out the juice" and "a man grows old and indolent"? Yet his choice of dramatic images ("make sacrifices," "magic horror away," "evil would come," "sure of my fates," "watchdogs ready to bite") points to pursuit of some exemption from science's realities, urging fate-leaping interventions.

Thus, considering the enormity of such a supposed claim, selecting a title for this essay one might in exasperation be tempted to write "Robinson Jeffers: Apostate to Inhumanism." He, whose primary insight was cyclic fatalism and whose desire was to be unattached, indifferent, to seek truthfully and accept wholly, in this instance would seem to ask to be immune? It is almost unthinkable that he intended with verses as it were to buy off his "Hanged God," who discovers only through the agony expressed in the concluding lines of "At the Birth of an Age" (CP 2: 481). Did Jeffers really expect his life to be more privileged through his art? Could he have bravely and unconditionally rejected suicide ("Ante Mortem," CP 1: 238) as disrespectful to the universe only to whine at the last? "Hungerfield" was the final narrative that might be expected to "magic / Horror away from the house." Was it written too late to save Una, that is, written as it was, four years after "The Inhumanist" (1948), which seemed to stand as Jeffers's last narrative word for his canon? "For these reasons," he writes in "Hungerfield," "I wish to make verses again, to drug memory, / To make it sleep for a moment" (CP 3: 378). Should we interpret the words to mean "I wish to make verses again *but this time* to drug memory," thus marking a changed narrative purpose? Was "Hungerfield" a unique narrative with different intent: an admission of defeat and loss by reason of delay in writing?

The questions mount. As has been noted, this final poem, in conjunction with "Apology," offers a ruthless metaphysics, one that for convenience can be reduced to the formula emphasizing an intra-active equality in which terms are interchangeable: Being = Dynamism = Change = Violence = Pain = Tragedy = Beauty = God—in which God is violence and pain and loss and agony as much as God is being and beauty and all dynamism. Does Jeffers really in any way wish to remove his family from this formula that represents all there is? Does he revolt against the cycle that moves all things including loss, aging, and death? Does he, who rejected the primacy of the selfishness that he saw everywhere, ask the most selfish of petitions? Does his bitterness over Una's passing, despite his "Hungerfield" disclaimer, cry for exemption? Was the "evil" death or was it that Una died first? And in agony? Does his final, formal visiting of Inhumanism, the total obeisance toward which he has yearned life-long, yield not a triumphant cry of acceptance but, as it were, a whimper?

With this posthumously available poem, "I have been warned," in mind, one must look back on "Apology" with at least a more critical eye. The wolves have surely arrived. If the reader must think for the moment the unthinkable, if, especially after Una's death, Jeffers had second thoughts, they were certainly not Freudian, not about by transference beating horses, or committing incest or infidelity. Could they have been about not sufficiently reminding himself of what had been the one truth of his life, that peace comes only after realizing that nothing is owed, no one is privileged against pain, Aristotelian "pity and fear" are not to be avoided but embraced and surmounted? But then why use the heavy-handed diction of magic and allied paranormal? Why would he evoke melodrama for very natural fates?

And the reader must see that the quasi Frazer-Murray-Frye-Campbell participation-mystique (magic?) must also fade as Jeffers's capacities fail, as he becomes so blinded by cataracts that he cannot read his own writing and for the final years, lacking the energy, can only endure simple daily routine, without Una's challenge and ear. To quote the welcoming angel's word to the disillusioned Woodrow Wilson in the poem of that name "What, that the God of the stars needed your help?" (CP 1: 107). Why should an artist be more privileged? Does "aping God" really yield significant power to avoid the inevitable? Can it raise myth-creating to a level in which he joins God in co-creation?

In that penultimate chapter of *Myth, Ritual, and Symbol*, I examined the Bennett-titled "The Beginning and the End" ("The unformed volcanic earth," CP 3: 430), a long verse meditation that celebrates and poetically probes mankind's, the earth's, and the universe's evolution.

In its final lines, Jeffers imagines mankind to be God's "sense organs."
And as Aeschylus and Shakespeare

reveal to their audience

Extremes of pain and passion they will never find
In their own lives but through the poems as sense-organs
They feel and know them: so the exultations and agonies of beasts and men
Are sense-organs of God: and on other globes
Throughout the universe much greater nerve-endings
Enrich the consciousness of the one being
Who is all that exists. This is man's mission:
To find and feel (*CP* 3: 434).

The beasts' contribution to God's perception is unreflective.⁶ Of man, Jeffers adds: "He has mind / And imagination, he might go far / And end in honor." If this concedes that mankind's self-reflective consciousness, capable of giving glory to God, is more than a passive sense organ, then humans add to or provide parts of God's consciousness. Does it not require but one step further to say that the artist, by co-creating, adds to God's discovery in a godlike way? It is a provocative and positive contributive thought, something to consider according to the poet's terms. It goes beyond humanism to affirm human consciousness and the poet's art as worthy in their own special way.

Whether this would make the artist thereby immune to the agonies that Jeffers writes about, however, is yet another matter.

Poems such as "Apology for Bad Dreams" and "I have been warned" pose (for me) a problem because they seem to step beyond mere "wisdom" (a rectified and accepting consciousness), the Aristotelian "to know." They claim a modifying of what would be normal reality, that is, embrace a rite of "preemption." I would settle gladly for the poet's goal of balanced insight and acceptance, but, as already noted, the vocabulary is too strong. The strongest word (of the diction cited in discussion of strophe II) is "magic." This word could have been taken by Jeffers right out of *The Golden Bough*; Sir James Frazer's third chapter is titled "Sympathetic Magic." Given entirely to the named concept, it distinguishes between "Homoeopathic [*sic*] or Imitative Magic" and "Contact or Contagious Magic."⁷ Such "Sympathetic Magic" underlies all the rituals meant to end the fall and winter deconstructive phases of the year cycle and move the new year to spring renewal and summer fullness. In the mythic mind, this was done by acts precipitating or encouraging on the one hand total overturn and destruction (the riotous saturnalian reversal of roles of king and fool, for instance), and, on the other hand, the expediting and quickening of a renewed world of fertility by means of temple prostitution

and coitus in the fields to initiate and invigorate soil and seed. But such magic has long since yielded to science.

Is it possible that, in "I have been warned," Jeffers, its private (i.e., unpublished) author, being an inhumanist, yet human, was merely protesting the absence of his dear wife and the emptiness without her? Death is normal, but her so painful death and the separation were staggering traumas. This sentiment is attested to in the poem "Whom should I write for" (CP 4: 541), which begins "Two years have passed, / The wound is bleeding-new and will never heal"? Or could he have indeed seen that the "good" wished for had reversed? Was he now invoking his own death, the closing of his cycle? He had no delusions about joining his beloved; that was what the lyric frame of "Hungerfield" was all about. Her consciousness has passed into the earth, thence to the galaxy, and finally into the mystery of God, who, in Revelation's words, makes "all things new" (Rev. 21.5; CP 4: 541). This cry would then be a testing, even a satirizing of his earlier, younger desires for immunity, calling now, by whatever "magic" the poem might have (it is not a narrative), for the dark powers to take him if it is God's and fate's judgment. Here he would be invoking the irony of his and Una's relations to life and death:

I knew you would die sometime, I should die first—
 But you have died. It is quite natural:
 Because you loved life you must die first, and I
 Who never cared much live on. ("Hungerfield," CP 3: 376)

Thus I end my questions. And thus my search for the deepest meaning of "Apology" for me remains frustrate. Jeffers's intent remains ambiguous. Are reality and meaning here to be found in the struggle between a strongly willed inhumanism and a heart-breaking humanity? And was the poem "I have been warned" possibly the third-year tribute to Una, with "Hungerfield" and "Whom should I write for" being the first and the second?

Closing, I can only remark that my more youthful conclusions have become doubts; I have had second thoughts over the full meaning and dimensions of "Apology for Bad Dreams."

* * * * *

As to the second headnote (Jeffers's remarks to Donald Friede about the Big Sur's power over mind), a brief coda might be in order, titled, if you will, "Environment Inducing Madness: Jeffers's 'Insanities of Desire.'" The question is whether and how the Big Sur environment

takes a toll on the very rationality of its inhabitants. Can landscape influence the inhabitants to commit untoward acts of dementia?

We have examined the artist's proposed contribution to God and questioned whether Jeffers claims immunity because of or through this. There remains the additional ontological-psychological question: How can more beautiful places demand feckless cruelty ("Apology," strophe II)? On a psychological level we ask: Can and does the Sur coast landscape induce or evoke insanity and possibly a consequent procligal violence as Jeffers reflects in the quoted letter and perhaps implies in the poem "Apology"? Indeed might anyone be led to beat horses or otherwise act out perversity because of it?

The commercial histories of Big Sur are understandably sanitized, restricted to the "colorful" and hardly hinting at the more bizarre and deviant. The Big Sur coast, however, has another folklore into which Jeffers first tapped for his *Californians* in 1916, precursor to his "Tamar"- "Apology" phase. That local folk history is both violent and insane to an extraordinary degree.

Some many years back a university researcher was reported studying the notable incidence of both violence and insanity among inhabitants of the Sur region. His question was: Did Sur beckon them or produce them? In the 1960s, during the time that the Beats invaded Big Sur, falsely presuming it congenial to dropouts, the California Department of Forestry destroyed many of the cabins on the surrounding terrain, fearing marijuana parties would produce forest fires. Sadly, much of the local, fully eccentric, mad, and criminal lore was lost. To some folklorists, including Una Jeffers, it seemed that each shack had a weird or horror story connected to it. Were the inhabitants fleeing asylums or sheriffs elsewhere? Were they innocents turned mad by the very terrain as in the case of the vaquero who is said to have driven a whole herd of cattle off a cliff below point Sur?

Surely no one will deny the interplay of place and psychology. Humans share a consanguinity with the earth and stars, being made of the same elements and governed by the same laws. And there are dimensions of reality, presumably some of them causal, that have not yet been adequately probed or are beyond scientific calculation. The moon, it has long been said, has power over women and madmen. The lunacy syndrome is part of our language. Daily in the newspapers we can read our horoscope; we are born under certain Zodiac signs that are said to determine our personalities and our fates. Climate affects us: the "Seasonal Affective Disorder" is testimony to this. Minnesotans go to Florida for winter and Floridians perhaps to Minnesota in summer. The Scandinavian suicide-rate is mute witness to the impact of cold and dark. The immense migration to Southern California from

the 1880s to present has been based on a Golden Land myth, offering a healthy and happy climate and vibrations.

What then are the conditions by which Carmel-Big Sur is characterized? It is apocalyptic in ways that far exceed Southern California's apocalypse fixations.⁸ Isolation is probably the largest ingredient. For the pragmatic driver or commercial trucker the Coast Road is a road to distraction and chaos. The two-lane highway falls into the sea regularly with winter floods or is smothered by mud slides; periodically it is choked by fires. For inhabitants, physical contact with normal civilization can be cut off for months. There is a perpendicular quality about the coast that is acrophobia-inducing; it is a cliff-edge. The Sur landscape is indeed the continent's end to which the castoffs of society flee often unaware that they will be stopped by multi-thousand miles of water, the headlands and cliffs being a lemming's drop-off. Here is an elemental hostility to settlement; nothing is flat; houses are often secured to hillsides with pylons and cables. Big Sur itself is a cave of darkness, narrow and river-convoluted under eclipsing redwoods. The coast and its highway 1 is, except for one tortuous road inland, cut off from all things east—not only by the Santa Lucian mountain range but by an almost impenetrable chaparral matting that shows no lights at night through to the Salinas Valley. The coast yearlong is subject to fogs, and storms lash its trees and churn its rock-studded waters white.

Signs of insanity abound in Jeffers's narratives, mostly, one suspects, from anecdotes supplied by Una in her gossip forays with friends; he fills his tales with characters driven to madness or mad acts. The desperate plottings in "Tamar" are blamed on the wind-twisted cypress, storm-scoured rocks, and unending waters (*CP* 1: 25). Her father tells her brother Lee "Hell's in the box" (*CP* 1: 23), meaning isolation will undo you. Barclay's madness has the Sur as resonator. The extremes of the inhabitants and fugitives in "The Inhumanist" are heightened by the land.

This also may be what Jeffers proposes in "Apology." Environmental isolation, dampening fog, lashing storm-winds, precipitous walls, and drop-off cliffs may be beautiful to him, but they may also be variously causative of madness, the beauty itself being the prime culprit. Beautiful places demand tragedy, says the poet. Insanity may be part of tragedy or a transitional step to a state beyond it, exemplified in Orestes's transcendence in "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," after killing his mother and going mad. One hesitates to add insanity to the proposed Jeffers metaphysical equation, but it may be the "too much and over the edge" factor.⁹

The sheer precipitousness, the compressed landscape and grim isolation of Sur may be the catalyst for madness and ruin. Beauty as the

face of God ("Nova," *CP* 2: 531) may drive the agonist to mad things. This is actually suggested in two early Jeffers poems, both titled "Noon" (*CP* 4: 32; *CP* 1: 203). The same phenomenon can be contemplated in the Tennessee Williams play *Suddenly Last Summer*.¹⁰ The masses of Uranium 235 or Plutonium 239 in a nuclear bomb merely radiate until they are brought together by a chemical explosive compressing them beyond the critical mass. Without defining beauty or designating what makes a beautiful place, or explaining how these bring on tragedy, the poet has presented the metaphysical theorem: the more beauty, the more tragedy, the more madness, the more God.

If so, it may have been Jeffers's private calculation to avoid madness by living in Carmel and visiting Big Sur.

ENDNOTES

1. One is reminded of Einstein's formula $E = MC^2$: "I believe that the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, influencing each other, therefore parts of one organic whole" (Letter to Sister Mary James, *SL* 221). Jeffers was a committed materialist in the sense that he did not believe in or use the term "spirit" to signify disembodiment. He dealt with ghosts as dramatic actors, for instance in Helen of "Tamar" and all the actors of "Dear Judas" and experienced a "spirit world" both vicariously and directly through his sons laughing with the dead "Billie" running alongside their car (*SL* 145) and at least one séance with his father (*RJN* 51: 39). Ghost stories and séances, he explained to Blanche Matthias, "all suggest a shadowy and rather brief survival by some fractional part of consciousness" (*SL* 287). "Consciousness" itself in humans and animals Jeffers represents as a focusing of nerve endings in the brain. But he extends this consciousness to inorganic existence both in his discussion with Benjamin Miller (*SL* 286n) and in his poem "Whom should I write for" (*CP* 4: 541-42), in which he imagines this for her consciousness:

I think it is taken into the great dream of the earth; for this dark planet
Has its own consciousness, from which yours came,
And now returns: as the Earth's consciousness,
Half-separate for a time, will return at length
To the whole galaxy; and when that perishes
To the whole endless universe—that is, to God,
Who will make all things new.

All the preternatural world would seem to fall under this rubric of errant, dissipating energies.

Melba Bennett, in unpublished notes, quotes Jeffers as insisting that God is not the "spirit of the universe"; spirit and body, energy and matter are one substance

(Brophy, "Index" 17). Also see Introduction (Brophy, "Index" 2), and the category "Religion/Mysticism/God" (Brophy, "Index" 55).

In a letter to a Mr. Meikle, dated June 12, 1942, Una Jeffers writes: "If you ask whether Robinson Jeffers believes that one lives after death with some kind of personality intact that he had in this world, I am sure he would say 'no.' He feels that life *persists*, but somehow blended & fused into a universal force. But you will find in his writings over & over again spirits—or at least the voices of dead people talking . . ." (*RJN* 74: 17).

2. "Apology" was listed in a table of contents for *The Women at Point Sur*, but space constraints left that volume without the usual cluster of epiphanic shorter poems to reinforce the major narrative theme. But this still leaves the publication of *Cawdor*, *Dear Judas*, *Descent to the Dead*, *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, *Thurso's Landing*, and *Solstice* all innocent of its presence, *Descent* only clearly with reason.

3. There are two entries on "Apology" in Ann Ridgeway's edited *Selected Letters*. In his letter of July 11, 1931, Powell asks Jeffers about "Apology," strophe IV, whether the ecstasy there is "something akin to a part of Buddhistic thought," and Jeffers replies only that he finds Oriental thought foreign and cites Spinoza (*SL* 184). In a letter, June 19, 1932, Carpenter asks about the discharge of energy in tragedy's catharsis and the purpose of "Apology," and Jeffers responds:

"Imagined victims our salvation" I think represented two strains of thought— (1) There was a time when human sacrifice was needed to save the people; then a sheep could be substituted, or some kind of Guy Fawkes image. Or an imagined victim in a story, suffering things we all feel liable to but hope to escape. Wasn't this one of the perhaps conscious functions of Greek Tragedy? (2) More practically, we endow a person in a story with certain excesses of thought or passion and see what their logic leads to, and are thus perhaps warned ourselves, so he suffers instead of us.

So there might be "salvation through" vicarious "passion." (*SL* 196)

This last excerpt touches the question, suggesting my Aristotelian and Jungian interpretations, but, in contrast to the directness of the poem, the poet slides away mixing vicarious suffering with learning from the character's passion.

4. "Hungerfield" appeared first in *Poetry* magazine, May 1952, then in *Hungerfield*, a special edition (1952), and finally in *Hungerfield and Other Poems* (Random House, 1954). Adding one year ("more than thirty years") to the *New Masses* publication in 1926 yields 1957, yet the poem was written in 1951 from internal evidence.

5. The reader may ask if Jeffers realized that, whatever his writing did in other aspects, it certainly could not and did not keep all wolves from his house. Yes, Garth escaped permanent injury among the hazards of the New Mexican ranch; Jeffers's sons were spared death and disfigurement in World War II, Donnan by draft exemption, Garth by happenstance in both Pacific and European theaters of action. Tragedy came close in 1938 when the poet suffered writer's block leading to infidelity and his wife's attempted suicide, saved only by the freak deflection of a bullet. Jeffers gives no indication what he imagines the parameters to be to the supposed writer's privilege; were they not all to die in their fated time?

6. One is reminded of the choric interruption in “The Women at Point Sur” (CP 1: 288–89) observing that, however mad his characters are, they exceed the herons, the owl, the bittern, the squid, and the vulture, which see and hear but do not behold God. Humans are capable of formal praise.

7. Frazer writes:

If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably be found to resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the Law of Contact or Contagion. From the first of these principles, namely the Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not. (12)

8. California has long had the reputation of being the land of the “crazies.” For the Western mind at least, it is the net that catches the last of westward migrations as well as escape artists and culture-fugitives; it is isolated from the East by two great mountain ranges, the Sierras and the Rockies, it is the land of earthquakes and forest fires, quiescent volcanoes and tsunami-hazard zones. Southern California and especially Los Angeles have been subjects of apocalyptic novel, film, and treatise. Nathanael West’s *Day of the Locust* (1939), Mike Davis’s *City of Quartz* (1992), and *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (1998) come to mind.

9. In a sense Big Sur is all places, each with its own beauty, but Big Sur is a strong dose. Jeffers’s is not just regional poetry. The beauty of California may be the detractor’s justification for vilifying the state as harboring more weird and crazy people per square mile than any other place on earth. However, the opening of strophe II insists “This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places, / (The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite cliff the gaunt cypresses crown / Demands what victim? . . .)”; for Jeffers the Sur coast was quintessential beauty.

10. In the “Noon” poems and in Williams’s play the emphasis and agency is in brightness and intensity of the summer sun. Jeffers’s second “Noon” ends:

What wine has the God drunk, to sing
Violently in heaven, what wine his worshippers
Whose silence blazes? The light that is over
Light, the terror of noon, the eyes
That the eagles die at, have thrown down
Me and my pride, here I lie naked
In a hollow of the shadowless rocks,
Full of the God, having drunk fire. (CP 1: 203)

In Jeffers, intensity and God are most often expressed in terms of light as in Orestes's witness in "The Tower Beyond Tragedy" (CP 1: 177) and in California's vision in "Roan Stallion" (CP 1: 195); see Brophy, *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol* (96–97; 147). Jeffers's God is the whiteness (containing all colors) of light but also light's total absence as in "Night."

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ROBERT ZALLER

LANDSCAPE AS DIVINATION
READING "APOLOGY FOR BAD DREAMS"

I

"Apology for Bad Dreams" (CP 1: 208–11), first published in *New Masses* in 1926, has long been recognized as Robinson Jeffers's *ars poetica*, a poem that simultaneously describes, defends, and itself embodies his mature project. At the same time, it is a problematic work on many levels. Its four numbered sections are all strikingly self-contained, with little apparent thematic connection, development, or cross-referencing, at least on first inspection. There is a progressive widening of perspective, but no final synthesis; indeed, the poem ends on a note of profound irresolution. The sections themselves might almost be read as discrete poetic statements, not to say as independent poems in their own right.

If the poem as a whole possesses unity, as I believe it does, it can only yield to close analysis. The first section would appear to offer the fewest difficulties. It presents a typical Jeffers narrative fragment or "scene," set against a background that is at once sublime, brooding, and dynamic. The first lines describe a coastal declivity at dusk, plunging "headlong"—that is, as if on purpose, or propulsively, like a breaking wave—toward an ocean figured, contrariwise, as "a great stone" cut to an edge and "polished to shining." It is not merely that Jeffers inverts the elements here, characterizing stone as fluid and the great waters as petrified, but that he suggests agency behind these appearances; the ocean is, he says, "Like a great stone *someone* has cut to a sharp edge and polished to shining" (emphasis added). But there is a third element as well, described both as immanent in and processive to the whole. The first words of the poem, "In the purple light," lead to the description of "the fountain / And furnace" of light that lies beyond the waters. Beginning with light, then, or rather *in* it, the scene leads to the element of rock—Jeffers never privileges mere earth—and from there to ocean, wrapping them around each other

metaphorically before returning to light, or more properly to the image of its source, figured as violent and volatile, furnace and fountain.

Embedded in this description is the casual notice of “A lonely clearing” on the sea-cliff with a field of corn, a stream, and the jut of a roof “under spared trees.” This is human habitation and cultivation, barely a detail in the sweep of the landscape; but we pause over the brief, wincing phrase “spared trees,” for something here suggests suspended agency, a small rent in nature that is potentially a very wide and catastrophic one: what is it, after all, but storms or blight that ever fells great trees in their prime? Having completed the first, establishing arc of the poem, Jeffers returns to the clearing, where “a woman / Is punishing a horse.” There is no context, and none will be provided; the scene simply unfolds, although to readers of Jeffers the final scene of *Roan Stallion* (CP 1: 195–98) will inevitably come to mind, with the gender roles reversed. This time it is not a man but a woman who abuses a horse—though Jeffers is careful not to use any pejoratives in his description, only parenthetically linking the punishment of the horse with the sparing of the trees—and the other figure who enters the scene, the woman’s son, comes merely to assist her. Toward the end, Jeffers abruptly enlarges his focus, returning to the panoramic perspective of the landscape from which the participants are “shrunk to insect size” and “Out of all human relation,” a phrase which suggests even as it dismisses the untold story of the action. If there is any narrative implication to the scene, however, it disappears into an almost aestheticized abstraction, the woman’s flailing arm reduced to a “gesture” and the horse’s reaction appearing as a ritual response. This move only intensifies the horror of the moment, for Jeffers describes minutely everything we can no longer “see”: “The blood dripping from where the chain is fastened, / The beast shuddering” We are left only with an image in which we are sure that innocence is being tortured, but for what reason or to what purpose we cannot know. The section sweeps on into a final evocation of dusk in which the sequence of description is reversed, the dying light in the west darkening first the ocean and then the coastal hills. As the woman and the horse seem to be enfolded in a rhythm that yokes them together in a timeless frieze, so the blurring of the natural elements by the transfiguring light makes the prone earth itself appear almost as its source, the matrix from which, as Jeffers says with shrewd evasion, it grows “apparent.”

We are left, then, with two scenes, two mysteries, one animate and the other inanimate, one compelling awe and the other horror—the two poles of the sublime. What larger vision unifies them? Jeffers leaves us with only a riddling quotation from Isaiah at the end: “What said the prophet? ‘I create good: / And I create evil: I am the Lord.’”

Whatever we are to make of this—and it is, as Jeffers emphasizes, a prophet speaking; that is, in his usage, a man with only a partial and distorted access to the truth—it is *not* that the beauty of the sundown is “good” and the apparent cruelty of the woman is “evil,” so that one is opposed to the other and one ultimately overcomes or extinguishes the other. We feel no such triumph, no such resolution, but only the unreconciled contrast and the unsettling sense of an undisclosed force beyond both.

There is a stylistic matter to take account of before we leave this section, namely Jeffers’s use of intensifiers. He does not describe the sun merely as a fountain and furnace of light, but of “incredible” light. Similarly, he refers to the light as “enormous” as he moves away from the scene of the woman and the horse, and of the beauty it effects as “unbridled and unbelievable.” Such modifiers are not uncommon in Jeffers, and some critics have chastised them as merely grandiose. Since one might think they could have been well dispensed with—the casual reader will wonder what *incredible* adds to “fountain / And furnace of incredible light” or *enormous* to “The enormous light beats up out of the west”—let us see what work they actually do in the poem.

“Enormous” means exceedingly or unboundedly large, with a secondary connotation of monstrous and astonishing, a quality more directly expressed in the noun form “enormity.” The “light” it modifies is not merely abundant and spectacular, but overwhelming. We can readily enough recognize this as an aspect of the sublime. The sunset into which Jeffers wishes to draw us is not placid and picturesque but engulfing, and the darkness it presages holds no comfort.

What, though, of the primary signification of “enormous,” namely, great size? Here, we must attend not only to the meaning of the word but to its exact placement in the poem. It occurs in the line that pulls us abruptly out of the “clearing,” twice described as “little” within three lines, in which the scene between the woman and the horse transpires. “Little” is not precisely the opposite of “enormous”; we would rather say “tiny.” But, as we recall, Jeffers has already shrunk the figures in the clearing to “insect size.” They are not only minuscule against the surrounding landscape, but, further belittled by the sudden widening of perspective that deprives them of identity (“You cannot see the face of the woman”) and reduces their actions to mere gestures, they appear as mere automatons. They are indeed rendered tiny, and in the most radical sense; they no longer signify.

“Unbridled” poses perhaps fewer difficulties. Here the contrast is with the halter and the chain-tie rope that bind the punished horse in the clearing. As the human actors are reduced in scale, the “unbridled” beauty of the sunset suggests, albeit indirectly and inferentially, the

suffering horse's transcendence of its incarnational fate and its subsumption in universal value. This may seem to stretch the text, and Jeffers wisely refrains from making the horse an overt symbol. If we glance backward however at "Roan Stallion," the poem he had only recently completed, we see a horse depicted precisely in terms of an image of divine power and sacrificial incarnation; and if we look ahead to the poem he was shortly to write, "Cawdor," we see similarly in the death-dream of the caged eagle that is its climax a form of divine assumption. The leisure that enables Jeffers to develop this conceit in the narratives is obviously lacking in the compressed and elliptical space of "Apology for Bad Dreams," but I think the descriptor "unbridled" serves as a kind of placeholder for what is fully expressed in the longer poems. It is certainly far from a casual or unconsidered locution.

That leaves the adjectives "incredible" and "unbelievable," both applied to the dying sunlight. We run these terms together in common speech when we wish to express our skepticism or wonder at something. What is there, though, not to believe about the setting sun? The question may seem facetiously posed, but we can give it a nonfrivolous answer if we remember that we are at a scene of the sublime, and that the entire poem takes place under its aspect. The sublime is that which is apparent but exceeds comprehension; it is precisely that which is offered but not believed. The world presents itself in Jeffers as immanent divinity, a vision beyond verification or credal assertion but grasped only by intuition and experienced as rapture. The sunset is eminently believable as a phenomenon of physics and sense perception, but its deeper meaning is veiled to our sight. At every scene of the sublime we thus stand at a threshold that simultaneously challenges and confounds belief. What Jeffers calls elsewhere "the wild God of the world" (*CP* 1: 377) manifests himself as a condition of doubt, for he can never be affirmed as a matter of direct perception or rational deduction. Very properly, then, the universal process that embodies him is, in this sense, "incredible," "unbelievable."

This vision (like any other) is, of course, open to dispute. What one cannot accuse Jeffers of is carelessness or imprecision in describing it.

II

The second section of the poem begins with a descriptive statement that sounds like a declaration, but is only part of an enormous verse paragraph—"enormous" in both of the senses we have canvassed—that only issues in a principal verb half-way down the page, and, after repeating itself, partly for emphasis, partly for balance, and partly for grammatical recuperation after the extended parenthetical excursus

that follows it, comes to a full stop only in the poet's silent rumination on what he has pronounced with such seeming confidence. Jeffers's unique way with poetic syntax has never been more challengingly on display, and it may be useful to quote the lines in full:

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
 (The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite cliff the gaunt
 cypresses crown
 Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what Titan? The hills
 like pointed flames
 Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the sun, what
 immolation?)
 This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and like the passionate
 spirit of humanity
 Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths, the horrible
 transfigurements: I said in my heart,
 "Better invent than suffer: imagine victims
 Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist, or you
 Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place."

This is an extraordinary feat of poetic architecture. It is not "This coast *cries out* for tragedy like all beautiful places" or "This coast is *crying out* for tragedy," but the participial phrase "This coast crying out . . ." which serves to usher in the whole paragraph and segues into the parenthetical queries that modify it. "This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places" is thus not a statement but a proposition, whose source and authority, as the paragraph discloses, lie not in any inherent quality in the granite cliffs and the terrible peaks but in the poet's private musing. The poet's need to subdue his own demons is projected grandly onto the landscape, which is deformed (or, if you will, exalted) by his vision, and makes his objective correlative. This then serves as the "apology" for the stories he feels compelled to tell. These stories do not merely relieve intolerable psychic pressure, however, but themselves embody a fearful energy and violence in the same way that the locked strains of rock, cloud, and atom that Jeffers evokes in the Prelude to "The Women at Point Sur" do, strains that pointedly include "The strain in the skull." Nor do they discharge this energy inconsequentially but actually transform the landscape, giving it the aspect of "pointed flames" through which we imaginatively perceive "Jeffers country" even now. Were the poet not to do so, worse still would redound on him or on some innocent victim whom he might be compelled to "martyr." Jeffers sees himself, that is, in the place of the woman in the clearing (who is, after all, his own creation), exempting

neither himself nor us from whatever passion might have driven her to an act of such cruelty and spite: “for what are we,” he continues, “The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips / And little hair, to think we should always be fed, / Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled?” Indeed we are capable of far worse, and when Jeffers admonishes himself to “Burn sacrifices once a year to magic / Horror away from the house,” it is not merely external malevolence that is signified but the darkness within.

The scene in the clearing is thus both clarified and complicated by the observations in Section II. The woman with the whip is, plausibly, a Jeffers protagonist, or at least the prototype of one; a part of the poet’s own psychic economy as well as the divine scheme. What remains is to establish the relations between the two, and here the key term, twice invoked in the section, is “beauty.” The opening gambit—“This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places”—is reflected again in Jeffers’s self-admonition to “invent” lest he “Martyr some creature to the beauty of the place.” The implication is that extremes of beauty beget extremes of violence, and that he who would not act upon such compulsion must represent it (not a lesser form of response, of course, but an ethically and aesthetically mediated one). Tragedy, in its most basic form, is violence as art.

The other reference to beauty in Section II is to “the spirit / Of the beauty of humanity” that occurs near the end. The copula of “beauty” and “humanity” in Jeffers is rare enough to compel attention, but we should be alert by now to the fact that beauty, for him, is correlated with the intensity or violence of divine manifestation in natural process; in short, with sublimity. It is simplest and most direct in inorganic matter; more complex in the instinctual drives of creatures; most complex, and also most problematic, in humans. When Jeffers says in the late poem “De Rerum Virtute” that “it is hard to see beauty / In any of the acts of man” (*CP* 3: 402), he does not mean that there is no beauty in them, but only that it is of a mixed and compound nature that requires a distinctive mode of action, tragedy, to realize itself. We might, indeed, most briefly define tragedy in Jeffers as the human response to sublimity, and beauty as the category that encompasses both. If, then, the coast cries out for tragedy, what it calls for are human actors. Those actors, to play their roles, must be unconscious of them—“agonists,” as Jeffers calls them. They suffer their actions, and the passions that provoke them, almost as “lesser” creatures suffer their instincts; the tragic poet alone can hold them in a vision of terror and awe. Jeffers first uses the term tragedy to describe “The Women at Point Sur,” the narrative contemporary with “Apology for Bad Dreams,” and it is no accident that this is the last of his narratives

whose protagonist is a Romantic overreacher who grasps at divine power and authority.¹ “Apology for Bad Dreams” in this sense is a working-out of Jeffers’s own sense of tragedy and therefore of the implications of his poetic project. When he apostrophizes the characters in “The Women at Point Sur,” “stammer the tragedy you crackled vessels” (CP 1: 289), he suggests clearly what the subsequent narratives will all bear out, that the most exemplary tragic actor is not one who storms heaven in the manner of Faust or his own Reverend Barclay, but one who comes up instead against the limits of his own nature.

III

The third section of the poem opens up yet another aspect of tragic economy, that of history. The coast remains populated by its ghosts, the native tribes who, as Jeffers says in “A Redeemer,” have been “brushed . . . to death” by its present occupants (CP 1: 407). Invisible to ordinary sight, they “Crouch in the nights” beside their spectral fires, denied the sky except in their wistful imaginings. They make no demands and they are past amends, but they nonetheless represent an obligation, for, as Jeffers remarks, they “have paid something for the future / Luck of the country, while we living keep old griefs in memory.” The elision of tense suggests the unstable relationship between the two halves of the statement, for what *has* been paid for *future* “luck” is paid only if the price—in a word, extinction—is remembered in atonement. The tribes of course can no longer exact that price, and divine consciousness is too remote—“God’s / Envy,” Jeffers says, “is not a likely fountain of ruin”—but the accounts are kept somewhere, for “to forget evils calls down / Sudden reminders from the cloud.” The phrase recalls (without denoting) Old Testament interventions, but suggests also a landscape charged with divine presence, and therefore a power that needs propitiation.

Almost as if casting a spell, Jeffers urges that “remembered deaths be our redeemers; / Imagined victims our salvation,” thereby invoking the apparition of Tamar Cauldwell, the eponymous protagonist of his “Tamar,” who passes him “flamelike” and “white as the half moon at midnight.” This vision in turn recalls and complicates his own self-counsel in Section II to “Burn sacrifices once a year to magic / Horror away from the house.” The horror, as we saw in considering that part of the poem, was in the poet himself; but, as we now understand, it is not in him alone but is also part of the burden the “lucky” successors of the coast must bear. The “magic” has worked for him, but without equal vigilance (and contrition) it may not for others. The prophet

can warn, but the redeemer alone can save, and Jeffers, though suggesting that his poems *are* partly redemptive, distances himself from the salvific role in "A Redeemer," and explicitly rejects it in "Meditation on Saviors" (CP 1: 396–401), another poem thematically related to the "Apology." Nonetheless, the speaker of "Apology" sounds a good deal like the self-immolating protagonist of "A Redeemer," who says: "I am here on the mountain making / Antitoxin for all the happy towns and farms, the lovely blameless children, the terrible / Arrogant cities. I used to think them terrible: their gray prosperity, their pride: from up here / Specks of mildew" (CP 1: 407). The "Specks of mildew" recall of course the "insect size" of the protagonists in Section I of the "Apology" as witnessed from a height, and the "happy," "blameless," and "arrogant" populations the Redeemer beholds have evidently forgotten the tainted and perilous "luck" they have appropriated from the Indian dead. From this perspective, the woman and the horse of our poem seem not only a reenactment of the region's genocidal past, but a grim omen of its future. Fire imagery links this progression into a single, unfolding vision. The hills "are scarred with ancient fire," while the revenant tribes crouch beside "the ghost of a fire." Tamar's passage is "flamelike," fittingly enough for the author of a holocaust, and the section ends with an invocation of the seasonal fires that purge and restore the landscape, but presage a final apocalypse as well:

... Beautiful country burn again, Point Pinos down to the Sur Rivers
Burn as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and the Carmel water.

IV

Section III ends as it and its predecessors had begun, with an evocation of the coast. This framing device reminds us of the natural surround in which human action is embedded, and of which it is part. Section IV begins with a radically different move, however: a shockingly violent image, again derived from Scripture, that is immediately linked to the poet's own function:

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who invents victims, is only
the ape of that God.

What the poet does indirectly, imaginatively, and almost unconsciously (he is having "bad dreams"), God—"that God"—does wilfully and purposively, not to literary inventions or even scapegoats (the vic-

tims the community itself puts forward as sacrifices to forestall collective disaster), but to humanity as such. This is almost a vision of the demonic, of Goya's Saturn devouring his children. It is worse, even, because it proceeds not from bestial appetite and cannibalistic amnesia, but experimentally, and, as it seems, merely to bring a connoisseur's pleasure in the "savor." The final suggestion of castration in "the bruised root" completes an image of torture at once appallingly brutal and perversely refined. Instead of distancing himself from this vision, however, the poet declares himself to be the willing disciple, "the ape" of this torturer-God. This would seem to be the cul-de-sac of the Calvinist imagination: absolute submission to conscienceless power.

Jeffers elaborates this vision, likening it to the geological process that had scarred the hills in Section II, and redefining the "savor" as a "spirit" that is simultaneously realized and consumed in a "naked ecstasy" before finally resuming the aspect of the "broken atom" invoked in "Roan Stallion": "Humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, / The atom to be split" (CP 1: 189). The authorial voice that makes this declaration in "Roan Stallion" is not identified, but it seems linked to the one that breaks out at this point in the "Apology" and is described as "the power that massed" the atom; that is, the immanent God of natural process who appears as a subordinate manifestation of divine purpose. We will meet this God again in the epiphanic deity of Jeffers's dramatic poem, "At the Birth of an Age" (CP 2: 420–84, at 481–84), the self-hanged God who tortures himself to discover himself: "I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me / In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth, / Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments, / And here am I moving the stars that are me." Jeffers again stretches syntax to its limits in this passage, playing on the subject/object relation in his alternation of the reflexive "myself" and the object pronoun "me." Similarly, in the lines that follow, he moves abruptly from a voice that seems to represent the poet to one that implies the answering deity:

I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason
 For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.
 He being sufficient might be still. *I think they admit no reason; they are the ways of
 my love.* [italics added]

It is not clear in the latter sentence at which point the voice breaks; "I think they admit no reason" might still be the poet's musing, but "they are the ways of my love," with its clear syntactical interruption, is surely the "answer," or, if one prefers, the antiphonal response. The

last lines of the poem, with their rapid survey of divine process, the unintelligibility of phenomena, and the concealed evidences in the human “brain-vault,” recapitulate the problematic of the sublime, which ends in a last prospect: “The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland, the ever-returning roses of dawn.” We are, in a sense, where we began, with an intensely active visual field in which the natural recurrences of the phenomenal world, including the recurrent human agon of tragedy, provide the sole but insufficient clue to its meaning.

If there is a master trope to “Apology for Bad Dreams,” it is surely landscape itself, which, as a dynamic continuum embracing everything from flora to star-swirls, is both the site and the ultimate subject of Jeffers’s art. In the “Apology,” Jeffers figures it successively as a theater of human action and divine manifestation; as the source and agency of the tragic agon of his narratives and a force to be appeased by “sacrifice”; as a locus of historic conquest and spoliation; and, finally, as a signifier of the constant divine presence that exhibits itself within natural process and transcends all more proximate levels of intention and value. If Jeffers’s verse exhibits this many-faceted vision within a final crystal of unity, “Apology for Bad Dreams” may be most fruitfully read as an epitome of his construction of landscape and the divine agon inherent in it. This construction is deeply resistant to the pieties of contemporary environmentalism and ecology. Jeffers poses a radical challenge to post-Romantic, post-Darwinian, and post-theistic views of the natural world as a passive and domesticated object of aesthetic appreciation, responsible stewardship, and enlightened conservation. We may indeed wish to test the adequacy of such views against his disquieting vision of a ceaseless natural dynamism in which the human perspective, while distinctive, cannot be determinative, and in which hubris of any kind, however notionally benign or well-intentioned, “calls down / Sudden reminders from the cloud.”

ENDNOTE

1. On this point see my “Hardy, Jeffers, and the Hero of Endurance.”

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STEVEN CHAPMAN

ON THE QUESTION OF SCIENCE
IN “THE INHUMANIST”

I. THE BUSINESS OF SCIENCE AND THE WILL TO TRUTH

I. THE TWO SIDES OF SCIENCE

The question of science, its uses and abuses, counts among the major themes of Jeffers’s work. In “Triad” (1933), Jeffers notes how science seems to suffer in the modern period from a crisis of confidence and legitimacy:

Science, that makes wheels turn, cities grow,
Moribund people live on, playthings increase,
But has fallen from hope to confusion at her own business
Of understanding the nature of things . . . (CP 2: 309)

While the achievements of science—industry, urbanization, modern medicine, etc.—are impressive and real, Jeffers suggests that science itself seems no longer sure of direction, has lost its earlier optimism, and is confused about its own purpose and value. There is also a sense in these lines that the technological applications of science do not indicate so much the triumph of the scientific worldview, as a distraction from science’s true vocation.

His definition of the “business” of science as understanding “the nature of things” is an idea which goes back at least as far as the early Greek philosophers (think of all those pre-Socratic treatises called simply *On Nature*), and recalls the title of Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*) as well as Virgil’s canonical statement of the philosophical good life in *The Georgics*: “Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas” (“happy is he who understands the cause of things”). While this Classical conception of the role and dignity of science is one Jeffers certainly had an affinity for, and would emulate in his own neo-Lucretian celebrations of the natural world in the final

poetry, the point here is that modern science has lost its earlier sense of purpose and direction, has “fallen from hope to confusion.” Modern science, unlike its Classical predecessor, is unable to provide for its own justification, having become fragmented and increasingly a problem unto itself.

This ambivalent relationship towards science remains a central tension in the poetry of the Thirties. While poems such as “The Purse Seine” and “The Coast Road” document modern science’s destructive potential and the havoc wreaked by technological civilization on both the natural and the human worlds, contemporary compositions such as “Margrave” and “Nova” show Jeffers engaging in a sustained dialogue with science, celebrating the knowledge it brings and finding in recent scientific discoveries rich material for poetic exploration. Thus even as Jeffers denounces the “immense vulgarities of misapplied science” in alliance with “decaying Christianity” (“Prescription of Painful Ends,” *CP* 3: 14), his own reading and thinking during this period is increasingly influenced and enriched by a broad scientific curiosity. In “Margrave,” he explores the existential consequences of Edwin Hubble’s discovery of galactic recession (in which the “far stars” are depicted as fleeing from the “infection” of human consciousness). In “Nova,” he celebrates recent advances in modern astrophysics—the physics of thermonuclear reactions and the thermodynamics of stellar evolution—while poetically interpreting the supernova event as a metaphor of the “invulnerable beauty of things,” which is also “the face of God” (*CP* 2: 531).

2. AFTER HIROSHIMA

This question of science became especially acute for Jeffers after the American decision to drop atomic weapons on the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. Along with many others, Jeffers believed that Hiroshima marked a new and troubling phase of history, which in turn called for a critical reassessment of the role and responsibility of science. His perspective on the “Atomic Age” is, however, somewhat different from the standard “humanist” critique. For him, the bomb marked not just a new epoch in the history of humanity’s capacity for self-destruction, but also a new epoch in our overall relationship with the natural world. What is truly shocking about nuclear weaponry’s “unnatural powers,” from Jeffers’s point of view, is not the immense cruelty of what humans can inflict on their fellow humans—Jeffers being much closer to Hobbes than to Rousseau on the question of humanity’s innate depravity—but that it has enabled a single species, for the first time, to disrupt the

very life-systems of the planet upon which all life, including human life, depends (see especially "The Inquisitors"). The new age of Promethean pyrotechnics inaugurated by the bomb, shocking in its destructive power and beyond anything previously known or imaginable, marked for Jeffers a critical turning point in both human and natural history, and he speaks accordingly of a new age of troubled human-earth relations (see Chapter XLV of "The Inhumanist," and "The Dog in the Sky": "Signs have appeared in heaven. . . . The second / General war was the end of a period. / . . . Now a new age begins" [CP 3: 470]). For Jeffers, of course, the "new age" is not a utopian dream of human achievement, but the age of critical awareness of the growing crisis affecting Western technological civilization in its relationship with the planet and the rest of planetary life.

3. THE DOUBLE-EDGED BLADE: CRITIQUE AND TRANSVALUATION

As the preface to *The Double Axe* makes clear, it was the crisis of World War II and the advent of nuclear weapons which impelled Jeffers to return with vigor to his philosophical project, to give it a name, and to refine it into a more coherent set of propositions and precepts adequate to the challenges of the times. "The Inhumanist," the second narrative of *The Double Axe* volume, offers Jeffers's most concise articulation of his late and fully ripened philosophical and cosmological worldview, and certainly counts among the high peaks of his artistic achievement. In an atmosphere infused by the red glow of nuclear holocaust, a primary theme of the poem is the question of humanity's survival and possible future in the period following Hiroshima. In a highly stylized sequence of prophetic-didactic teachings and parables which recalls both the form and the ironic style of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the old man (a.k.a. "The Inhumanist") presents a series of modulations on the central theme of his philosophy, namely, the imperative to move from a human-centered to a nature-centered frame of reference, or as he puts it in the preface: "a clear shift of meaning and emphasis, from man to what is not man" (CP 4: 421). Jeffers sees this philosophy, what he describes as "a new attitude, a new manner of thought and feeling" (CP 4: 418) as having truth and value, and as the appropriate philosophical-religious-ethical response to the new historical situation which began at Hiroshima.

Like Nietzsche's provocative identification with the Anti-Christ, Jeffers uses the exaggerated and theatrical figure of the old man as a vehicle to express his most critical assessment of the human condition, as well as his own antithetical relationship to conventional value systems.¹ And in a way which is similar to Nietzsche's dissonant

dialectics, Jeffers's late philosophy is double-edged, involving both a devaluation of traditional values and a "transvaluation" and proclamation of new values. But whereas Nietzsche negotiates what he calls the "overcoming of nihilism" through the intertwined doctrines of the superman, the eternal recurrence, and the aesthetic justification of life, Jeffers's overcoming of traditional humanism and theism leads to the adoption of an inhuman or "transhuman" perspective, to a holistic conception of the "one life" of the universe, and to the idea that human beings are justified not through their own productions, but through conscious participation in the creative movement of the whole.

Jeffers's teaching of Inhumanism thus contains both a critical and a utopian dimension. The critical edge is represented by the old man's double-bladed axe, used explicitly in the sense of a symbol "to cut truth from lies"; but behind all his axe-wielding and axe-grinding is an underlying hope—self-consciously utopian—that some future civilization may indeed free itself from the enthrallments of the human self-world and "endure peace." While the poem offers an explicit critique of the "arrogance of humanism" (to use David Ehrenfeld's term), the ultimate goal of this critique is the restructuring of human-earth relations towards a new mode in which humanity is considered as part and participant of the larger transhuman reality. Only such a radical shift in humanity's sense of self and purpose, Jeffers believed, would enable the species to face the future with any sort of dignity.² And because the future, as such, is undetermined and thus "open," there exists a window of possibility and opportunity for the exercise of human freedom and a new ordering of human-earth affairs—even if humanity's way into the future is likely to be long and hard.

II. THE SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS OF INHUMANISM

I. THE COPERNICAN PRINCIPLE

It is significant that even against the backdrop of nuclear catastrophe, Jeffers reserves a place of honor for science, paying tribute to its founding personalities and celebrating its achievements. His sympathy and allegiance with the scientific worldview are made clear in chapter XXV, where the old man erects a pair of roughhewn cairns to honor two of his intellectual heroes, the first "to Copernicus: Nicky Kupernick: who first pushed man / Out of his insane self-importance and the world's navel, and taught him his place. // And the next one to Darwin" (*CP* 3: 274). Jeffers's choice is significant. Copernicus and Darwin may be understood as stand-ins—or what Emerson would call

"representative men"—for the whole remarkable history of modern physics and biology, and as key figures of the Scientific Revolution broadly understood. For Jeffers, stonework always carries symbolic weight, so even the old man's crude masonry suggests the foundational and enduring significance of science for his overall worldview, and that the philosophy of Inhumanism is grounded in large measure upon the concept of truth embodied in the scientific tradition.

The first figure honored is Copernicus, referred to familiarly as "Nicky Kupernick." Copernicus, as the old man correctly notes, was the first to extend cosmology outside the classical bounds of anthropocentrism and geocentrism, and in so doing opened up an infinitely vaster universe in which neither the earth nor humankind could claim centrality. Earlier, in the opening lines of "Margrave," Jeffers had described how the scientific revolution in cosmology brought about a displacement of humanity's sense of itself from the center of the world to the periphery:

The earth was the world and man was its measure, but our minds have looked
 Through the little mock-dome of heaven the telescope-slotted observatory
 eye-ball, there space and multitude came in
 And the earth is a particle of dust by a sand-grain sun, lost in a nameless cove of
 the shores of a continent.
 Galaxy on galaxy, innumerable swirls of innumerable stars, endured as it were
 forever and humanity
 Came into being, its two or three million years are a moment, in a moment it
 will certainly cease out from being
 And galaxy on galaxy endure after that as it were forever . . . (CP 2: 160)

In the pre-modern period, the natural world (macrocosmos) and the human world (microcosmos) were seen as reciprocal and integral aspects of a single reality. Humanity was "at home" in a human world. In a clear reference to Protagoras's dictum that man (anthropos) is the measure (metron) of the cosmos, Jeffers describes how, in the pre-scientific age, the "earth was the world and man was its measure." After the advances of the Copernican revolution and modern measuring instruments (from Galileo's telescope to Hubble's observatory on Mt. Wilson), humanity's sense both of itself and of the world began to change. Especially with the advances of modern observational techniques and data collection, the earth now seems but "a particle of dust by a sand-grain sun," and humanity's two or three million years but "a moment."³

In the tribute in "The Inhumanist," the old man pays homage especially to the de-centering effect of the Copernican revolution, crediting it with helping to break the stranglehold of classical humanism

and religious orthodoxy with their “absurd” notions of human self-importance. This de-centering of the world picture is often called the “Copernican Principle,” the principle that human observers possess no inherently privileged position within the universe. As cultural historians have pointed out, Copernicus not only effected a revolution in astronomy but inaugurated a revolution of our larger cosmological picture which would shape the modern view of the world (Koestler, Blumenberg). Jeffers too recognized the Copernican revolution as a fundamental turning point, and as the first step towards replacing anthropocentric illusions with a view of reality in which humans can no longer claim to be central. “Man is no measure of anything,” we read in Chapter XV (*CP* 3: 264). Insofar as modern astronomy, beginning with Copernicus, helps to break the spell of anthropocentric illusion and lead to more viable theories concerning the nature of the cosmos and humanity’s place in it, its discoveries are indispensable. As Jeffers puts it in a late, untitled fragment: “There is nothing like astronomy to pull the stuff out of man, / His stupid dreams and red-rooster importance: let him count the star-swirls” (*CP* 3: 476). Or similarly in “Animula”: “Man’s world puffs up his mind, as a toad / Puffs himself up; the billion light-years cause a serene and wholesome deflation” (*CP* 3: 420).

2. THE COSMOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The tribute to Copernicus intones the cosmological dimension of Jeffers’s late poetry, his concern with the structure and origins, evolution and eventual fate of the cosmos taken as a whole. “The Inhumanist” foregrounds this cosmological dimension right at the beginning of the poem, where the old man points to the One and All of the universe with a combination of traditional pantheist and organicist notions meshed with insights gleaned from modern physics and thermodynamics:

“there is not an atom in all the universes
But feels every other atom; gravitation, electromagnetism, light, heat, and the
other
Flamings, the nerves in the night’s black flesh, flow them together; the stars, the
winds and the people: one energy,
One existence, one music, one organism, one life, one God: star-fire and rock-
strength, the sea’s cold flow
And man’s dark soul.” (*CP* 3: 256–57)

This passage reads somewhat like a résumé of Einstein's theory of general relativity, with its attempt to bring together the extensive dimension of space-time with the electromagnetic and gravitational fields. Particularly precocious, in terms of Jeffers's engagement with modern (post-classical) physics, are the ideas expressed here of the universal interconnectedness of all things (the idea that every atom "feels" every other atom), that ultimate reality can be described as a process or "flowing together," that the universe is comprised primarily of "flamings" or "energy," and finally that human observers are also part of the universal flow of things, both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence (to paraphrase Niels Bohr). What comes through above all is an uncompromising holism, the idea that the universe, though vastly extensive, is a singular and undivided whole, like the *en kai pan* of the pre-Socratics, or Spinoza's *Summum Genus*. In his emphasis on wholeness, Jeffers comes in fact to a viewpoint which is strikingly similar to the holistic or "ontological" interpretation of quantum mechanics offered by David Bohm, with his notions of "undivided wholeness," that reality is best understood as process or flux (or what he calls the "holomovement"), and that the phenomenal world emerges or "unfolds" out of an implicate order in which everything is connected to everything else.

The dual theme of stargazing and meditation on the cosmic mysteries reappears in Chapter XXII, just before the tribute to Copernicus, where the old man is shown directing his gaze with wonder at the "black eyelet in the white of the Milky Way" while musing on the "one pattern" which pervades the universe in all its parts:

"There—or thereabout—

Cloaked in thick darkness in his power's dust-cloud,
 There is the hub and heavy nucleus, the ringmaster
 Of all this million-shining whirlwind of dancers, the stars of this end of heaven.
 It is strange truly,
 That great and small, the atoms of a grain of sand and the suns with planets, and
 all the galactic universes
 Are organized on one pattern, the eternal roundabout, the heavy nucleus and
 whirling electrons, the leashed
 And panting runners going nowhere; frustrated flight, unrelieved strain, endless
 return—all—all—
 The eternal firewheel." (CP 3: 269–70)

Here again, it is evident how thoroughly Jeffers had digested the findings of modern cosmography and astrophysics. Especially up-to-date is his portrayal of the infinite vastness of the universe beyond anything Pascal could have imagined (due to the vastly more expansive uni-

verse revealed by Hubble and others), and the identification of the Milky Way as just one of innumerable galaxies (“the stars of this end of heaven”). Modern cosmographers speak similarly of the Milky Way galaxy, along with the Andromeda galaxy, as belonging to what is called the “Local Group of Galaxies,” which is in turn part of the Virgo super-cluster, itself influenced by what is called the “Great Attractor”—although Jeffers’s metaphor of the “Ringmaster” is certainly more poetic. While the model of the atom presented here as a kind of miniature solar system (the “Rutherford model”) had already been superseded by quantum mechanics (the “Bohr model”), the old man’s intuition of pervasive homology and symmetry at all levels in the universe, from the subatomic world to the macroscopic properties of organized matter, to the ordering of solar systems and galaxies, corresponds very much to a central tenet of modern cosmology—sometimes called the Cosmological Principle—which states that the universe is a singular homogenous entity manifesting the same general laws in all regions of space and time.

The specific literary “spin” which Jeffers adds to this picture is the Schopenhaurian/Wagnerian tribute to the “endless return—all—all—” (think of *Tristan und Isolde*), which suggests not only an appreciation of the immense sea of creative energy underlying the movement of the whole, but also a belief that the entire universe is, in Jeffers-speak, “crying out for tragedy.” The old man, in fact, believes he can hear the great passionate “cry of nature,” which he compares to that of Lear or Oedipus, while hypothesizing that human tragedy is merely an echo or “reflex” of the greater cosmic drama. The meaning here is not only that the cosmos itself is a fitting subject for dramatic poetry, but that the cosmic context is the ultimate horizon of meaning for human existence, the context within which our human tragedies are played out.

3. DARWIN AND THE EVOLUTIONARY PARADIGM

The second figure commemorated in the old man’s odd ritual of honoring the ancestors is, significantly, another epochal figure in the history of science: Charles Darwin. While introduced almost as an afterthought (“And the next one [cairn] to Darwin”), it is perhaps even more significant. Darwin did in the realm of biology what Copernicus had done for astronomy and cosmology, showing that “man” has no special place in the larger scheme of evolution, and that his “insane self-importance” is largely an historical conceit which runs contrary to scientific facts. Among other things, Darwin’s theory of evolution or “descent with modification” held that human beings were not created by a creator God, but rather recently descended from

ape-like ancestors. While some of his followers might fall back into anthropocentrism by making humanity itself the final stage and teleological goal of the entire evolutionary process, Darwin himself strictly avoided such inferences and tended to stress the close similarity between human beings and their primate relatives. The "culture wars" caused by the clash between Darwinism and more traditional belief systems are well known, and Jeffers clearly sided with the Darwinists against the cultural conservatives of his day and saw in Darwinism an important tool in demolishing the assumptions of what he called the "Christian culture-complex."

But Darwinism was more to Jeffers than a critical instrument for bashing the conceits of the American patriarchic-technocratic ruling class. Rather, Darwinism offered a new and compelling view of the emergence and diversification of life, which, as Darwin himself put it, is "not without grandeur." Based on random genetic mutation, natural selection, and the adaptation of species to new environments, the Darwinian theory of evolution offered a solidly scientific way of looking at the story of how the natural world came into being without the need to posit a creator God or other supernatural force behind the process. From the period of "The Inhumanist" onward, Jeffers's thinking and philosophizing is increasingly informed by a broad Darwinian evolutionary perspective, which he extends to both cosmology and biology to form a unified picture of reality as a self-organizing creative movement unfolding in time and history according to its own direction and purposes.

Jeffers's reception of Darwinian ideas does not occur in a vacuum, and it involves an extensive dialogue with a long tradition of natural philosophy. Like many of Darwin's philosophically inclined interpreters, Jeffers was concerned above all with how the theory of evolution meshed with an overall view of reality. He is a Darwinist in a broad, pluralist sense. His view of life as a self-creating singularity is in fact more akin to the views expressed in Jan Smut's *Holism and Evolution*, Henri Bergson's *Evolution Créatrice*, and the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, than it is to the more restricted constructions of modern neo-Darwinists. Similarly, his view of evolution as endowed from the beginning with purpose and direction introduces a teleological dimension which is anathema to most modern evolutionary biologists, but which lies at the heart of his overall worldview. Especially in the final poetry, Jeffers will adapt and extend the Darwinian paradigm into a comprehensive "master narrative" embracing all aspects of existence, including the origin of the cosmos, of life, of human beings, of consciousness, and even of God insofar as "God" can refer to the whole interconnected process of becoming.

4. WHAT IS MAN?

In "The Inhumanist" and in the short poems of *The Double Axe*, Darwin's influence is most apparent in the articulation of a thoroughly materialist anthropology, based on an evolutionary understanding of human origins. Rather than special beings created by God, humans are seen in the Darwinian perspective first and foremost as animals, as a peculiar off-shoot of erect anthropoid bipeds who branched away from the baboons and related monkey groups towards the middle of the Miocene (approximately 20 million years ago), with modern humans distinguishing themselves from the other hominids at the end of the Pleistocene (a half million years ago or so). Besides offering a critical counterpoint to the "insane" representations of Christian Humanism, Darwinism provided Jeffers with an objective framework for viewing the human phenomenon which is scientifically grounded and relatively free from anthropocentric prejudice.

This critical Darwinian perspective is worked out in many of the shorter poems of *The Double Axe*, some of which were composed before the end of the war. This suggests that, for Jeffers, the descent of European civilization into a new kind of barbarism demanded a deeper level of critique, along with an evolutionary explanation of humanity's tendency towards self-destruction. Whereas in the earlier poems Jeffers used language suggesting that only "civilization" is the "enemy of man," and that redemption for the civilized lies in a simple "return to nature," in the late period he comes to the view that something went awry right from the beginning of the human experiment. For the late Jeffers, humanity's problematic relationship to the rest of nature does not date simply to the Industrial Revolution, or to the "Agricultural Revolution" of the Neolithic when humans first began to cultivate and domesticate the earth, but to the time far back in our evolutionary pre-history when humans first diverged from our ape ancestors.

In "Original Sin," one of the short poems, Jeffers offers a thoroughly Darwinian answer to the timeworn question "What is man?" In typical fashion, he invokes the theology-laden concept of "original sin" only to undermine orthodox (Judeo-Christian) notions of the origin of human depravity, pointing instead to the "repulsive" natural history of early humans. His view is decidedly unflattering:

The man-brained and man-handed ground-ape, physically
The most repulsive of all hot-blooded animals
Up to that time of the world . . . (CP 3: 203)

Noteworthy among the features which distinguish *Homo sapiens* are the large cranium, to house a large brain, and the opposed thumb, for

handling tools and weapons. He is physically "repulsive" because he is born without body hair or other protective armature and must compensate for his vulnerability through the use of tools, fire, and aggressive social behavior.

Jeffers then directs his evolutionary spotlight on a band of early human hunters who have captured a mammoth in a pit and are slowly roasting it to death. At the spectacle of the early humans' evident enjoyment of the pain they inflict on their hapless victim, the narrator exclaims in distaste:

These are the people.

This is the human dawn. As for me, I would rather
Be a worm in a wild apple than a son of man.
But we are what we are . . . (CP 3: 203-04)

In addition to the obvious critique of traditional "humanist" notions of the "dignity of man" and the expression of the poet's own subjective preference for wild nature over the human world, the allusion to the eschatological figure of the "son of man," one of the many titles of the Messiah/Christ, can be read as another swipe at salvation cults, or the idea that humans need to be "saved" from their human condition by some supernatural power. The concluding matter-of-fact statement "we are what we are" suggests that the poet is himself reconciled with his human identity, but also that we, being human, need to understand our humanity as plainly as possible, with the best scientific tools available, and not be seduced into the typical anthropocentric fallacy of "flattering the race."

A principal burden of "The Inhumanist," and the reason the protagonist must exaggerate his "anti-human" proclivities, is the adoption of a perspective which lies beyond the traditional frame of human self-importance and self-reference—"my eyes are snail-eyes, they are outside of me," he says to his axe in Chapter XV (CP 3: 264). Yet humanity is not so easily overcome, and part of the drama of the poem lies in the old man's difficulties in moving beyond the human. "I am human," he must still admit to his daughter Sea-gull in Chapter XXIX, and notes with anguish the contradictions of the human condition:

"There is only one animal that hates himself. . . .

I'll be a stone at the bottom of the sea, or any
bush on the mountain,
But not this ghost-ridden blood-and-bone-thing, civil war on two legs and the
stars' contempt, this walking farce,
This ape, this—denatured ape, this—citizen—" (CP 3: 282)

Compared to the order of nature, the human condition is fraught with multiple unhealthy dualisms: the dualism of mind and body (being both a “ghost-ridden” and a “blood-and-bone-thing”), the subject-object dualism of reflective self-consciousness (“civil war on two legs”), and the dualism of nature and culture, between humanity’s primitive and only partially repressed apish ancestry and the discontents of civilization. In a pattern which repeats itself many times throughout the poem, the old man’s tortured reflections are only relieved by the outward gaze, by turning towards the stars and the “outer magnificence,” towards the “transhuman reality.”

5. HUMANS AND THE LIFE COMMUNITY: THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

In keeping with the general thrust of his philosophy to move from a human-centered to an ecocentric viewpoint, the old man’s view of evolution is decidedly non-anthropocentric, holistic, and ecological, concerned with the evolution of life as a whole. In this, Inhumanism anticipates many of the currents of modern environmentalism, including the concept of an “environmental ethic,” or the idea that “nature” or “the environment” has its own value beyond what humans may attribute to it. As the self-declared “people stopper,” the old man is the caretaker of “the land,” and when trespassers come it is his job to drive them off. When in Chapter XIII one of them lingers to argue, saying that the land ““belongs to the people; we make its value”” (*CP* 3: 262), the old man responds aggressively: ““Listen, fellow: / This land is clean, it is not public”” (*CP* 3: 263). The view here is similar to Aldo Leopold’s idea of a “land ethic,” in which “the land” and the community of creatures it contains are viewed as having their own value, and in which humanity is viewed as a plain member and citizen of the larger biotic community without any special distinction (Leopold). But in Jeffers’s “eco-ethic,” it is not merely a question of extending ethics beyond the traditional human dimension to embrace the larger community of life (as it was for Leopold and to some extent Gandhi and Schweitzer), but of starting from a perspective of the whole in which humans have no a priori privilege. In its proposed transvaluation of values from a human frame of reference towards a concern for life as a whole, Inhumanism even seems to anticipate Deep Ecology, with its explicit call to move from a “shallow” anthropocentric view of nature to a deeper view in which the natural world is seen as having its own intrinsic value. In this view, the other creatures with whom we share the planet have a right to live and flourish, above and beyond any value which can be imputed to them by human beings for economic, recreational, or even aesthetic purposes (Naess, Devall and Sessions).

6. THE HUMAN POPULATION EXPLOSION

Another recurring theme of "The Inhumanist" is the issue of human overpopulation and its effects on the larger biotic community. Viewed at the species level and from the perspective of population biology, what is remarkable is how few Malthusian checks there are to human reproductive success. Through a combination of effective social organization and technological prowess, humankind has been able to exploit and dominate a major portion of the biosphere, subjecting the whole earth to the needs and wants of a single species. The old man considers this an evolutionary aberrant situation and is not reticent in expressing his opinion that there are simply too many people on the planet. When another trespasser seeks refuge on the land, murmuring how he murdered his wife and her lover, the old man retorts ironically: "Two . . . out of two thousand million" (CP 3: 263)—but lets him through. Pointing to what he perceives as the horns of another world war just beyond the hill, he even laments that full-fledged nuclear warfare would probably only kill one out of ten in classical decimation fashion, leaving the species a bit "scorched," but likely to survive. What is remarkable, even prophetic, is that Jeffers was saying these things well before the issue of human overpopulation had entered into public domain with the publication of Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) and other titles.

The subject of runaway human population growth comes up again in Chapter XXXIX where the old man, acting against his better judgment, saves "the man of many terrors" from death by water. Regretting his actions, he notes in one of his mock-religious utterances:

"It would
be better
That twenty million should die than one be saved. One man in ten miles is more
Than the earth wants . . ." (CP 3: 297)

While this sounds at one level like pure misanthropy, the point is that from the perspective of a land ethic, there must be limits on human population growth if other species are to survive. The ironic parable-like quality of this passage with its inversion of traditional notions of "salvation" makes it clear that, in terms of the ecosystem as a whole, human salvation is not particularly important, and that the death of many millions might not be such a bad thing. What counts is not what the people want, but what "the earth wants." This is also a hard saying, a stumbling block to many, but lies at the heart of the old man's uncouth philosophy and radically non-anthropocentric worldview.

The old man's own estimate of what the earth "wants" as one person every ten miles is in fact very close to the ideal population figures set forth by the anthropologist and philosopher Paul Shepard as representing the natural population equilibrium of human beings in a hunter-gatherer state (Shepard). While Jeffers is not advocating directly (as Shepard does) that humanity return to Paleolithic population densities, he does make it clear that, based on long-term demographic trends and their extrapolation into the future, human overpopulation emerges as a major—perhaps the major—problem affecting human-earth relations and the health of the biosphere as a whole.

7. BIODIVERSITY CRISIS: THE LAMENT OF THE ANIMALS

Another theme, which runs like a Wagnerian Leitmotif throughout the poem, is the correlation of humanity's rise to global domination and the rapid decline of planetary biodiversity. The theme was suggested in "Original Sin" with its juxtaposition of the "human dawn" and the slaughter of a soon-to-be-extinct mammoth. In Chapter XXVI of "The Inhumanist," the old man remarks in a similar vein:

What comes will come.

The great bear and the sabre-tooth tiger, the powerful ones perish; an absurd ape
drops from a tree
And for a time rules the earth. (CP 3: 276)

It can be no coincidence, these lines suggest, that the ascendancy of human beings as rulers of the earth occurs at the same time as the disappearance of other large mammals, such as giant bears and saber-tooth tigers.

In a particularly poignant Dante-esque vignette in Chapter XXXI, the old man sees a tribe of animals, including such locally charismatic fauna as wildcat, coon, and coyote, marching in one direction. On the other side of the rock is a dense river of humanity, marching the other way. "We are going into the past, into the past, we have no place / In the great age," the animals lament in their sad innocence (CP 3: 285). The humans claim they are marching "Into the future with the dawn on our faces." The old man, of course, refuses to join in the march, and suggests darkly that the future may contain some unpleasant surprises, and that in the large cycles of time humans may find themselves walking the way of the animals.

8. THE END GAME: ESCHATOLOGIES OF HUMAN EXTINCTION

A central tenet of Jeffers's Inhumanist philosophy is that, from the perspective of the whole, human evolution is deeply problematic, even pathological. In another of the short poems, "Orca," after comparing the "clean" deaths among creatures with the unnatural deaths of human fratricide, the poet suggests that the history of the species looks like a failed evolutionary experiment: "But the breed of man / Has been queer from the start. / It looks like a botched experiment that has run wild and ought to be stopped" (CP 3: 206). Similarly in Chapter XXIV of "The Inhumanist," when the old man expresses his own opinion, he says bluntly: "I think the whole human race ought to be scrapped and is on the way to it" (CP 3: 274).

Among the least appealing aspects of the old man's persona and inhuman prophesying is his wish that the people would indeed perish. The question of eventual human extinction is taken up explicitly in Chapter XXVII, where the old man invokes the example of the population crash of the recently extinct passenger pigeons:

"And look—
the race of man has become more numerous
Than the passenger pigeons, that flattened forests
With the weight of their hordes—but something has happened to them
suddenly . . ." (CP 3: 294)

Jeffers will return to the theme of the passenger pigeons in a later poem, "Passenger Pigeons" (CP 3: 435), where he takes to task the notion that humans are somehow exempt from the law of species mortality. Here he is mainly concerned with whether the current human population explosion might trigger a similar cascade, perhaps leading to a precipitous extinction.

In Chapter XLIX, the old man sees three large raptors perched on a crag. When they reveal themselves to be condors rather than common vultures, he exclaims in surprise:

"If you are coming back here,
Perhaps the race of man is withering away.
It is a thought; but unlikely." (CP 3: 307)

The thought is "unlikely" not because it won't happen eventually, but because it is unlikely to happen anytime soon. In spite of the poem's dramatization of nuclear warfare, the old man does not believe that the "end of the world" is imminent; from his perspective, the period of troubles affecting human-earth relations was just beginning, and

bound to play itself out in multiple crises and breakdowns far into the foreseeable future.

Towards the end of the poem, in Chapter L, in one of his most outrageous utterances, the old man even prays to his "Inhuman" God to intervene and "exterminate" the race: "hear me, Lord God: Exterminate / The race of man" he cries, noting that humans alone, with the exception of certain insects, are "essentially cruel" (CP 3: 308). This is heady stuff, and extreme statements like this certainly did nothing to endear Jeffers to his readers in a victorious America that believed itself (and still believes itself) to be in the vanguard of human progress. But for Jeffers the times were tragic rather than pastoral, and he has the old man express his own most scathing assessment of humanity in fidelity to a critical imperative, however set against the major tendencies of the times.

9. THE PATHOZOIC: OR THE ERA OF TROUBLED HUMAN-EARTH RELATIONS

After the "childish" supplication to his Inhuman God to "exterminate" the race of man, the old man hears—or believes he hears—the divine voice appearing out of the driving storm like Jehovah out of the whirlwind, saying: "I will; but not now" (CP 3: 308). The hierophantic proclamation is twofold: "I will" because if there are any lessons to be derived from paleontology and the study of speciation and extinction in the fossil record, it is that all species must eventually go extinct; "not now" because human extinction is not in the cards anytime soon, because the time-frame for such large-scale perturbations of the biosphere is much larger than our limited historical time-frame, and because humanity still has discoveries to make, even at the price of much suffering.

This temporal dimension of the old man's prophesying, as well as his diagnosis of the present age as a time of general crisis in human-earth relations, is set forth clearly in the address to the "future children" in Chapter XLV:

Oh future children:

Trouble is coming; the world as of the present time
Sails on its rocks; but you will be born and live
Afterwards. Also a day will come when the earth
Will scratch herself and smile and rub off humanity:
But you will be born before that. (CP 3: 303)

What is noteworthy about this passage is how precisely the old man configures his intended horizon or reception. The "future children," he

predicts, will live in an in-between time, after the major tendencies of human planetary domination have been set into gear, but before the time when the earth will "scratch herself and smile and rub off humanity." For Jeffers, this new age is not simply a new epoch of human history, but a new era of natural history as well, the two being henceforth intertwined in such a way that the fate of the biosphere is bound up with that of humanity—and vice-versa. The dawning age which begins at "the present time" can be characterized as the age of the intrusion of the technosphere into all the major functions of the biosphere, as the age of suffering and decline of planetary life, ecosystem-wide crises, and mass extinctions, leading perhaps over time to human extinction.⁴ But Jeffers's intended horizon of reception is the proximate future, suggesting that things are not "so late" as they seem, and that the Earth may take some time before she finally shrugs us off.

Jeffers's view of the final dénouement of evolutionary history is not quite as bleak and fatalistic as his foreshortened prophetic synopsis may suggest. While the current crisis affecting human-earth relations seems poised only to get worse, and while human extinction is an eventual certainty, the way all these conflicts play out involves a certain indeterminacy, multiple variables, and the freedom of future human beings to adapt to a changing situation. While his address to the future is consistent with the typical rhetorical strategy of the prophet whose own people ignore him, it suggests at least the possibility that future disciples might take to heart some of the precepts of his philosophy with its proposed shift of values and lifestyle. This "utopian" or eschatological dimension of Jeffers's teaching is admittedly somewhat hidden in "The Inhumanist" itself, but will become an important motivation for the final poetry. Suffice it to say here that Jeffers is not the nihilistic pessimist he is often made out to be, but, in Czeslaw Milosz's term, a "tragic optimist," who faces up to the future without any illusions, but with a sense of "resigned hopefulness."

III. TOWARDS THE NOTION OF A SACRED SCIENCE

I. THE LIMITS OF THE SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIVITY

I have argued in the preceding that Jeffers's use of science involves both a critical and an affirmative dimension: critical insofar as Jeffers understood that the crisis of the modern world was bound up with the crisis of modern science and its misguided technological applications; affirmative because he understood the notion of truth embodied in the scientific tradition to be fundamental for any coherent understanding of the world, and so for his own philosophy of Inhumanism. I also

pointed to some of the ways Jeffers confirms his allegiance to the scientific tradition, as in his tribute to Copernicus and Darwin, and generally in the way he situates his own philosophizing within a larger scientifically defined cosmological and evolutionary context. I would like now to suggest that his views on science are more nuanced and complex than that of a simple appropriation of the “scientific worldview.” In particular, Jeffers comes to an understanding of the “business” of doing science which differs considerably from the standard mechanistic and objectivist methodology promulgated during the Scientific Revolution and which is still the dominant model of doing science today. As part of Inhumanism’s general transvaluation of values, the function of science is similarly “reinterpreted” from a human-oriented to a holistic frame of reference. In Jeffers’s view, the true “nobility” of science lies not in its practical applications, nor in any human uses or ends, but in what scientific discovery has to say about reality, or the whole, which can also be called “God.” He thus arrives at a somewhat mystical or even theological view of science which, in seeking out the ways of God/Nature, is also a “sacred science,” or *scientia sacra*. This idea of a “sacred science” is, I believe, an essential component of Jeffers’s mature worldview, and lies at the heart of his synthesis of science and poetry in the late period.

The question of the proper function and place of science is taken up directly in one of the more enigmatic encounters of “The Inhumanist,” Chapter XXXVI, where the old man confronts the renegade nuclear physicist. In spite of the fact the scientist makes it clear that he hired himself out to the military (first to the Germans and then to the Americans), the old man finds in him a free spirit like himself. It is somewhat ironic that even against the background of nuclear warfare Jeffers would choose as the old man’s interlocutor the figure of an escaped weapons scientist, who here has been absolved of his past crimes and represents the scientific viewpoint at its most “pure.” Among the many visitors who come to call, he is the only one whom the old man actually invites to stay—suggesting that Jeffers harbored a profound respect for scientific discovery for its own sake, regardless of ideological or political differences. Out of this dialogue, however, there emerge a number of important distinctions between the physicist’s “scientific” viewpoint and that of the old man. Whereas the physicist places his faith in an objectivist and reductive methodology, and seeks to resolve the multiplex reality of the world into a single mathematical equation, the old man adheres to a holistic and intuitive approach. While he respects the physicist’s dedication to scientific discovery for its own sake, he insists on his own “ontological” definition of science as positive knowledge of the whole of God/Nature. In

addition to scandalizing the German with his pantheist invocation of "God," the old man paints a picture of "ultimate reality" which is quite different from the deterministic and lifeless universe represented by the scientist's equation. For the old man, the universe—or "the whole" or "God"—is undetermined, freely creative, and essentially infinite, and therefore cannot be adequately represented by any determinate set of propositions or equations. Because this episode contains Jeffers's most detailed account of his view of science as a "sacred science," and because it situates his philosophy of science within the context of his larger worldview with its cosmological and theological dimensions, it merits some explication.

2. FREE SCIENCE AND SERVILE SCIENCE

A critical question for Jeffers in the aftermath of Hiroshima, as I argued in the first part of this essay, was the question concerning the "right uses" of science and technology, and whether it is possible to separate the positive contributions of science from its potential for misuse in the hands of fallible humans for destructive purposes. In other words, is there a way to separate the "will to knowledge" from the "will to power"? Or is scientific knowledge in its essence—as Nietzsche darkly suggested—only a modification of the instinctive human drive to domination? Francis Bacon said famously that "knowledge is power," and a major impetus behind the Scientific Revolution was certainly the extension of human domination over nature (and other human beings) by means of technology. This historical alliance between the "will to knowledge" and the "will to power" is manifest in the close link between technological advances and their militaristic applications, from the flint spear-tips of the Paleolithic through Galileo's work on ballistics to the mass mobilization of nuclear physicists during World War II. Jeffers was painfully aware of that link, of the way that scientists have traditionally served as "trained seals" to extend the dominant power structures, and of the paradox that the same science which allows human beings "to live without lies" also provides the potential for enormous abuse, even to the point of disrupting the natural systems upon which all life depends. It is therefore significant that Jeffers begins the dialogue with an explicit validation of the scientific quest for knowledge for its own sake and readily accepts the escaped scientist's notion of scientific freedom and self-determination.

The encounter begins in a comical manner. The old man spots him from his hillside perch by eyeing the reflection of his glasses in the midday sun and rides down to confront him. The scientist answers

with an ironic and ambivalent retort: “Is here not free either?” (CP 3: 289). At one level, the scientist’s meaning is straightforward. Translated backward, “Is here not free?” means simply “Is this place free (available)?” (“Ist hier nicht frei?”) as one might ask in a café or on a train. At another level, the question has to do with the notion of scientific freedom, and whether there is still a place for the exercise of free scientific inquiry in a world threatened by nuclear holocaust. The German proceeds with rough Teutonic accent to explain his predicament: “I haf escaped. Is now with me clean science or nothing; I serve no more” (CP 3: 290). Here again, on one level, the scientist is a renegade, an escaped criminal, and is simply looking for a place of refuge. On a broader, allegorical plane, his predicament is the predicament of science in general, seeking to retain its own sense of nobility of purpose and “academic” freedom. Thus the idea of “clean science” presented here is not just the opposite of the “dirty science” of weapons manufacture, but points to the idea of “pure science” or *reine Wissenschaft*, a kind of science which is free to pursue its own ends, no longer in the service of the will to power.

The scientist makes his position clear:

“Science is not to serve but to know. Science is for itself its own value, it is not
for man,
His little good and big evil: it is a noble thing, which to use
Is to degrade. . . .
Science is not a chambermaid-woman.” (CP 3: 291)

The important point here is the elaboration of an ideal science which would be free from the structures of domination, of use-oriented or “instrumental” applications. The invocation of the somewhat archaic image of the “chambermaid-woman” recalls the older debates surrounding the respective roles of philosophy and theology, in which philosophy was considered to be the chambermaid of theology, an *ancilla theologicae*—a subordinate position from which it only extricated itself with great difficulty during the course of the Scientific Revolution. The scientist takes this notion of scientific autonomy even further, arguing that science should be free not only of religion, but of all human purposes and uses.

By proclaiming that science has its own value, he also proclaims science’s freedom from political influence and applications, and—not incidentally—provides for his own justification and alibi. As a fugitive war criminal, the scientist represents the position that science is, in essence, “beyond good and evil.” While he condemns the purposeful misapplication of science for ignoble human ends as a degradation of

science's true nobility, he also expresses the view that scientific inquiry should remain unconstrained by traditional ethical notions. This idea of scientific freedom is one for which the old man—and obviously Jeffers himself—has considerable sympathy.⁵ In spite of his questionable past, he calls him "brother" and offers refuge: "Because you have chosen nobly between free science and servile science" (CP 3: 294). "But," we read further down, "the man would not."

3. SCIENTIA SACRA

While the renegade physicist's position between autonomous "free science" and instrumental "servile science" remains ambiguous, Jeffers uses the occasion to probe deeper into the question of the meaning and value of science, and to elaborate his own alternative notion of science as a sacred science. Unlike the German, the old man sees science not so much as a value for itself, but for what it tells about reality. He thus hearkens back to an older notion that science has value because it allows human beings to decipher and make sense out of the world around them. And since one of the basic precepts of his Spinozistic ontology is that the world can be considered functionally equivalent to God, science becomes a kind of divine gnosis or "knowledge of God." He then provokes the enlightened German with his hybrid theological notion of science as a kind of worship or *Adoratio Dei*: "Science is an adoration; a kind of worship" (CP 3: 292). When the scientist asks him to clarify, he exclaims rapturously: "A contemplation of God. . . / . . . A coming nearer to God, . . . To learn his ways / And love his beauty" (CP 3: 292). The scientist, of course, will have none of this, and stubbornly refuses to accept such "Romantic" notions. Reverting to an unpolished German, he exclaims dismissively: "Das noch! . . . / Das fehlte noch! . . . / . . . Der uralte Bloedsinn"—"Oh that still! . . . That's still missing! . . . The ancient stupidity" (CP 3: 292).

The notion of science as a kind of worship or active contemplation of God is ancient (*uralte*) indeed, and corresponds to deep-seated human desire to know and feel at home in a world of meaning. Such a notion, however, is antithetical to the purely quantitative methodology promoted by the Scientific Revolution, which sought to banish God from the world picture by reducing all observable phenomena to the status of lifeless objects. Nonetheless the idea of a sacred science has always remained in the background of European cultural history, and periodically has its champions. Perhaps its greatest champion was Goethe, whose criticism of the purely mechanistic world-picture of Newtonian science was complemented by a notion that a more noble

kind of science is possible—a science which, dwelling in the myriad phenomena of nature, and dissociated from all instrumental applications, can render positive information about reality as such. And since for both Goethe and Jeffers (following Spinoza), God and Nature are identical, scientific discovery of the natural world becomes at the same time a contemplation or even communion with God, involving an active participation of the scientist/observer with the whole of reality.

4. ON THE SUBJECT OF GOD

As the dialogue heats up, it is on the subject of God that the scientist and old man display their greatest differences of opinion. Unlike the thoroughly secular and materialist view of the scientist, the old man's understanding involves an intuitive insight into the nature of the whole, which is inseparable from his notion of God. When the scientist rejects such pantheist heresies—"I hope the Russians / Destroy you and your God" (*CP* 3: 292)—the old man and his axe react violently; the axe screams "like a hawk" and the old man finds himself compelled to defend his invocation of "God" as the appropriate term to designate the totality of all that exists:

You have perhaps
heard some false reports
On the subject of God. He is not dead; and he is not a fable. He is not mocked
nor forgotten—
Successfully. God is a lion that comes in the night. God is a hawk gliding among
the stars—
If all the stars and the earth, and the living flesh of the night that flows in
between them, and whatever is beyond them
Were that one bird. (*CP* 3: 292)

The "false reports" can refer to Nietzsche's/Zarathustra's report (*Nachricht*) of "the death of God," as well as to the familiar Enlightenment conceit that with the advancement of science and its superior explanatory powers, there is no longer any need for such an hypothesis (this was the answer Laplace gave famously to Napoleon when questioned about the role of God in his equations, and seems to be the German scientist's attitude as well). For the old man, as for Jeffers himself, the rumors of God's demise have been greatly exaggerated. To the timeworn question "Does God exist?" Jeffers's response is consistently in the affirmative. As Leibnitz said of Spinoza, he is no atheist, but a man "drunk with God"—Ein Gott betrunkenen Mensch. The philosophy of Inhumanism is itself unabashedly "theocentric," as the Spinozistic definitions and propositions in the opening chapters

make clear. The old man's God, of course, is neither the God of tradition, nor the watchmaker God of the deists, but the God who is all that exists, and thus "not easily forgotten."

The ensuing theomorphic images of God as a "lion that comes in the night" or as a "hawk gliding among the stars" may seem atavistic, a return to myth, but these metaphors are deployed with an explicit and self-conscious awareness of their metaphoric quality, as if to make the point that the poet, too, has his models and explanatory tools which are at least as valid as those of the scientist. Lest the assertion "God is a hawk" be interpreted too literally, the old man qualifies himself, suggesting that the statement is correct if one is prepared to understand the logic of poetic invocation. In a universe of flowing meaning in which everything is connected to everything else, it is possible to see the whole universe reflected in any image (even in a "grain of sand" as the English poet and mystic William Blake said). If God is all things, then all things are part of God, including a lion or a hawk or anything else. Unlike the analytic approach of the scientist, the old man's methodology is that of a *scientia intuitiva*, for which the poet's metaphors such as the lion and the hawk are equally valid, inasmuch as no predicate or attribute can exhaustively define the whole.

Overwhelmed by the din of the screaming axe and the old man's clamoring, the German throws up his hands in exasperation and starts to head back down the hill. The old man, however, continues his meditation on the metaphysical implications of the scientist's fully determined and objectivist worldview, which he equates, in an interesting transposition, with the Hegelian/Nietzschean idea of the "death of God." He assumes for the purposes of his "thought experiment" that the universe, as represented in the scientist's equation, is a closed system of matter and energy, which in accordance with the laws of thermodynamics is tending towards a state of maximum entropy and disorganization. In this view, the ultimate destiny of the universe is a "heat death" (really a "cold death") where only an amorphous and tepid equilibrium will remain: "the innumerable stars reddened to a deadly starset; their ancient power and glory were darkened, . . . / . . . no flow nor motion; lukewarm equality, / the final desert" (*CP* 3: 293).

After this bleak vision, and after considering the nihilistic proposition that "God had died," the old man has another of his violent visceral reactions. Shaking with shamanistic fury, he experiences a vision of "ultimate reality" which is quite different from the atomistic and purely material universe of the scientist, and which points instead to an underlying order of pulsating creative energy at the root of things:

He shook like an epileptic and saw the darkness glow
again. Flash after flash,
And terrible midnight beyond midnight, endless succession, the shining towers
of the universe
Were and were not; they leaped back and forth like goats
Between existence and annihilation. (CP 3: 293)

The darkness “glows again” because the old man cannot subscribe to a model of the universe which simply runs out of steam. Rather, for him, what is primary is process itself, the fluxes of matter and energy which make up existence and which, in his view, will never cease. Among the many Nietzschean moments of the poem, his vision of “terrible midnight beyond midnight, endless succession” is reminiscent of Zarathustra’s “night songs” (such as “What the Midnight Said”) and his doctrine of the eternal recurrence. The important point is that, for the old man, reality is infinite and eternal rather than finite and temporal. That the “shining towers of the universe / Were and were not” suggests similarly that the ultimate “ground” of the universe is not a single determinate and quantifiable entity, but a quantum potential which unfolds in an indeterminate area between being and non-being.⁶

“[Y]ou have a harsh wisdom, unperfumed, untuned, untaught, / Like Heraclitus’s Sibyl,” the gray-haired walker troubled about the future tells him in Chapter XXIV (CP 3: 272). Like Heraclitus, the old man is a spokesperson (prophetes) of the logos, who believes that “all things are one.” This oneness, however, is conceived not as a static abstraction, but as a dynamic movement in which all things flow together. Thus while the universe exists as a whole, it cannot be reduced to a Parmenidian singularity or any concept of pure “being,” but is best understood in terms of infinite fluctuations and flowing movement. “Everything flows” (panta rei) Heraclitus intoned famously in another of the fragments. For Heraclitus, as Karl Popper wrote, “Truth lies in having grasped the essential becoming of nature, i.e., having represented it as implicitly infinite, as a process in itself” (qtd. in Prigogine 10). The basic idea is that what is “at bottom” is not so much “things themselves” or brute matter, but rather the underlying energetic process out of which things emerge in their becoming, and to which they return in the larger cycles of time. In this view, even the observable universe in all its vastness is not itself “ultimate reality” but only a relatively stable form which emerges out of a fecundating and flowing movement which is essentially mysterious, undetermined, and unpredictable.

5. THE OLD SERPENT INFINITY

It is worth noting how differently the scientist and the old man approach the question of the whole. The scientist's chosen path is the path of scientific discovery for its own sake, motivated by a belief that it is possible to gather together all the forces of the universe into a single "mathematische Formel":

"It solves, it solves. It brings under one rule atoms and galaxies, gravitation and time,
Photons and light-waves." (CP 3: 291)

The scientist's all-embracing equation sounds again very much like general relativity, Einstein's dream of bringing all the forces of the universe—including matter, energy, gravity, and time—together under "one law," a dream which continues to inspire many modern "Theories of Everything" such as String Theory. But for Jeffers, mathematics is a human invention, which runs parallel to reality without actually touching it, and can "solve" problems only within a limited human horizon. Mathematical equations can offer models or metaphors of reality, and even probabilities for experimental results (much like Schrödinger's wave equation), but they cannot be considered reality itself. The scientist's mistake is to confound his "equation" with reality itself, or what Whitehead would call "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness."

In the old man's view, the totality of universe cannot be reduced to any single mathematical formula or equation. For him, the scientist's faith in the power of his equation is essentially misguided because it doesn't take into account what lies outside the equation:

The old man laughed and said,
"Skin beyond skin, there is always something beyond: it comes in and stirs them.
I think that poor fellow
Should have let in the mad old serpent infinity, the double zero that confounds
reckoning,
In his equation." (CP 3: 293)

By claiming that there is "always something beyond" the old man makes the point that no matter how inclusive our concepts or theories of reality aim to be, there is always something "extra" which resists conceptualization, something ultimately mysterious. This suggests not only that the metaphors used by scientists to describe the powers and flows of the universe are continually subject to revision, but that there is something intrinsic to the universe which "confounds reckon-

ing,” and that therefore all our theories of the truth are necessarily incomplete.

This concept of the infinite, conveyed here in the archaic image of the “mad old serpent,” is again an idea which is both ancient and modern. Among the ancients, it recalls Anaximander’s idea of “the boundless,” or the *apeiron*—the notion that there is an infinite and indeterminate force which is behind the mixing of the elements of the phenomenal world, as well as the Epicurian-Lucretian notion of the *clinamen*, the idea that there are unpredictable fluctuations which inform all things and which make their behavior entirely unpredictable. It also correlates quite closely with Spinoza’s notion of the infinite as the essential attribute of God/Nature understood as an undetermined and self-creating whole. Among the moderns, it pairs well with Karl Popper’s philosophy of indeterminism, with David Bohm’s view of the “qualitative infinity” of the implicate order, or what he calls the “infinite substructure and background of existence,” and with Ilya Prigogine’s defense of such concepts as instability, chaos, and “irreversibility” as necessary correlatives to the end of objectivism and determinism.⁷

I have dwelt at some length on Jeffers’s notion of a sacred science and his idea of God as infinite process because these concepts provide an important depth dimension for understanding his forays into cosmology and evolutionary theory. And since it is impossible to separate Jeffers’s views on science from the larger cosmological and even theological dimensions of his thought, it is best to explore these relationships up front. The notion of a sacred science is especially important because it becomes the operative methodology behind what I believe to be Jeffers’s greatest achievement: his vision of an all-encompassing scientifically informed evolutionary epic poetry embracing cosmogenesis, biogenesis, anthropogenesis, and even theogenesis (or the becoming of God). While this vision emerges only in the final period, and then only in fragmentary form in such poems as “De Rerum Virtute,” “The Great Explosion,” and especially in the long fragment “The unformed volcanic earth,” it is present in nuce in “The Inhumanist,” and suggests the direction of his future development.

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding, I have tried to sketch some of the major points of contact between Jeffers’s late poetry and modern science, especially in the areas of cosmology and evolutionary theory. I have also suggested how his approach to science involves a critique of the mechanistic and objectivist model and the embrace of an alternative intuitive or holis-

tic viewpoint which, while recalling the pre-Socratics, Spinoza, and Goethe, is also consistent with many of the insights of modern (post-classical) physics and thermodynamics. I conclude with three general remarks intended to situate this achievement within a broader critical and historical framework.

First, while Jeffers was often critical of the misuses and abuses of applied technology, he never rejects science per se. Within the dialectic of Enlightenment, Jeffers remains firmly committed to reason over unreason, truth over untruth, the rational over the irrational. Science in the service of the will to truth—or what he calls “discovery”—is an indispensable component of his worldview, especially in the late period. The point is worth insisting upon because there is still a tendency to interpret his call to “return to nature” as neo-Romantic escapism or simple evasion from the harsh realities of technological civilization. Rather, as I have argued, Jeffers’s critique of the excesses of applied science is grounded on the faith that a better kind of science is possible. This commitment to the notion that the truth is better than all the lies imbues his work with a Spinoza-like integrity and probity which is at the same time profoundly modern.

Second, from the perspective of critical biography or any appraisal of Jeffers’s overall development as an artist and as a thinker, it is important to note how science becomes increasingly significant during the late period. Like Thoreau before him, Jeffers’s appreciation of “nature” moves from a somewhat mediated and literary mold in the early works towards an increasing emphasis on “natural facts,” or what Jeffers calls simply “things.” In terms of the general development of his poetic voice, after the early narratives, Jeffers begins to adopt a more meditative and philosophical tone in which scientific “discovery” is valued both for what it tells us about the world and as a fitting subject for poetic elaboration. From the rapturous excesses of Barclay to the reserved demeanor of the narrator of “Margrave” to the impersonal stoicism of the old man in “The Inhumanist” to the depersonalized sage-philosopher of the final poetry, the evolution of Jeffers’s poetic voice can be seen as recapitulating a general movement from myth to enlightenment, or from mythos to logos. While he will continue to explore mythic themes in the late period (as in his *Medea*), the guiding creative imperative of the final period is an uncompromising searching out of the truth.

Third, from the larger perspective of literary and cultural history, Jeffers’s poetry assumes a unique position which goes beyond his recognized status as the regional “poet of California.” Within the history of “science and literature,” Jeffers reveals himself as perhaps the most scientifically informed of modern poets, and as a Goethe-like figure

bestriding what C. P. Snow called the “two cultures” divide, bringing science and poetry together into a unique kind of dialogue. In terms of his position within American literature, he emerges as the heir and torch-bearer of an ecocentric tradition beginning with Emerson and Thoreau, extending through John Muir, Aldo Leopold, and including such modern defenders of the idea of “nature” as Gary Snyder and Edward Abbey. His unique achievement, I believe, is the way he adapts the “idea of nature” into a coherent and scientifically grounded ecological philosophy and poetics which is both critical and, in the best tradition of what poets are for, inspiring. In the address to his future disciples in Chapter XVI of “The Inhumanist,” the old man believes his voice “carries a long way off.” To us, Jeffers’s interpreters and to some extent his “future children,” Jeffers’s late poetry does indeed seem to “cry out” for critical reassessment and reinterpretation.

ENDNOTES

1. It is a worthwhile but vexing question to ask how far the views expressed by the old man in “The Inhumanist” can be said to represent those of Jeffers himself. Even the old man cannot entirely obey his own inhumanist precepts, and part of the drama of the poem lies in the difficulties of overcoming the human. Betraying his “humanitarianism,” the old man feels compelled to save the “man of many terrors” not once but three times from suicidal drowning. Only at the end of the poem, when he finally kills the man—who reveals himself to be his “other self”—is he able to rise to a position free of human prejudice. “No man has ever known himself nor surpassed himself until he has killed / Half of himself,” he notes (*CP* 3: 301). The poem thus enacts a kind of ritualistic self-overcoming of humanism, much in the same way as Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* relates the death of humanism (as represented by the figure of “the Last Man”) and the advent of the superman (*Übermensch*).

2. Like his failed forerunner, the reverend Barclay, the “old man” is a prophetic figure, a man with a message, who sees himself, even if reluctantly, as a mouthpiece for a new kind of religious sensibility. Jeffers genuinely believed that only a radical shift or “conversion” of the collective human *Weltanschauung* would be sufficient to save humanity from its present course of self-destruction. He saw in his teachings a kind of philosophical fortress of ideas and propositions, which, however set against the grain of the times, were nonetheless coherent and internally self-consistent. The final apocalypse which concludes the poem is itself an allegory, a moral fable about the failure of traditional humanism, along with current forms of political organization and government. As the great disasters begin to fall, the tribe of humanists and believers in progress are transformed into the “panting fugitives” of nuclear catastrophe. After final disillusionment and the “death of humanism” embodied in the figure of one of the refugees now lying dead on the floor before him, the old man collects himself and proclaims, some-

what immodestly, that only such a radical revision and shift in values such as he proposes can help humanity plod along in the "red dawn" of our uncertain post-humanist future: "There is,' he said, 'no remedy.—There are *two* remedies. / This man has got his remedy, and I have one. There is no third.' / About midnight he slept, and arose refreshed / In the red dawn" (CP 3: 312).

3. Eric Chaisson gives a similar description of what this sea-change meant for modern humanity's sense of itself and of the world at the beginning of his masterful *Cosmic Evolution*: "The idea of the centrality of earth was demolished forever, and with it the false serenity that had been engendered by the unknown. Humankind came to feel that it was marooned on a tiny particle of dust drifting aimlessly through a hostile Universe" (1).

4. In Jeffers's long view of history, it is conceivable that the current age of troubles will be followed in the distant future by a new period of evolutionary expansion and creativity, new forms of life and consciousness, and perhaps even new system-wide crises. As he writes in "The Inquisitors": "Life would surely grow up again / From grubs in the soil, or the newt and toad level, and be beautiful again. And again perhaps break its legs / On its own cleverness: who can forecast the future?" (CP 3: 210).

5. Jeffers addresses the question of scientific freedom in another of *The Double Axe* period poems, "Curb Science?," where he explicitly rejects the idea that it is possible to limit science "until mortality catches up." "Morality" for him is not an end in itself, but "truth" is. Therefore, "To seek the truth is better than good works" (CP 3: 199).

6. As early as "Roan Stallion," Jeffers had hit upon the truly strange world of quantum mechanics as an appropriate *analogon* for his own project of transcending the human. Here he suggests further how the breakdown of classical conceptions involves an intuition of a deeper level of reality which is like the potentialities of the quantum world. As Heisenberg makes clear in his elaboration of the uncertainly principle and the "quantum paradox," the various states or *eigenfunctions* of the wave equation both "are" and "are not" until such time as a measurement is made. For a discussion of the violence that quantum theory inflicts on traditional objective notions of truth, see especially Heisenberg's *Physics and Philosophy*.

7. For Jeffers, as for all these thinkers (albeit in slightly different ways), to allow the concept of the infinite into the equation is to permit a formulation of reality in which probabilities and chance fluctuations are no longer understood in terms of our ignorance (as with "coarse graining"), but as intrinsic properties of the universe. As Prigogine clarifies: "Once we include these concepts, we come to a new formulation of the laws of nature, one that is no longer built on certitude, as is the case for deterministic laws, but rather on possibilities" (Prigogine 29).

8. The point is worth making because there is still a tendency to treat Jeffers's oeuvre as if it were a monolithic block, and to skip randomly among the different periods, as if Jeffers were merely saying the same thing for fifty years. While I believe it is true—as Heidegger said of Hölderlin—that a poet's collected works comprise in essence "one poem," that poem is more like an organism, developing and changing over time, than a timeless artifact to be picked apart and mined for meaning in some ahistorical framework. In Jeffers's case, the course of this devel-

opment involves a clear direction away from the concept of the poet as fabricator of fantastic tales towards a concept of the poet as an informed scientist-sage and “prophet” of the logos. To miss this increasing emphasis on science and on the scientific notion of truth is to miss a lot of what the late Jeffers is about.

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TWO PORTRAITS

ELLA WINTER ON THE JEFFERSES

JAMES BROUGHTON ON ROBINSON JEFFERS

Ella Winter was the wife of Lincoln Steffens, muckraker and Carmel resident in the 1920s and 30s. Her political orientation was far to the left of the Jefferses', but the two women enjoyed each other, though the relationship was not without its tension, as described in Winter's memoir. The following extract is from her book, *And Not to Yield: An Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1963), pp. 129-31. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace.

We had now to make a garden and find a name for our home.¹ I eagerly took care of the first, and Jack Black² gave us the second. "The thing a burglar needs most is a getaway," Jack said, and Stef jumped at it. "That's it, we'll call our house 'The Getaway,' a refuge for any poor s.o.b. in a jam." Now, as soon as we were settled, Stef wrote and invited his friends, all his friends, to come and stay with us. It was a habit of his to get far away from everybody, out of civilization, to be alone, and then invite the world to his door.

An old newspaper colleague of Stef's³ introduced us to Robinson Jeffers and his wife, Una. On their gate was a wooden plaque: NOT AT HOME TILL 4 PM. Their low-walled granite-boulder cottage was called "Tor House," because Una loved everything Irish. To one side of it was the thick-walled square Irish tower built by Jeffers of boulders he had laboriously rolled up from the beach each afternoon after four, when he had finished work. Una was a great believer in physical effort for her lean, powerful, long-limbed man. "It will keep him busy," she said in her incisive way, "the work I've out laid out for him, till he's eighty."

Robin was always the same tall silent man, painfully shy; but one could content oneself with just looking at his weather-beaten, handsome, rocklike face. One eye was violet, one blue. His gestures were timid and he kept his long arms hanging, his big hands uncomfortably unoccupied except for his pipe, as if he did not know what to do with

them when they weren't rolling heavy boulders up cliffs. His shirt was always open at the long bronzed neck, and he wore breeches and leather gaiters. His voice was so low that it was hard to catch what he said when he did speak. When he talked to the twins, his boys, it was like a foreign tongue or a secret language.

The twins were part of Una's carefully nourished legend. "I wanted twin boys. I intended to have them, and when my first little girl died soon after she was born, I knew it was meant that I should get them." Donnan and Garth, then about twelve, were as handsome, blue-eyed, and silent as their father.

Una was a great contrast. Small, gay, lively, full of energy and an iron determination that life should yield what she wished it to, she was indefatigable in fashioning it. She had an insatiable curiosity: if new guests wore dark glasses, she ordered them to remove them: "I want to see your face." She elicited everyone's story, did the talking and entertaining for all the family. She offered you their homemade wine, made you feel at home, and fussed over you while she asked you a hundred questions. "Have you come to stay? Do you like it here? We've lived here seven years and we're going to stay forever. I don't believe in a telephone or electric light, do you? I like kerosene lamps, they're more work, but I prefer them. No, the boys don't go to school, I teach them myself at home, they waste so much time at school. Did you know anyone in Carmel before you came?"

I loved our visits and loved Una and Robin. They did much to reconcile me to this village the other side of the world. Una was always on the go, like a rushing bubbling brook. I admired—and a little envied—her unquestionable assurance about everything; she knew exactly what she wanted and usually got it. "I don't like grays, I like everything black and white," she asserted. She did the shopping, driving uptown in her old Chevrolet twice a day, to collect the mail that we fetched at the post office with the day's gossip, and to gather the latest news and the legends of the region, which she brought home for her man's epic poems. She also collected myths about her beloved Ireland from Ella Young, the wild-haired old rebel poet.

Sometimes Una drove over the hill to Monterey for wine or olive oil, and once in a while to get her men haircuts. She wore always the same kind of loose green tunic tied with a cord at the waist and white moccasins on her tiny feet. Her hair, which came to her waist, was wound in a thick braid around her head. This she always washed in rainwater collected in a special cask outside the house. In keeping with the legend Una joyously fostered, her first husband built a big house nearby on Point Lobos,⁴ and Una proudly related how "Teddy

never turns off his lights at night till he sees my candles go out.” Edward Kuster (“Teddy”) remained a good friend of the whole family.

Visitors flocked the Jeffers’ [sic], poets like Witter Bynner and Arthur Davison Ficke from Taos, Edna Millay from the East, Ben Lehman from San Francisco. Robin’s equally tall, silent brother, Hamilton, arrived occasionally for a wordless visit. Una told how once the two brothers had some business to transact about an inheritance, and how they sat silent a whole afternoon. “And when Hamilton left it was done.” Robin’s work was Una’s religion. She managed all his correspondence with publishers and friends—he never wrote letters himself—read the reviews of his work, which he always denied doing, was his mouthpiece for the outside world. She also kept him at it. “I listen at the foot of the stairs,” she told me, “and when I don’t hear Robin walking up and down, I call up, ‘Robin, pace!’”

I like the story of Jeffers and the White Russian princess who called at Tor House the same weekend we, at the other end of the village, entertained Ilf and Petrov. They were the Soviet satirists who wrote their American impressions, including Carmel, in their book, *Little Golden America*. The Russian princess was telling Jeffers of her escape from her homeland, when they had to leave everything behind. “We came with nothing, absolutely nothing,” she emphasized indignantly.

“You had your lives, didn’t you?” Robin murmured.

But not all of Robin’s admirers were welcomed at Tor House. There was, for example, a pretty Hollywood movie girl with green eyes, named Marcella, whom Una found when she came back from her shopping sitting there along with Robin, before 4 P.M.—the sacred hour before which the poet must not be disturbed. Una chased her out of the house, then went back and vented her anger. “I’ve spent a lifetime making this house, our lives, everything,” she cried, furious, “and I won’t have that woman come here and break it up, I won’t stand it!” And as she spoke she tore at the balustrade, and pulled out balusters one by one. As she continued her tirade, her two sons, with masklike faces, carefully and silently fitted each baluster back into place again.

I managed to steer a rather safe course between my warm friendship for her and my admiration for Robin, which I took no pains to hide. He liked us all three (“Pete⁵ is my friend,” he said once), appreciated our visits and Stef’s stories of the revolutions, my talk of England or Italy, of books or our work—though Jeffers never discussed his. He liked to hear any stories of that outside world he so seldom visited, and he preferred natural people. But though I was as circumspect as possible, I once ran afoul of Una at a cocktail party at which everyone had had perhaps a little too much to drink, for suddenly she burst out at

me out of the blue: “As for you, I know you’ve never touched Robin or he you, but there’s something between you all the same.”

Robin’s response was typical. When in dismay at Una’s challenge I appealed to him standing there in his usual embarrassed way, smoking his pipe: “But Robin, you know there’s nothing, absolutely nothing like that, why don’t you tell Una?” he merely smiled constrainedly and went on smoking.

On occasion Una could become irritated by our political activities, of which she had no understanding. Her only political feeling was that of anger as their house taxes mounted. Once she even asked me, “What’s so wrong with Hitler? He doesn’t smoke or drink or go with women.” Politics was not Una’s strong point. Individual lives were her delight and enthralling interest, and she knew every legend of every writer and poet practically throughout the ages.

ENDNOTES

1. The Getaway is located on the east side of San Antonio, a few doors south of Ocean. There is a bronze commemorative plaque set in stone at the north edge of the property that identifies the house. Una had written of it in her essay on Steffens in the Steffens Special Issue of the *Carmel Pine Cone*, Feb. 16, 1934.

2. A hardened burglar whom Fremont Older, a friend of the Steffenses’, had nurtured and freed from his criminal past.

3. George West, of the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*.

4. Ella Winter clearly misunderstood. Teddy Kuster’s house is located a few hundred feet from Tor House, on Carmel Point, not a mile to the south at Point Lobos.

5. “Pete” was the Steffens’s son. Ella Winter was sometimes known as “Peter.”

* * * * *

James Broughton was born in Modesto, California, in 1913. Best known as an avant-garde filmmaker, he also was a poet and playwright. Although his playful poetry and explicitly sexual films might not bear any resemblance to Jeffers’s work or themes, they shared an antagonist: Broughton once recollected, “The clearest poetic memory of my years at Stanford: the day Yvor Winters ordered me out of his class” (<<http://jargonbooks.com/broughton.html>>). His films have won many awards, and in 1989 he received a lifetime achievement award from the American Film Institute. He died in 1999. The following is an extract from his autobiography, *Coming Unbuttoned* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1993), pp. 32–34. The editors have no way of verifying the anecdote about the excursion to Point Lobos.

After the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, my ultra-conservative stepfather was so convinced that murderous radicals would pillage San Francisco that he moved the family to the Monterey village of Carmel, where there were no labor unions and the only poor were artists and beachcombers. There, he said, we would hide out the Depression. This was how I came to meet Robinson Jeffers.

During the summer vacation of that year I was cast as the Page of Herodias in a production of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in Carmel's Forest Theater. The Herodias was a raven-haired Australian named Ella Winter who had written a passionate book in praise of the Soviet Union. She was married to the retired muckraker Lincoln Steffens, who was twice her age. In fact, having finally completed his autobiography, he didn't last long past that summer, after which Ella married Donald Ogden Stewart and moved into more fashionable radical circles. I found her fiery and fascinating and so much sexier than the actress playing *Salome* that I sought her company after rehearsal hours.

One afternoon while we strolled on the beach Ella referred to her "intimate friend" Robin Jeffers. Then at the height of his popular fame for his verse narratives of sexual aberration in the Big Sur, Robinson Jeffers was Carmel's major celebrity. I had been trying to read his most recent work, *Thurso's Landing*, and was awed at living only a few blocks away from him. I begged Ella Winter to introduce me.

Jeffers was also famous for being reclusive. A permanent sign on his gate read: "Not home until 4 p.m. By appointment only." Even after 4 p.m. the gate only grudgingly opened. I had been impressed by the photograph of Jeffers in *Vanity Fair* standing ruggedly Byronic against the stone wall of his tower. I did not expect to meet a man so shy of manner and so muted of speech that I could scarcely hear him. Nor did I expect a watery introverted gaze instead of the eyes of a hawk. His handshake too was unexpectedly soft. Most disturbing of all was the way his wife intercepted any attempt one made to address him. She would answer: "Robin thinks this" or "We don't like that."

Ella Winter had brought a bouquet for the poet and cookies for the wife. The wife took them both. Plainly she was guarding her husband from female clutches, and Ella's clutches were notorious in the community. Una Jeffers was a woman of strident chatter, plump and maternal, adept at reducing conversation to triviality. I got little more than an autograph out of the afternoon.

On my second visit to Tor House the atmosphere proved less strained. Since I had come alone, Una paid scant heed to a college sophomore and went about household business, leaving me free to converse with Jeffers. Being a melancholy Capricorn, who nursed some

kind of undeclared rage, he was scarcely a merry conversationalist. But I shared his passion for the California coast and he was then the major poet of its geography. Besides, for me he represented an ideal of the romantic poet, one who had built his ivory tower of stone on a dramatic promontory above the Pacific but who also had a major publisher in New York. I was further beguiled by his gaunt bones, beautiful fingers, and humorless intensity.

In some oblique way Jeffers seemed to enjoy my company. We met several times during that summer to talk about poetry. He responded to my poems more politely than [Yvor] Winters. I had been overfond of adjectives and mellifluous sounds. Jeffers taught me to value clangor in the language, the timpani of consonants, the bang of verbs. His dictum: "A poem needs multitude, multitudes of thoughts, all fierce, all flesh-eaters, musically clamorous."

Longing to have some of his fire and fame rub off on me, I tried to rub against him. But he was unnerved by proximity—until the afternoon he took me to Point Lobos. There he made me listen to the waves pounding granite, the tide rolling pebbles, the gulls shrieking in the wind. As we sat beside one another, staring at the heave and splash of the sea, he became more relaxed, so much so that when I questioned him about the tortured passions in his narratives, he admitted that he was fascinated by kinky sexuality and unlikely violence. Then, in a surprising emotional outburst, he went on to confess that he felt painfully trapped in the body of a man, forced to behave in conventional human ways, when what he ached for was the freedom of the osprey.

"The violent skies!" he said, "Or the turbulent depths, the cold turbulent depths!" At that moment he clutched my arm so tightly and stared seaward with such ferocity that I feared he might yank me with him as he jumped into the icy water to drown himself. But after a tense moment he abruptly released me, arose, and turned to clamber back up the cliffside as if to flee the temptation. On the drive back into Carmel he said not another word and I was not invited again to Tor House.

BOOK REVIEW

This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry. By Jed Rasula. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002. 259 pp. \$39.95.

REVIEWED BY GEORGE HART

Like two other books that have studied poetry and nature, John Elder's *Imagining the Earth* and Karl Kroeber's *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind*, *This Compost* emphasizes the connection between imagination and ecology, and, like these two other studies, Jed Rasula's is deeply rooted in the Romantic tradition. However, he makes a significant distinction between the romanticisms of English poetry: "The Romantic phase of English poetry is separated from that later branch we know as American by nothing less than the recovery of half the total span of the Western literary record. Champollion's decipherment of the Rosetta stone in the 1820s, and the subsequent popularization of prebiblical civilizations, created the unique conditions in which a distinctively American literature arose" (13). From this claim, one of Rasula's main tropes emerges, what he calls the "compost library." He writes, "American poetry is the first full opening of a field of archaic, scattered, incomplete, and scarcely surmised literacies from that compost library unearthed in the nineteenth century" (14). He calls his book "an anthology of sorts, concentrating on the Black Mountain lineage in modern American poetry," but he does not want to be a mere canonizer of "a particular set of poets." The common feature of his assembled poets, he claims, "is their willingness to work outside prevailing literary sensibility." According to Rasula, "this book does not validate aesthetic claims commonly made in literary criticism so much as document a stance toward the living planet, a stance these poets share with many people who know nothing of poetry" (xi). An ecumenical approach to ecologically oriented poetry is admirable and needed, but the strong claims for the connections between stance and style made by the Black Mountain poets certainly creates problems for such an approach. After all, the principal tenet of Olson's projective verse is that "form is never more than an extension of content."

An example of this difficulty may be found in Rasula's own methodology. Rasula believes his book participates in the poetics that he is anthologizing more than it constitutes an analysis of it. In fact, he suggests that *This Compost* might be best considered "as an instance of 'poet's prose'" (xiii). To this end, he practices what he calls a composting method: "most of the citations of poetry are not identified in the text, but blended into polyphonic configurations. Sometimes what is given as a single poetic citation is assembled from several poets or poems" (xii). He looks to the poets themselves for justification of this practice, as well as poststructuralist theorists such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva. In this sense, he asserts that "it is poetry, not poets—the system, not the signet—that is in need of attention and nurture" (6). Aligning himself with ecological thinkers such as Aldo Leopold, Rasula says, "I would describe poetry as ecology in the community of words" (7), and therefore his unorthodox method is intended to create a "compost library" in which poetic ecology can be read. Even though he wants to strip the names from his citations, the dominant poetics here is Olson's projective verse, and so the appearance of Jeffers throughout the book is something of a test of his project's heterogeneity. The "company" of poets he's concerned with is predominantly postmodernist, but he wants to take "*company* in a more expansive sense to include those like Robinson Jeffers, Muriel Rukeyser, and Kenneth Rexroth, who tend to fall outside customary genealogies" (9). Indeed, these three do often get short shrift in poetic literary history, but Rukeyser and Rexroth, who have experimental modernist roots and literary politics that connect them with some of these coteries, fit more comfortably in Rasula's *mélange*. In fact, he points out that the book "is in part a rumination" on Pound's *Cantos*, Zukofsky's "A," and Olson's *The Maximus Poems*, and in this regard one must wonder how Jeffers figures in at all, since his narrative approach to the long poem has little in common with poems that deploy just about every structuring device but narrative.

Following his composting method, Rasula's book does not present a single argument about "ecological imperatives in American poetry," but rather attempts to put those imperatives into practice itself. The argument is the way the book is written—it does not develop readings of individual poets chapter by chapter, or present a thesis supported by textual evidence. Rasula's neologism "wreading," which he applies to poets such as Olson to indicate how they turn their readers into writers, also applies to his own book. He writes, "*This Compost* goes about its business by pragmatically realizing its issues in its design. It is written in units of variable length, but tending to brevity, the sequence of which is determined by imaginal, not logical considerations; its argu-

ment is hologrammatic, not hypotactic—that is, not hierarchically disposed, but radically egalitarian. Its parts are its wholes and vice versa. If holes are found in the ‘argument,’ all the better—they’re for burrowing, for warmth and intimacy” (8). In any case, Rasula assures us that the book does have a unity: “The key organizing principle is the trope, in several senses: trope *as* trope or turning (which I relate to the Lucretian *clinamen* or swerve), trope as linguistic cousin to the tropic as geographic situation, and trope as poetry’s composting medium” (9). In other words, the figurative capacity of language, which via Lucretius accrues a meaning-making capacity, is the place of poetry and the process of its regeneration.

So, the poststructuralist concepts of intertextuality and *écriture* do in fact play a large part in Rasula’s imaginal argument. His coinage “wreading” is in earnest: “modern American poetry has been a resuscitation of reading into wreading, or nosing into the compost library. Before Pound and Olson, we have no instances of poets whose reading itself becomes the manifest fulcrum of their commitment to poetry” (18). The linguistic bias of this type of poetry dominates Rasula’s concerns at the outset. If there is a thesis here, it is based on modernism’s and poststructuralism’s materiality of the signifier. Rasula’s poets are *bricoleurs* (83, 199)—language is their medium, their material, and the medium is the message: “The work of poetry is less to entertain images than to pass human order through the mulching of language” (90). The long poems he places at the center of the book are all conceived as assemblages of material bits of language.

The beginning “units” of *This Compost*, roughly the first hundred pages, lay out this “argument,” and Jeffers makes his first major appearance at this point in “From Saturn to Demeter.” This brief section compares the melancholic, Saturnian mood of “Apology for Bad Dreams” with Mina Loy’s “temperamental alternative” in “Parturition.” According to Rasula, “The Hermetic function of Saturn is division,” and this power is centered in the earth, but it is also a breaking away from the earth. Rasula focuses his attention on the “breaks” in the poem—the boulders breaking up from the headland, the breaking vessel of humanity. Loy’s descent to earth, in contrast, takes its aspect from the corn goddess, and therefore its division results in birth and germination. Based on the overall trajectory of the book, it seems that Jeffers takes on a pivotal position here, though his appearance is abrupt. Up to this point, Rasula has been concerned with the long poems he highlighted in the Introduction, primarily Olson’s *The Maximus Poems*, and, from the “discovery of language as material” he has arrived at a descent to the dead. The book turns, tropes in Rasula’s terms, here, “from Saturn to Demeter,” from the “masculine severity”

(98) of Jeffers's breaking to Loy's "cosmic reproductivity" that connects human birth with "The contents of the universe" (99). The following sections, with titles such as "Milk light," "The floor of the upside down," and "The starry horizon," follow the thread of this connection by examining all sorts of astral imaginings. For the next fifty or so pages, Rasula meditates on language some more, and then, with the next turn, to the subject of the orders of epic and lyric poetry, Jeffers reappears in "*De rerum natura*: epic's lyric absolute." Along with the Introduction, this section is the book's most extended passage, taking up about ten pages. If the length of the section bespeaks its relative importance, so does its topic, the Lucretian element in American poetry: "the single most decisive gift of Lucretius to Whitman, and to the ongoing legacy of composting poetry, is his vision of human life fully absorbed into the fabric of the cosmos, a scene of propagations and admixtures inclusive of all creaturely life, but enfolding it in a plenitude far exceeding the bounds of sentience" (153). This statement is indeed a fair assessment of the Lucretian heritage we find in Jeffers's work.

What is also different about this chapter is that it begins with a specific historical reference to World War II, and Rasula's method runs into trouble when it attempts to place the poems in an historical context. The idea of superfluity brings Jeffers into Rasula's company of poets in productive ways, and it makes perfect sense to discuss Lucretius as he investigates the "copious and diverse" number of American poets "pledged to some version of *De rerum natura*" (153). Kenneth Rexroth, Wallace Stevens, Ronald Johnson, and Robert Frost are cited with ample evidence for their Lucretian interests, and he points out the Lucretian element in Jeffers's early poetry ("Divinely Superfluous Beauty") as well as the later work ("The unformed volcanic earth"). Rasula mixes up a "compost" from a variety of poems ("Oh Lovely Rock," "Credo," "Carmel Point," "Orca," "The Answer," and "The Beaks of Eagles") to provide an overview of Jeffers's "dichotomiz[ing] [of] the world as human and nonhuman" (156), but such a potpourri risks confusing a reader unfamiliar with Jeffers's poetry and elides any subtle distinctions between poems spanning the 1920s through the 1950s.

However, the real problem is the historical claims Rasula makes about Inhumanism and the publication record of *The Double Axe*. He attributes the Random House disclaimer published with the volume to a reaction against Jeffers's Inhumanist vision rather than his political comments in the poems. "Poets like Pound had been saying nasty things about politicians all along, so it couldn't entirely have been Jeffers's routine slander of militarism that made his publishers nervous.

The offense was putting the species in its place" (156–57). Would that this were true. It would be nice to think that a radically ecocentric politics based in a religious view of nature would make a publisher nervous, but, as Jeffers points out in "The Inhumanist," Copernicus and Darwin put the species in its place long before. Their discoveries were radical enough to unsettle the established order, and one assumes that New York publishers were fairly comfortable with the implications of physics and evolution by the mid-twentieth century. Besides, the record just doesn't support Rasula's claim. The letters between Jeffers and Random House editor Saxe Commins, reprinted in James Shebl's *In This Wild Water*, reveal Commins's unease was based in the specific political references, especially to Roosevelt (39–44). Once Jeffers agreed to tone down the characterizations of Roosevelt and Truman, Commins was satisfied enough to let the other statements he found offensive stand, as long as the publisher's note was included. Jeffers supplied a revised Preface, but whether Commins asked for changes there as well is unclear. The poet removed references to an approaching third world war, to the atomic bomb as "mass murder," and to international politics as nothing more than the manifestation of politicians' mental instabilities. However, the substantial comments on Inhumanism were retained—Rasula, in fact, quotes the definition of Inhumanism from the published version of the Preface (157).

Rasula seems to distinguish between the doctrinal statements of Inhumanism in the poems and the topics and tone of the work itself. After the discussion of *The Double Axe*, Rasula continues, "But Jeffers does have a story to tell, a tale of degeneration and disinheritance," and his "personal fate" was to hate those who hated the world, a fate reinforced by his loneliness after Una's death (157). He quotes "Prescription of Painful Ends" as an example of Jeffers's frustrated hope for Lucretian integration, but that poem predates Una's death by ten years, so Rasula is playing somewhat fast and loose with the chronology here. He concludes this section by pairing Jeffers and Pound as poets possessed by "monomania" during the War (158). He specifically mentions Pound's "blockbuster docudrama history *Cantos* of the 1930s," but rather than looking at poems from *Solstice* or *Be Angry at the Sun*, he cites "Shine, Perishing Republic," and so the comparison is more a general comment than a specific analysis of how these two poets responded to World War II.

It is salutary for Jeffers studies to find a critic willing to consider its poet among contemporaries such as Pound and successors such as Olson, but not much is gained here (for Jeffers studies) because Rasula privileges his composting method over historical and textual analysis. Lucretius may in fact connect this particular company of poets, but style

does seem to divide them as well. Narrative certainly unites Rexroth, Frost, and Jeffers in their Lucretian ruminations; the connection with brilliant bricoleurs such as Ronald Johnson, Olson, and Pound seems less evident. I say this as a critic who finds much value in the Black Mountain lineage of American poetry, and as a reader who is convinced by Rasula's general thesis that this poetics is particularly suited to ecological imperatives when we consider language as an ecosystem itself. However, little concern is given to the strain of Modernism that didn't turn Romanticism into Postmodernism, in other words, to Jeffers's anti-Modernism, as Albert Gelpi has called it. Jeffers reasserted the British Romantic imagination in the face of Modernism, and he draws as much sustenance from Wordsworth as from Emerson, if not more. To include Jeffers in this company because of his ecological concerns is generous and worthy, but to disregard his poetics in favor of one completely alien to him is not productive. In effect, Rasula's ecological imperatives turn out to be the linguistic imperatives of a particular kind of American poetry, one that Jeffers most certainly took a stance against.

NEWS AND NOTES

After reading “So Brave, in a Void” (*JS* 7.2), in which Robert Zaller writes that Czeslaw Milosz “appears to have been about fifty before he discovered Jeffers” (43), RJA member John Varady contacted both the author and the editors of *JS*. He informs us that Milosz first encountered Jeffers when he attended a performance of *Medea* during its initial Broadway run in 1947–48, which means that he would have been in his mid-thirties. Mr. Varady acquired this information in a conversation with Milosz after the Occidental College Jeffers Centennial in 1987.

RJA CONFERENCE

The 12th Annual Robinson Jeffers Association Conference was held February 17–19, 2006, at the Brazil Ranch in Big Sur, California. The conference theme was “Evolution, Revolution, and Change: Social and Natural Forces in Jeffers’s Poetry.”

The conference was inaugurated by a poetry reading at Tor House on Friday night. Saturday morning, after the former RJA president’s welcome, by Jim Baird, and the president’s address, by Peter Quigley, Scott Slovic, Professor of Literature and Environment at the University of Nevada, Reno, delivered the keynote address, “Oh Lovely Slab: Jeffers, Stone Work, and the Locus of the Local.” After the keynote, Armando Arias, Director of the Big Sur Environmental Institute, gave an introduction to the Brazil Ranch. Two panels followed: “Embracing a Sense of Place,” which included Tim Hunt, “A Wordsworthian Coast: Jeffers, Tradition, and the Shock of Big Sur,” Donald Masterson, “Jeffers and Henry Miller: Expatriates in Big Sur,” and David Copeland Morris, “The Trouble with Cronan: The Wilderness Debate between Jeffers and William Cronan”; “Underlying Schemas” included Robert Brophy, “The Humor of Robinson Jeffers,” and ShaunAnne Tangney, “A Little Too Abstract, A Little Too Wise.”

The afternoon sessions included a video presentation on the photographer Leigh Wiener, a panel called "The Constructed, the Sublime," which included Barbara Mossberg, "Chaos and Complexity," Steven Chapman, "Jeffers's Attitude toward Science," and George Hart, "The Strain in the Skull: 'Prelude' and the Biology of Consciousness," and a reading of Una and Robin's love letters by Lili Bitá and Robert Zaller. The day concluded with a reception at the Brazil Ranch house.

After the business meeting, Sunday's morning sessions were "Points of View," which included Fredrik Christian Brogger, "Inhumanism," Ronald P. Olowin, "Inhumanism and Modern Cosmology," and Robert Zaller, "Jeffers, Darwin, and Design," and an open discussion on Jeffers and current evolutionary issues such as intelligent design. The afternoon panels were "Minding Matter and the Dynamics of Change," which included James Baird, "'Are We Not Men? We Are Devo!' Robinson Jeffers and the Social and Biological Devolution of Humanity," Ian Roberts, "Change of Mind: Jeffers and Evolutionary Psychology," and Stuart Noble-Goodman, "Natural Science and Change"; "Coming Round," which included C. Travis Webb, "The Arc and the Circle," Mike Splain, "The Purse-Seine," and Dirk Aardsma, "*Cawdor*; then *Cawdor*"; and "The Beginning of the End," which included Mark Minster, "'How Quiet We Shall Be': Eschatology in Jeffers's *Double Axe*" and Eric Shaffer, "After Jeffers: Antler, Keeler, Saijo, and Whitney."

CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Brophy edited the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* from 1968 to 1996 and *Jeffers Studies* from 1997 to 2002, and he currently serves as *JS*'s senior editor. He is the author of *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems* (Case Western Reserve UP, 1973) and editor of *Robinson Jeffers: Dimensions of a Poet* (Fordham UP, 1995).

Steven Chapman is the director of the Foundation for Ecology and Culture, a San Francisco-based non-profit working to promote new cultural paradigms for a sustainable future. His article "'De Rerum Virtute': A Critical Anatomy" appeared in *Jeffers Studies* 6.4 (2002).

Robert Zaller, a poet and historian with a specialty in British and early modern European history, is author of *The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers* (Cambridge UP, 1983) and editor of *Centennial Essays for Robinson Jeffers* (Associated UP, 1991).

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