

JEFFERS STUDIES

"It is likely the enormous
Beauty of the world requires for completion our
ghostly increments,
It has to dream, and dream badly, a moment
of its might." (page 143)

For Edith Muckleston, from Una and
Robinson Jeffers.

Ten House, Carmel, California.
May, 1932.

A PUBLICATION OF
THE ROBINSON JEFFERS ASSOCIATION

JEFFERS STUDIES

VOLUME 19 2015/2016

CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

iii

ARTICLES

CHARLES AUSTIN BEARD AND ROBINSON JEFFERS:
A HISTORIAN AND A POET AGAINST
THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

RICHARD DRAKE

1

TURNING FROM THE HIGH LAMPS TO LOVE THE
LOW HILLS: THE STORY THE STORY OF JEFFERS'
"METEMPSYCHOSIS" TELLS

TIM HUNT

13

THE EDITH WHERRY MUCKLESTON COLLECTION,
UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARY

JAMES KARMAN

37

BOOK REVIEWS

CHARLES AUSTIN BEARD: THE RETURN OF THE
MASTER HISTORIAN OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

BY RICHARD DRAKE

REVIEWED BY ROBERT ZALLER

82

THE ATOM TO BE SPLIT: NEW AND SELECTED ESSAYS
ON ROBINSON JEFFERS

BY ROBERT ZALLER

REVIEWED BY WHITNEY HOTH

90

COVER ILLUSTRATION: *Inscription For Gift Copy Of Thurso's Landing,*
COURTESY OF PRICE FAMILY ARCHIVES.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of *Jeffers Studies* begins with an essay by Richard Drake, Professor of History at the University of Montana, whose main field of study is the resistance in the first half of the twentieth century to the prevailing view of the role of the United States' expansion into imperialism and the economic and social changes this stance brought about. He has written a book about a political figure who embodied this resistance, Senator Robert LaFollette. He has recently turned his attention to the historian Charles Beard, who, with his wife Mary, wrote several books challenging imperialistic policies on constitutional and moral grounds. Drake's most recent book is *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism* (2018). The essay published here is an outgrowth of the sections in that book which deal with Robinson Jeffers, who shared Beard's view that America was headed down the wrong path. Jeffers readers know that the poet was an isolationist before the Second World War and after its conclusion bitterly denounced the results in American and world society. Because the United States eventually joined in the Second World War, the isolationist viewpoint is sometimes thought of in hindsight as wrong, but Professor Drake explains how both Beard and Jeffers were part of a large minority which had been part of the national debate for decades, and, as the title of his book on Beard suggests, may again offer an alternate political and philosophical choice.

Tim Hunt returns to *Jeffers Studies* with an extended examination of several variants of early published and unpublished poems from the poet's formative period during and immediately after the First World War. Hunt makes full use of the resources of his standard edition of the poems, the Stanford University Press *Collected Poems of Robinson Jeffers* (1988-2001), to demonstrate the importance of the restored textual record for grounding interpretation in documentary evidence. Hunt's reconstruction of the process of creation and revision in these early poems combines careful textual sleuthing with adventurous speculation.

James Karman, in his ongoing search for biographical and historical evidence about the lives of Robinson and Una Jeffers, brings us more information about the poet's wife in the form of a memoir by Edith Wherry, a friend of Una. The manuscript is stored in the Special Collections of the University of Oregon Library. Much of what Ms. Wherry tells us is about Una's life before she met Robin, and it shows us that her effect on others was quite powerful without the attraction of her role as wife and professional helpmate of a famous poet. When her sorority sisters at the University of California at Berkeley hear that she will be coming to one of their reunions, everything stops as they shout, "Una is coming!" Wherry's manuscript provides new details about this remarkable woman.

Robert Zaller is such a preeminent Jeffers scholar that we forget he is also an accomplished historian. He uses his background in both history and literature in his review of Richard Drake's book on Charles Beard described above.

Whitney Hoth, Associate Editor of *Jeffers Studies*, reviews Robert Zaller's latest book, *The Atom To Be Split*, a collection of his many essays on Jeffers' work. The collection is far ranging, and so is Hoth's assessment. He not only places *Atom* in the context of all of Zaller's critical work, he also evaluates it in terms of the history of Jeffers criticism and includes general aesthetic theories as well. If a literary scholar unfamiliar with Jeffers wants a general introduction to critical viewpoints about the poet, he or she would find it in this review.

RICHARD DRAKE

CHARLES AUSTIN BEARD
AND ROBINSON JEFFERS:

A HISTORIAN AND A POET AGAINST
THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

I became interested in the work of Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) while doing research for a book on the life of the American historian Charles Austin Beard (1874-1948). Jeffers and Beard both published books in 1948 that denounced the foreign policy of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for what they believed to be its warmongering character. Beard's *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities* came out in February and Jeffers's *The Double Axe and Other Poems* in September. Appearing at the high tide of American triumphalism after the Second World War, both books received savage treatment from critics, and essentially for the same reason: they questioned the morality of America's involvement in the "Good War." Both authors were condemned for their isolationist views, their ridicule of Washington's professed motives for entering the Second World War, and their supposed blindness to the efficacy and even existence of American idealism. My idea for this article began with the question of the extent to which Beard's work might have been a part of Jeffers's political education as an isolationist.

It seemed reasonable to assume that Beard would have been an inescapable influence on Jeffers, not only on his isolationism, but also his attitude of cold historical realism in *The Double Axe*. The country's most famous and influential historian during the first half

of the twentieth century, Beard throughout his career challenged what he called America's romantic illusions about itself. For more than three decades, from the publication in 1913 of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* to his death in 1948, Beard's work set the terms of debate among American historians and informed popular understanding of the nation's past. He called attention to the workings of a complexly functioning economic and political power elite lording over the underlying masses. American democracy, to him, lay in the future, if it ever could be achieved against the oligarchy that he believed always had ruled the country and ruled it still. For millions of readers in the 1930s, the decade of Beard's greatest influence, his work explained the Depression-era world in which they lived. Beard was part of the climate of opinion for educated Americans during much of the twentieth century.

Like Jeffers, Beard championed a non-interventionist foreign policy for the United States. Beard, however, did not like the term isolationism, thinking that there was nothing isolationist about a foreign policy calling for Americans to mind their own business and stop thinking of themselves as preceptors for the rest of humanity. Instead, he adopted the term "continentalism," to signify that the United States should concern itself only with matters involving its own continental sphere of influence. Beginning in the 1930s, in such classic anti-war works as *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels* (1939), Beard took the lead nationally as the foremost spokesman for an anti-interventionist foreign policy in the United States. Though an early supporter of the New Deal, he came to regard President Roosevelt as the catalyst in Washington for the decisions that brought the country into the Second World War. Jeffers felt the same.

Even after Pearl Harbor, Beard continued to question FDR's rationale for the war as a struggle against Nazi and Fascist totalitarianism to preserve his vaunted Four Freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. All noble objectives, but Beard thought that the war had to be about something else. He never could bring himself to believe that a war for freedom of any kind could be fought alongside the worst mass murderer in history, Joseph Stalin. Winston Churchill, an arch imperialist, also seemed to Beard miscast as a statesman with any serious concern about spreading freedom in the world, as the peoples of Ireland, Egypt and India knew at first-hand. FDR himself,

Beard observed, had ample experience as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during the administration of Woodrow Wilson in extending and maintaining the sphere of American imperial control in Latin America.

Taking these facts about the allied leaders into consideration, Beard concluded that the Second World War was at bottom a variation on history's oldest theme, how the rich control the poor. All the other issues, some of them truly important and moral, stood in a subaltern relationship to the question of who would dominate the world's markets and resources. In other words, whichever side won, the Second World War would have an imperialist outcome. He made these arguments most fully in *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*. Jeffers, like Beard, had no illusions about Stalin, Churchill, and FDR. He, too, believed the war was motivated on all sides by imperialist aggressions.

That same year, in *The Double Axe*, Jeffers attacked FDR while making historical references that echoed Beard's core contentions about America's involvement in the war. Jeffers felt disgust for FDR and repeatedly referred to the President as a war peddler crazed by ambition. To the supreme misfortune of the American people, Jeffers believed, they had in FDR a leader of genius-caliber rhetorical gifts who with consummate political skill had succeeded in destroying the last vestiges of the Republic. For Jeffers's generation, Beard's historical works had called attention to the darker side of the nation's past. America, according to Beard, had been a continental empire from the beginning, and then after the Spanish-American War of 1898, a regional empire in Latin America and the Pacific. Beard also taught that after 1941 the United States began to envision its field of operations as the whole world. Everything everywhere would now become a matter of national interest and concern for the United States. Henceforward, the underlying reality in American life and its driving force would be an unholy alliance between militarism and imperialism.

Jeffers appeared to have absorbed completely Beard's teaching about the American Empire. He contended in "So Many Blood Lakes," one of the poems in *The Double Axe*, that America's imperialist ambition would require permanent military preparedness: "Now guard the beaches, watch the north, trust not the dawns. Probe every cloud. /Build power. Fortress America may yet for a long time stand, between the east and the west, like Byzantium" (CP

3: 133). As with all empires, Jeffers thought, a long time would not mean forever. The American Empire, too, would fall, and Jeffers believed it already showed signs of decay.

The Double Axe seemed to me to be Beardianism set to the music of poetry. What, I wondered, was the actual relationship between the poet and the historian? Jeffers certainly knew about Beard and admired him. In 1946, he voted to elect Beard to the American Academy of Arts and Letters (CL 3: 424). It surprised me very much, however, to find no other mention of Beard in *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*. I thought those volumes would be bulging with letters of mutual admiration between the two men. Instead, all I found was editor James Karman's footnote about Jeffers's vote for Beard in the American Academy of Arts and Letters 1946 election. On Beard's side, the record of their relationship was similarly lacking in substantiating detail. He and his wife, Mary Ritter Beard, destroyed their personal papers, but some of his letters survive in scattered archival collections. I have found no mention of Jeffers in any of those extant letters.

Although there is no record of any direct personal contact between them, Beard and Jeffers were aware of each other's work. In *America in Midpassage* (1939), the Beards cite Jeffers as one of the important poets of the 1930s, but they give him just one sentence: "Only Robinson Jeffers seemed to be content with complete frustration, seeing no escape from humanity's incapacities and violence even in death; *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* followed *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*—both statements of the tortured poetic soul in a world infinitely hideous" (2: 679). As of 1939, the Beards considered Jeffers a non-political poet unconcerned about the mundane stresses of the Depression who looked to reach a higher level of tragic philosophical awareness in which the details of history are absorbed and lost in a cosmic force field.

For Jeffers's part, his library included at least one of Beard's books, the 1923 edition of *The History of the American People* (originally published in 1918), a textbook written with William C. Bagley.¹ Intended for use in the high school classroom, this is a very minor work by Beard and entirely lacking the passionate revisionism that would characterize his later studies of American foreign policy. A decade later, in *The Idea of National Interest: An Analytical Study in American Foreign Policy* (1934), he put forward his view that the country's dealings with the world had amounted to little more than

a hypocritical promotion and defense of elite economic interests. It cannot be claimed as a certainty that Jeffers ever read this book or any of Beard's other major works on American imperialism. It does seem highly probable that Jeffers, a voracious reader, would have been familiar with *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War, 1941*, a study by the most famous historian in America about the identical subject of his own 1948 anti-war book, *The Double Axe*. Probable, but not certain.

In my own book, *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism* (2018), I devote an entire chapter to the history of the isolationist movement on which he exerted a powerful influence as a foreign policy authority. His books were required reading for isolationists. I had thought to find connections between Jeffers and such isolationist groups as America First, which might have served as another channel for him to have discovered Beard. Nowhere in my reading about American isolationism during the 1930s, however, did I see any treatment of Jeffers's writing. Consulting the indexes for the three volumes of *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, I found no mention of isolationism or the America First movement or any of the principal isolationist figures of this period, save for Charles Lindbergh, and mentions of him were sparse and perfunctory. Given the aggressively isolationist viewpoint of *The Double Axe*, the complete absence in *The Collected Letters* of references to the isolationist movement seemed as strange to me as the nearly non-existent references to Beard. Jeffers's political education as an isolationist was turning out to be a much more complicated historical problem than I initially thought it would be.

Other research that I compiled for my book pointed in the direction of a third possible explanation for the Beardian historical backdrop of *The Double Axe*. If Jeffers did not go to school directly to Beard, he might have had indirect exposure to him through his connections with a circle of Republican friends and acquaintances who were prominent supporters of former President Herbert Hoover. During the Second World War, Hoover developed an enormous admiration for Beard, and his feelings were fully reciprocated by the historian. Their friendship is surprising in that they stood on opposite sides in domestic politics, with Beard to the left of the New Deal and Hoover to the right of it. They found common ground, however, in their shared opposition to FDR's foreign policy. They agreed that he and his chief Cabinet officers had dragged the United States into

the Second World War. In a chapter titled "Beard Finds an Ally in Herbert Hoover," I relate how both men encouraged and helped each other to write exposés of the real forces that propelled the United States along the road to war, the same theme preoccupying Jeffers during these years when he was writing *The Double Axe*.

It excited me to learn that Hoover and Jeffers had several mutual friends. I began to speculate that the Beardian thesis about America's involvement in the Second World War might have come to Jeffers through these Hoover connections. Foremost among them was Charlotte Kellogg (1874-1960). A prominent writer and social activist at the center of the Jefferses' social circle in Carmel, California, she held his poetry in the highest regard and thought of him as a mentor for her own writing. She had participated in Hoover's relief work during the First World War. Her husband, the Stanford University zoologist Vernon Kellogg, had been Hoover's chief assistant in Belgium. After the Nazi and Soviet invasions of Poland, Hoover helped to establish the Commission for Polish Relief. Serving on that organization's board of directors, and as a tireless fundraiser for it, Charlotte Kellogg would have been a likely link between Hoover and Jeffers (CL 2: 1043). *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers* contain many references to the Kelloggs, who owned property in Carmel.

Another of their mutual friends, the financier Eugene Meyer, had been a key member of the Hoover administration. Hoover had made him the chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and then the chief of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a government lending agency created as part of the President's economic recovery program. Meyer later bought *The Washington Post* and adopted a strong anti-New Deal editorial line. He and Hoover remained close.

Meyer and his wife, Agnes, befriended Jeffers. On a poetry reading tour in 1941, Jeffers and his wife, Una, stayed with the Meyers as their guests when they came to Washington. Following a reading Jeffers gave at the Library of Congress, Meyer held a reception at his home attended by numerous dignitaries. A *Washington Post* headline the next day announced the brilliant success of the reading (CL 1: 76-77). The biographies of Hoover that I have consulted, however, do not mention Jeffers. In *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, I found two slight and politically innocent references to Hoover, both in volume two, and none at all in volume three, which covers the

years in which he wrote *The Double Axe*. Hoover and Jeffers do not appear to have had any personal relationship. The poet's personal relations with Hoover sympathizers notwithstanding, there is even less documentary support for a Jeffers-Hoover connection than for one between Jeffers and Beard.

In the absence of any definitive documentary evidence, can a case be made for a Beardian interpretation of *The Double Axe and Other Poems*? I think so, but the evidence for the case lies in the poetry itself, not in any external statements about it. The letters from the period when Jeffers was writing *The Double Axe* reveal little about his political views. Based on the letters, it can be said that he knew *The Double Axe* would cause hard feelings. In an August 1944 letter, he wrote to a friend that his publisher, Random House, did not agree with the political line of the new poems. He expected the major newspapers and literary reviews to react in the same negative way: "My next book, {which I hope to finish in a few months,} may give them a bit of a workout" (CL 3: 303). Concerned about the tepid response to the book of editor Saxe Commins, Una Jeffers, who often managed her husband's correspondence, wondered in a 1947 letter, "do you think your firm wishes to publish this book—and, if they do, will push it properly?" She pleaded with Commins, "It would be best to tell us now if you'd prefer to skip this particular book..." (CL 3: 506).

About the main human targets of *The Double Axe*—FDR, Winston Churchill, and Harry Truman—almost nothing of consequence can be found in *The Collected Letters*. Jeffers barely mentions these figures. Stalin, another monster of inhumanity by Jeffers's reckoning, comes up twice in the nearly thousand-page-long third volume, once mentioned by Una in a 1940 letter and the other time by Jeffers himself in an enclosure for a letter he wrote in 1953. In "Teheran," a poem from *The Double Axe*, he asks, concerning the statesmen meeting at the Allied conference of 1943, "— but who are these little smiling attendants/ On a world's agony, meeting in Teheran to plot against whom what future?" (CP 3: 125). His opinion of FDR brims with disdain. In one of the "suppressed" poems from the 1948 edition, he has President Woodrow Wilson meet FDR in hell. Wilson self-protectively claims to have blundered into war "Through honest error.... But you/ Blew on the coal-bed, and when it kindled you deliberately/Sabotaged every fire-wall that even the men who denied/ My hope had built. You have too much

murder on your hands. I will not/Speak of the lies and connivings” (CP 3: 117).²

Throughout the book, the Axis dictators come off no worse than FDR, Churchill, and Stalin. In the letters, however, there is not so much as a hint of animosity toward the Allied leaders, collectively referred to in *The Double Axe* as war criminals. Jeffers would have liked to have seen all of them hanged in a public execution, and if fate had put them on the losing side in the war they would have been. “[A]ll governments/Are thugs and liars” (CP 3: 234), he said, and the worst of them busily cook up world wars. The real reason for the execution of the Nazi and Japanese war criminals, according to Jeffers, was that they had committed atrocities on the losing side. Those who had committed atrocities on the winning side earned the privilege of writing the history books about the war and covering themselves with glory. He repeatedly refers to the leaders on both sides of the conflict as hellhounds.

Jeffers’s anti-war and isolationist politics, to be understood fully, must be viewed in the larger context of his “inhumanist” philosophy. “What is not well?” he asks in the poem “What of It?” from *The Double Axe*, and he answers, “Man is not well” (CP 3: 208). He explains in the poem that the natural world, not man, is the measure of all things. The presence of man spoils the natural world. Indeed, all will be well in nature once man, this insignificant speck in the grand scheme of creation, becomes extinct, a biological outcome Jeffers thought inevitable given all the contemporary trends in the world. Life would go on without mankind and in time revert to its primal beauty. Jeffers writes about the final disappearance of man as a consummation devoutly to be wished.

Yet the vehemence and passion of *The Double Axe* appear to contradict the fatalism of his inhumanist philosophy. This is not a book of stoical passivity in the face of an irresistible fate. He acknowledges his fierce partisanship. To a hypothetical critic, he says “—As for me: laugh at me. I agree with you. It is a foolish business to see the future and screech at it. /One should watch and not speak” (CP 3: 133). *The Double Axe* essentially is one long screech of pain and outrage at the folly of the perennially bamboozled American people and the perfidy of their leaders. In the book’s preface, he acknowledges that his anti-war cause had been lost in advance. American intervention in Europe’s wars had been calam-

itous, “But it is futile at present to argue these matters” (CP 4: 429). He grimly makes the argument for isolationism anyway.

That Jeffers’s political argument in *The Double Axe*, at its core, comes directly from the non-interventionist writings of Beard can be demonstrated most succinctly and tellingly by a line from the lead poem in *The Double Axe*. In that poem’s second part, “The Inhumanist,” the old man protagonist offers counsel to people concerned about the dying social order in America. When asked, “What’s your advice?” he responds, “[It] is not new: all the rulers know it. /If there’s a flea in the water, swallow a toad. If you have trouble at home, /Try foreign war” (CP 3: 303).

The old man’s recommendation is a reference to the most famous passage in Beard’s major isolationist book of the 1930s. In September 1939, Beard published an article in *Harper’s Magazine*, derived from a theme that he and his wife had raised in *America in Midpassage*: throughout history governments habitually have used foreign war as a diversion from domestic crises. The article grew into a short book that same year, *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels: An Estimate of American Foreign Policy*. It rapidly became the bible of American isolationists. Beard borrowed its title from a scene in one of Shakespeare’s history plays. In the fourth act of *Henry IV, Part Two*, the dying king beckons his son:

Come hither, Harry, sit thou by my bed
And hear, I think, the very latest counsel
That I shall ever breathe.

The king reflects on the “by-paths and indirect crook’d ways/I met this crown.” Once on the throne, he worries incessantly about the men,

By whose fell working I was first advanced
And by whose power I well might lodge a fear
To be again displac’d; which to avoid,
I cut them off; and had a purpose now
To lead out many to the Holy Land,
Lest rest and lying still might make them look
Too near unto my state.

In short, there is nothing like a good crusade to keep domestic politics safe from covetous eyes and prying hands. Beard then continues with the quotation,

...Therefore, my Harry
 Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
 With foreign quarrels....

Prince Henry responds,

My gracious liege,
 You won it, wore it, kept it, and gave it me;
 Then plain and right must my possession be;
 Which I with more than with a common pain
 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain.

(*Henry IV*, Part II, Act IV, Scene V)

Beard thought that this exchange between the two Plantagenets, father and son, caught the true spirit of American foreign policy in the FDR era. For sheer deviousness, American leaders belonged in the same class with Henry IV. Ever since the Spanish-American War, the United States had been inserting itself ever deeper into world affairs. The Depression, however, had forced the country to concentrate on its economic problems at home. As the dreadful decade wore on, the Depression did not relax its hold. Beard thought that the President had steadily shifted his attention to world affairs for the same reason that Henry IV had fomented a crusade, as a diversionary tactic. As early as 1939, in *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels*, Beard said of Roosevelt, "Evidently, he was clearing a way to make the next war a real holy war" (50).

Whenever FDR made his internationalist foreign policy moves too suddenly or sharply, the powerful neutralist and isolationist forces in the country blocked him. As Justus D. Doenecke explains in his history of the opposition to FDR's foreign policy on the eve of the Second World War, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941*, "[o]bviously the house of anti-intervention contained many mansions" (8). Doenecke means that a vigorous opposition to FDR existed at this time across a broad spectrum of opinion, left and right, in American politics, journalism, and intellectual life. Jeffers was part of this spectrum of isolationist opinion, which derived its basic understanding of American history and politics from Beard. If Americans ever again engage in a national debate about the aims and methods of the country's foreign policy, they would do well to turn to the ideas of Beard, as Jeffers did in his most important work of political poetry.

ENDNOTES

1. Cited in "The Last Word: A Record of the 'Auxiliary' Library at Tor House" (Girard 1998), which contains a listing of holdings in the personal library of Jeffers and his wife Una. I am indebted to Robinson Jeffers scholar James Karman for this information.
2. In the Liveright edition of *The Double Axe and Other Poems* (New York, 1977), "Wilson in Hell" is identified as one of the poems suppressed in the 1948 edition by Jeffers's publisher, Random House. The editors of the 1977 edition, William Everson and Bill Hotchkiss, contend that ten of the poems intended by Jeffers for inclusion in the book were deleted "apparently at the urging (insistence?) of the editors [at Random House]" (153). In making their claim, Everson and Hotchkiss rely primarily on the authority of James M. Shebl, *In This Wild Water: The Suppressed Poems of Robinson Jeffers* (Pasadena, California: Ward Ritchie Press, 1976). Tim Hunt has analyzed the complex publishing history of the book and the interpretations of its composition. Random House feared a hostile reaction to the book's inflammatory politics, but only succeeded in imposing some relatively minor changes on the text, according to Hunt. He concludes that in responding to Random House's criticisms, Jeffers "had left the book's political tone and judgments intact" ("Double the Axe, Double the Fun: Is There a Final Version of Jeffers' *The Double Axe*?" *Text* 7, (1995), 444, <http://www.tahunt.com/critical-work-2/>). Hunt disputes the claim that Random House suppressed any of the poems, while acknowledging that in give and take negotiations with the press, Jeffers did soften some of the book's language and character portrayals. For the book's published form in 1948, Hunt ascribes more responsibility to Jeffers's own inner conflict and shifting intentions about these poems than to censorship at Random House.

WORKS CITED

- Beard, Charles A. *Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels: An Estimate of American Foreign Policy*. Macmillan, 1939.
- Beard, Charles A. and Beard, Mary R. *America in Midpassage*. Vol. 2., Macmillan, 1939.
- Doenecke, Justus D. *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- Girard, Maureen, compiler. "The Last Word: A Record of the 'Auxiliary' Library at Tor House" (1998), unpublished list of the holdings in the personal library of Jeffers and his wife, Una.
- Hunt, Tim. "Double the Axe, Double the Fun: Is There a Final Version of Jeffers' *The Double Axe*?", *Text* 7, (1995), <http://www.tahunt.com/critical-work-2/>.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers*, edited by James Karman, Stanford UP, 2009- 2015.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, Vol. 3, edited by Tim Hunt, Stanford UP, 1991.
- . *The Double Axe and Other Poems*, edited by William Everson and Bill Hotchkiss, Liveright, 1977.
- Shakespeare, William. *Henry IV, Part II, Histories*, edited by Peter Alexander, Collins, 1951.
- Shebl, James M. *In This Wild Water: The Suppressed Poems of Robinson Jeffers*. Pasadena, Ward Ritchie Press, 1976.

TIM HUNT

TURNING FROM THE HIGH LAMPS TO LOVE THE LOW HILLS:

THE STORY THE STORY OF JEFFERS'
"METEMPSYCHOSIS" TELLS

We often treat poems as if the words on the page are inevitable and timeless. Poems wait for us as a beautiful rock might wait for us to pick it up, then turn it side to side to study its form, its material, its beauty. Whatever the poem might tell us is there, fixed and final in the words the poet has chosen. Such matters as when the poem was written, or how, matter about as much as the marble shards left on the studio floor after the sculptor has chiseled the stone to reveal the figure within it. The debris testifies to the labor and craft, but the stages of work along the way are of no real significance. And this would seem especially the case for the work of Robinson Jeffers, who declared he was committed to writing so clearly and with such emphasis on permanent things that his poems could be read a thousand years in the future.

But the stages of a poem as it's being drafted can deepen—even alter—our understanding of the completed work. And this is true for Jeffers, especially so for the poems he wrote following World War I and on into 1920 as he worked to find his way both stylistically and thematically. In some cases, the poem's final version may even obscure its original nature and thereby obscure what the earlier drafts might reveal about Jeffers' development and the nature of his achievement. "The Truce and the Peace," a 1918 sonnet sequence eventually included in *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924), is a case in

point. It exists in a series of thematically distinct versions that reflect Jeffers' changing sense of the world order following World War I. As the promise of peace devolved into the corrosive compromises of the Versailles Treaty, his mood darkened from hope to despair and he became convinced that the terms of the peace were the conditions for another war (CP 5: 41-44 & 269-290). The successive versions of "The Truce and the Peace" record and chart these changes in the poet's perceptions and responses. Even more revealing, however, are the poems Jeffers elected to omit from *Tamar*—work he at first planned to include in a collection entitled *God's Peace in November*, and then, as he wrote new poems and discarded earlier ones, organized into another collection possibly to be entitled *Brides of the South Wind* (CP 5: 41-44 & 1055-1059). Even though Jeffers discarded much of the work from this period, these omitted poems help clarify the crucial turn, both conceptually and aesthetically, in his poetry at the end of 1920 when he broke through to his mature voice.

One of the omitted poems is "The Hills Beyond the River." Jeffers wrote the initial unit of this poem (ten lines titled "Metempsychosis") in the spring of 1919 and included it in tables of contents for projected collections under that title. In early 1921, or perhaps as late as the spring, Jeffers constructed the final (and retitled) version of this poem by adding four lines adapted from another poem, "The Beginning of Decadence," written in the spring of 1920. "Metempsychosis"/"The Hills Beyond the River" has, then, a two-year history that coincides with a crucial period in Jeffers' development as a poet, during which he moved beyond his transitional work of 1918-1919 (both formally and thematically) to such lyrics as "Salmon Fishing" (presumably initially drafted in December 1920)¹ which initiate his mature work, so powerfully gathered in *Tamar and Other Poems*. Considering the differences between "Metempsychosis" (the poem's initial state) and "The Hills Beyond the River" (its final version) helps clarify this transitional period by revealing not just a greater emphasis placed on nature as a central imaginative element in his work but also a shift in how he viewed the self's relationship to nature, a shift that both problematized and energized his sense of the relationship of poetry to nature. The story that the transformation of "Metempsychosis" into "The Hills Beyond the River" tells doesn't provide a comprehensive account of how an aspiring apprentice poet became the distinctive, authoritative figure we know

as Jeffers, but this story does bring into view a few of the critical and needed elements for such an account.

Oddly, the place to start this story is at its end—an omitted poem in its final expanded version entitled “The Hills Beyond the River” completed in 1921:

Coast-range creeks, veins of the body of mine that
will not die
When this spirit is nothing and this flesh new dirt
and the eager eye
Sucked its last and is drunk with darkness—I am
content I think to cease,
I rejoice no death will drag you peaks and slopes
down to that peace.
Neither failure of the blood will make you faint nor
its fevers choke,
Canyon creeks that are my arteries, hair of forest
and body of rock.
If long hence and after a thousand long millenni-
ums you go down
I will go, the last of me then, and the endless dance
of suns go on.
Therefore I turned from the high lamps and limited
to low hills my love.
Sweet you are immortality enough, identity enough.
. . . . As while life lasts I am content with the stone
belts of my own house,
Windows opening west over salt water and south to
the coast-range brows,
Walls on a rock above the sea, and granite ecstasy
kept clean
By its very narrowness from much that troubles
luckier men. (CP 4: 337)

The poem shows Jeffers (in both the ten lines from 1919 and the concluding four composed in 1920) moving toward the long lines and cadences that would soon come to characterize his work, yet it also reflects his earlier commitment to traditional forms, meter, and rhyme (here a mix of full and slant rhyme). Arguably, “The Hills Beyond the River,” as finished, is a variation on that most traditional of forms, the sonnet, using a somewhat longer verse line and with a concluding unit of four lines instead of six (as in the Italian sonnet) or two (as in the Shakespearean sonnet). And in the

spirit of the sonnet, the final unit enacts a thematic and emotional turn (here further marked by the expanded ellipsis that initiates it). This concluding unit clearly alludes to Tor House² (“the stone belts of my own house”), celebrating it as a refuge: the windows of the house orient the speaker’s gaze “west over salt water,” and the “granite ecstasy” of both the headland site and the walls of the house enable (enforce?) a redemptive “narrowness” that recalls Wordsworth’s sonnet, “Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent’s Narrow Room,” which concludes,

and hence for me,
In sundry moods, ‘twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet’s scanty plot of ground;
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

The mention of Tor House seems to place “The Hills Beyond the River” after the completion of the house in August 1919, while its manner seems to place it prior to poems like “Salmon Fishing,” probably written December 1920 or shortly after. But the story of the poem—as opposed to the story the finished poem presents to us—shows it had to have been assembled no earlier than spring 1920 when Jeffers wrote “The Beginning of Decadence,” from which he took the final four lines added to “Metempsychosis” to create the expanded “The Hills Beyond the River.” The second of many extant tables of contents for *Brides of South Wind* indicates that Jeffers probably converted “Metempsychosis” into “The Hills Beyond the River” sometime in the first three or four months of 1921—after, that is, “Natural Music,” “Salmon Fishing,” “Divinely Superfluous Beauty,” and other *Tamar* lyrics that more fully exemplify his mature style.

This raises an obvious question: why would Jeffers, having written such poems as “Salmon Fishing” and “Natural Music,” rework a transitional poem from 1919 by borrowing lines from another transitional poem from 1920?³ He may, simply, have wanted to salvage the lines from “The Beginning of Decadence” that invoke Tor House and hit upon adding them to “Metempsychosis” as a way to do so. But the four lines invoking Tor House have a different resonance in “The Beginning of Decadence” than they do in “The Hills Beyond the River.” “The Beginning of Decadence” ends:

We were chosen the world's lamp and set on the
 world's hill for a sign.
 Now the morning hope is hushed and the early
 miracle in decline.

Now we shall grow wealthier, now we shall grow
 mightier, now freedom is gone.
 Better if the army had broken, and safer if the ships
 had gone down.

For myself I have the hills and the stone belts of my
 own house,
 Casements opening west over salt water and south
 to the coast-range brows.

Walls on a rock above the sea and granite ecstasy
 kept clean
 From the breath of multitude, the bondage of sub-
 mitting men.

But I shall not look at flowers now, summer may kill
 the fragrant copse,
 Sun-glare eat the fritillaries, poppy and lupine pass
 from the slopes. (CP 4: 367)

"The Beginning of Decadence" reflects Jeffers' sense, in the spring of 1920, that the terms of the Versailles Treaty meant European civilization was entering a period of "decline" and that the United States was becoming inextricably entangled in this decline because of its participation in the war and its failure to promote a more equitable and progressive peace. For America, Jeffers suggests, it would have been better to have lost the war than suffer the decadence to come, and Tor House figures as a literal and figurative refuge from politics and history where he can declare a kind of separate peace from the emerging post-Versailles world order, even as he laments that the decadence of this new order is extinguishing the light of the "world's lamp," i.e., American "freedom."⁴

In "The Hills Beyond the River," the focus is, instead, on the human condition and our relationship to nature rather than the West's descent into decadence, and Tor House becomes a sanctuary where one turns away from social distraction and human solipsism in order to worship nature's redemptive beauty. In recycling these lines, Jeffers altered the psychological and symbolic nature of Tor

House: shifting it from a refuge from politics and history into a privileged vantage point transcending them from which to regard nature's beauty and permanence—a "granite ecstasy" where one is redeemed from human "troubles."

Recognizing that Jeffers adapted the concluding lines of "The Hills Beyond the River" from a different poem helps us understand this as a stage in the process by which he—having participated in the building of Tor House and having lived in it for some months—converts his impulse to turn away from the collapse of his political hopes into a determination to embrace nature rather than society or history as the context for human being and meaning—a turn more fully realized in "Salmon Fishing" and the lyrics that followed. But this raises the question of why Jeffers didn't include "The Hills Beyond the River" in *Tamar and Other Poems*. And that takes us back to the beginning of the story, the spring of 1919 before Tor House was built and the headland was still a treeless vacant lot some distance from Carmel.

In various prose pieces Jeffers wrote after he was famous, he suggests his move to Carmel was the discovery of his "inevitable place" and that this discovery catalyzed his transformation from the conventional, apprentice poet of *Flagons and Apples* (1912) into the assured and distinctive poet of *Tamar*.⁵ Whatever this scenario's symbolic truth as a tale of origin, it obscures aspects of his poetic development. It conflates the village of Carmel, already a lively artists' colony, with the Big Sur coast, a stretch of stunning coastal scenery and sparsely populated ranch country. It skips over the prolonged search for an artistic vision and the technique to manifest it. And it obscures how much of what Jeffers wrote in the years before the winter of 1920-1921 has nothing directly to do with either his "inevitable place" or the perspective that evolved into what he would later term Inhumanism.

With the recovery in 1987 of the majority of poems Jeffers wrote between *Californians* in 1916 and *Tamar*, we can better assess how his work developed in these years.⁶ For one thing, we now know that he included various poems from 1918 and even earlier in *Tamar* but largely omitted the poems written in 1919, even though the 1919 poetry features prominently in the various tables of contents for the collections he assembled and discarded prior to settling

on the contents for *Tamar* and paying to have it printed. As a result, “Fauna,” “Mal Paso Bridge,” and “The Truce and the Peace” appear in *Tamar* but not the narratives “Peacock Ranch” and “Sea Passions” nor such poems as “The Beginning of Decadence” or “Confession on Caucasus.” Nor does *Tamar* include “The Hills Beyond the River.” Why Jeffers discarded this poem, and with it, the four lines celebrating the “stone belts” of the house he had salvaged from “The Beginning of Decadence” isn’t clear. He might have seen some of the more recent work he was including as stronger. This would explain setting aside “The Hills Beyond the River” to make space, say, for “Salmon Fishing,” but not to make space for the 1918 work he actually kept and used. More plausibly he set it aside for thematic reasons. And to consider this we need to focus on the first ten lines of “The Hills Beyond the River”—the ten lines drafted in the spring of 1919 as “Metempsychosis.”

A number of the poems Jeffers wrote in the first half of 1920, “The Beginning of Decadence” among them, record his political dismay. The poems he was writing in the spring of 1919 reflect something deeper than dismay at the collapse of his political hopes.⁷ They point to a period of depression verging on a psychological crisis. The two narratives written in these months, “Peacock Ranch” and “Sea-Passions,” anticipate “Tamar’s” norm-breaking violence but lack its final move to a broadened, transcendent perspective containing, but transforming, the literal and figurative conflation. This sense of depression verging on despair is also evident in such shorter poems as “The Pit in the Pinewood” and the original form of “Suicide’s Stone” (see below). It is worth noting that these spring 1919 poems do not directly focus on world affairs as many of the 1918 poems and some of the 1920 poems do. And while personal matters were likely a factor in their mood, there’s another important factor to consider: Jeffers’ uncertainty about his creative direction as a poet.

At the very least, the 1919 poems listed in the *Brides of the South Wind* tables of contents but omitted from *Tamar* suggest that Jeffers had not yet committed to his “inevitable” place as his primary material and that he was still searching for a way beyond 19th century verse modes that could stand as a viable alternative to modernist experimentation. In the Introduction to the 1935 Modern Library edition of *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems*, Jeffers reports that in 1914, soon after moving to Carmel, he was still “imitating dead men”

(he specifies Milton and Shelley, though the manuscript shows he originally specified, then cancelled, Wordsworth) while his “more advanced contemporaries” (i.e. Pound and Eliot) were revolutionizing poetry in ways he saw as a counterproductive narrowing of what poetry should be if it was to remain significant (CP 5: 384-386). Five years later in 1919 he was still, largely, imitating dead men. Once he’d achieved his distinctive voice and a measure of success with *Tamar*, Jeffers claimed he had no use for fame and reputation,⁸ but in the spring of 1919 this was not the case and was plausibly a factor in the depression evident in the poems of this period.

Following the construction of Tor House and moving into it, Jeffers spent at least some of fall 1919 or early winter assembling a collection that he submitted to Macmillan, publisher of his first commercial volume, *Californians* (1916). The Macmillan editor’s rejection letter shows that it included much of the 1919 work later omitted from *Tamar* (CP 5: 47-48). By the end of 1919 or early 1920 Jeffers had begun work on “The Coast-Range Christ,” and by the end of 1920 he was writing lyrics such as “Salmon Fishing” and soon after that working on “Tamar” (CP: 5: 50-62). This chronology suggests that Jeffers, having settled into Tor House, first assessed and consolidated what he had been writing, and then turned to produce the first poems that we see as distinctively and fully Jeffersian. Before Tor House, we see a poet casting about for what he would later term his “originality.” Soon after Tor House, we see a poet having achieved his originality and rapidly composing the poems that made his reputation and remain central to his achievement. It is tempting, then, to see Tor House (the physical labor of building it? the commitment to family and connection to place it might have symbolized?) as the impetus for Jeffers’ recovery from his period of depression and his decisive aesthetic advance.

“Metempsychosis,” however, complicates this scenario, especially when considered in conjunction with “Two Garden-Marbles,” a pair of sonnets also written spring 1919. These two poems—written most probably after the purchase of the Tor House site but before its construction—are included in the various *Brides of the South Wind* tables of contents that Jeffers compiled, reworked, and then recompiled from late summer or early fall 1920 through late spring 1921. In the intermediate recasting from early 1921 they are paired as the concluding poems in a section (then replaced by other poems). In the last (extant) of these tables of contents, “Metempsychosis” (now

recast as “The Hills Beyond the River”) and “Two Garden-Marbles” are included in a section titled “Sonnets and Stones” (CP 5: 1055-1059).

The formal, stylistic, and thematic differences between “Metempsychosis” and “Two Garden-Marbles” are readily apparent. “Metempsychosis” emphasizes the materiality and process of nature as a more fundamental reality than human awareness and action, and its longish lines (ranging from 14 to 17 syllables) are cadenced as a kind of intensified speech, which might be mistaken for free verse were it not for the recurring pattern of six beats per line and the unobtrusive full and slant rhymes. In its subject, its perspective, and its manner (if one excludes the rhyme), “Metempsychosis” anticipates the breakthrough lyrics Jeffers would begin writing in December of 1920 such as “Salmon Fishing” and continue writing across the winter and spring of 1921, including “Natural Music” and “Divinely Superfluous Beauty.” Conversely, the sonnets paired as “Two Garden-Marbles” seem a retreat to the mode of the 1918 work in their formal diction, handling of lineation and meter, and (most obviously) in their use of classical material (the one reflecting on Alcibiades, the other on Alexander the Great). Even so, the draft tables of contents and other internal evidence indicate that both were written in the spring of 1919, along with “Suicide’s Stone” and “Pit in the Pinewood.” And considering “Metempsychosis” and “Two Garden-Marbles” in relationship to each other, in spite of these differences, helps clarify Jeffers’ shifting sense of his work at this pivotal moment in his transformation from ambitious apprentice trying on the various approaches evident in what would have been *God’s Peace in November* and *Brides of the South Wind* to the assured poet of *Tamar* who was neither “imitating dead men” nor threatened by the modernist experimentation of his “more advanced contemporaries.”

“Two Garden-Marbles” develops a series of contrasts which, taken as a whole, function ironically. The opening lines of the first sonnet declare that “marble Athens” in the classical era was “the perfect flower of the world,” even though its “new temples were not stripped of scaffolding yet.” The rest of the opening quatrain introduces Alcibiades as not only “the flower of Athens” but more broadly “of Hellas.” Alcibiades is “youth and beauty / Incarnate” and simultaneously “the sweet corruption sister of ripeness.” In both, Alcibiades compares unfavorably with the greater permanence of

the unfinished temple. A durable monument (its ruins survive into the present), the temple contrasts to the ephemeral (and ultimately destructive, corrupt, and corrupting) career of Alcibiades. The contrast between the temple and Alcibiades is not only a matter of scale but a difference in what is celebrated: a communally validated vision of recurring divinity as opposed to human fame (which, in the case of Alcibiades, is such a tangled web of self-indulgence and corrupt action that his fame is perhaps better understood as infamy). In the poem, the imagined garden-marble in the imagined garden memorializes Alcibiades, even as it reveals his triviality against the vision of the temple's relative permanence and the flower's lush but soon decayed beauty.

Monuments, it seems, sustain their material being, yet their symbolic power to project the fame that occasioned them diminishes over time. Jeffers was (as noted) a close reader of Shelley and would certainly have known "Ozymandias," and the similarities and differences between his sonnet and Jeffers' are instructive. In Shelley's, the surviving fragments of the ruler's statue underscore the ancient Pharaoh's failure to project his grandeur and authority across time (however successfully he might have projected it across his dominion while living). The inscription on the pedestal, the Pharaoh's declaration of his power ("Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!") survives among the statue's fragments, but even the inscription contributes to our awareness of the statue's failure to project the Pharaoh's authority across time. With the disappearance of a community of subjects, much less believers, to register the statue's symbolic power and acknowledge the inscription's authority, both become merely ironic when viewed against the greater duration and power of the sands:

Nothing beside [the inscription] remains. Round the
 decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

And the surviving wreckage mocks both the political and historical force of the Pharaoh's claim and its existential significance. And yet the poem itself is, in effect, an alternative inscription (or re-inscription) of the "colossal wreck," enacting an alternative declaration of power—the poet's power to confront the terms of existence yet assert the imagination's power to recast this "bare"

reality into a visionary apprehension that not only “stretch[es] far away” into the past but into the future when the poet’s monument, too, will have become a relic to be recovered and reimagined. “Ozymandias” overwrites both historical and merely personal time with visionary time, which is to say timelessness—a monument to the imagination’s power to comprehend and transcend “bare” existence.

Jeffers’ “Two Garden-Marbles,” like “Ozymandias,” explores the power of time to erase and the power of poetry to resist time’s erasure, but in spite of Shelley’s influence on Jeffers’ transitional work, “Two Garden-Marbles” develops a different, even antithetical, response to time’s power. In “Ozymandias” Shelley evokes the conflict between human power (operating within historical and social time) and nature’s power (operating within nature’s much vaster temporality) and develops from this conflict an affirmation of the imagination’s power (in spite of the self’s time-bound mortality) to project (and thereby affirm the self’s participation in) visionary time (a timelessness beyond the time-bound self). In Shelley’s sonnet, power and being are dissolved and reimagined in the context of time and consciousness. In “Two Garden-Marbles,” Jeffers engages a similar, but decisively different dichotomy. Instead of power and being, Jeffers’ pair of sonnets engage power and identity, and this shift brings into play, as well, the matter of fame.

If Shelley’s sonnet can be seen as an attempt to confront the loss the past enforces in order to project the possibility of a visionary awareness beyond the past and loss, Jeffers’ pair of sonnets can be seen as an attempt to revitalize the past through the poem’s power to evoke what has been lost—a move akin to reimagining the statue of Ozymandias as if it were not a ruin and still had the power to enforce awe and obedience among the Pharaoh’s subjects. In “Two Garden-Marbles,” Jeffers evokes the classical era as if still present, and this casts those who engage the poem as a renewed and alternative community of remembrance. But this move is self-cancelling, since it is the poem itself and not the historical figures of Alcibiades and Alexander (or their achievements, or in the case of Alcibiades, their crimes and failings) that creates this seeming recuperation. The poem aestheticizes the past more than it recovers or revitalizes it (which suggests how easily Jeffers, at this crucial moment in his development, might have become a poet of tradition and culture, i.e. a modernist—albeit one aligned more with Eliot’s “Tradition and

the Individual Talent” than Pound’s agenda—rather than a poet who put nature at the center of his work). Alcibiades, whatever his skill in having “Mastered the sensual atom-streams of the agora” and however much the “Spartan women loved his sword” while “his enemies trembled / From the Eros handling thunder that was carved on his shield,” is a figure whose power died with him. His career is memorialized not by a public monument but an imagined garden-marble in the corner of an imagined garden. And as such the poem testifies to the failure of temporal power and fame to provide significance after death. And even Alexander’s greater power and greater fame in the second of the sonnets ends with a carving of Alexander, “Drunken with Persian wine and empire,” knowing he will die young. Ironically, the poem memorializes what does not suffice. Death empties fame of its significance, and neither fame nor power solve the dilemma of identity. The imagined garden-marbles are gravestones marking fame’s failure to provide more than an illusion of symbolic life after death.

The centrality of fame and identity in “Two Garden-Marbles,” and the failure of fame to resolve mortality as a dilemma of identity is evident when compared with “Metempsychosis”:

Coast-range creeks, veins of the body of mine that
 will not die
 When this spirit is nothing and this flesh new dirt
 and the eager eye
 Sucked its last and is drunk with darkness—I am
 content I think to cease,
 I rejoice no death will drag you peaks and slopes
 down to that peace.
 Neither failure of the blood will make you faint nor
 its fevers choke,
 Canyon creeks that are my arteries, hair of forest
 and body of rock.
 If long hence and after a thousand long millenni-
 ums you go down
 I will go, the last of me then, and the endless dance
 of suns go on.
 Therefore I turned from the high lamps and limited
 to low hills my love.
 Sweet you are immortality enough, identity enough.
 (CP 5: 299-300)

The opening lines imagine subsuming one's body into nature's more comprehensive and enduring body ("Canyon creeks that are my arteries, hair of forest and body of rock"). And through this metempsychosis, this "ceas[ing]" of the separate microcosm of self, one becomes part of the continuing and continual life of the macrocosm's body.

In "Metempsychosis," the turn away from society and culture as the frame of being in order to turn to nature as the frame of being is clearly evident, and the concluding two lines signal that this turn to nature is also a turn away from (and rejection of) fame and psychological identity within either a social structure or cultural framework. In these lines the speaker claims that he has "turned from the high lamps" (implicitly fame through public achievement) and has instead "limited" his "love" to the world of the "low hills" (implicitly nature) which, he asserts, "are immortality enough, identity enough." If "Two Garden-Marbles" considers fame as a basis for identity, "Metempsychosis" rejects the fleeting, illusory light of the "high lamps" in order to imagine embracing instead what amounts to an erasure of "identity" and "long milleniums" of "darkness." The ten lines of "Metempsychosis" enact what might be termed an *en-naturement* that prefigures the redemptive "enskyment" Jeffers envisioned near the end of his career in "Vulture." And the poem, in this its initially completed state, not only pivots from the "high lamps" portrayed in "Two Garden-Marbles" and rejects them but imagines in their place the seed of what he later terms Inhumanism.

For both Alcibiades and Alexander, fame stems from public actions and their identity (at least as we can understand it historically) is as public figures. For Jeffers, fame, which is to say literary reputation, is necessarily of a different sort and is staged in a different arena. In the Introduction to the 1935 Modern Library edition of *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems*, Jeffers offers a glimpse of the anxiety he felt as a young writer because of his lack of "originality" compared to "more advanced contemporaries" such as Pound who he explicitly cites were pushing "farther and farther along the way that perhaps Mallarmé's aging dream had shown them." For Jeffers, their commitment to achieving a "pure poetry" was a matter of "divorcing poetry from reason and ideas," and this amounted to an "originality by amputation that was too painful to bear." In a brief

parenthetical, Jeffers adds that “since turning thirty” he had “not considered ‘trends’” nor “been competitive either” (CP 4: 385-386).

In the *Roan Stallion* Introduction, written as he neared fifty and when his own “originality” and reputation seemed securely established, Jeffers is able to confess his youthful concern with literary reputation as a momentary anxiety, a weakness, that he soon outgrew, so that he was able to dismiss competitiveness (a striving for reputation) and even reject a concern for “originality” as secondary to the writing of genuine poetry. Real poets don’t think about such things. But lurking behind the “high lamps” of fame (Alcibiades and Alexander) in “Two Garden-Marbles” and the rejection of the “high lamps” in order to accept, and be accepted by, the all-encompassing reality of the “low hills” of nature is the question of the proper role of the poet and what would constitute achievement—and from achievement—recognition. In the *Roan Stallion* Introduction, Jeffers misleadingly claims (or mistakenly remembers) that he had put all this behind him by 1917, but his seeming depression in the spring of 1919 and the poems “Two Garden-Marbles” and “Metempsychosis” suggest he was still working to resolve his desire for “originality” and recognition several years afterward.

In the *Roan Stallion* Introduction, Jeffers confesses what he would have us ignore—his creative anxiety as a young poet as he tracked the seemingly assured but (as he saw it misguided) projects of Pound and his modernist colleagues. Rhetorically, the confession attempts to trivialize his youthful weakness and thereby both acknowledge and erase it from his creative life. Conceptually, the confession serves a slightly different role: it provides a justification for explicitly rejecting Pound’s approach and implicitly rejecting Eliot’s. The latter is invoked when Jeffers offers that “A more promising kind of amputation” would be to “eliminate one’s words from the poem, use quotations from books as the elder poets used imagery from life and nature, make something new by putting together a mosaic of the old,” and that this could lead to the writing of “one or two noble things.” While Jeffers suggests this is something that could be tried, he seems to be acknowledging something that has already been accomplished: *The Waste Land*. And if this is so, then Jeffers is both praising Eliot’s monument of modernism as a “noble” achievement and declaring that it, too, is a model to be rejected. But whether or not Jeffers is alluding to Eliot in these comments, the Introduction proposes that it is Jeffers’ commitment to a poetry that engages

reality directly and deals with ideas that drives his “final decision not to become a ‘modern,’” since becoming a “modern” would be to reject “reason and ideas” and to become “slight and fantastic, abstract and unintelligible.”

The *Roan Stallion* Introduction suggests how Jeffers had come to view his split from Pound and Eliot following the development of his mature approach to poetry and the success of *Tamar* and the volumes that followed. But “The Palace,” another unpublished poem written in 1914, suggests that this Introduction may not accurately represent how Jeffers viewed his relationship to modernist experimentation in the years before he developed the approach that characterizes *Tamar*. The occasion for “The Palace” seems, at least in part, to have been the death of the Jeffers’ newborn daughter a few days before he wrote the poem. In “The Palace” the speaker (implicitly Jeffers) dedicates himself to rebuilding the palace of poetic tradition that his contemporaries (implicitly the Imagists) have chosen to ignore. That the poem, a rejection of Imagism and *vers libres*, is metered and rhymed is no surprise.¹⁰ In critiquing and dismissing the Imagists, Jeffers underscores his opposition by utilizing the aesthetic tools he saw them as discarding. “The Palace,” then, shows Jeffers in 1914 (a few months before the move from the Los Angeles area to Carmel) not only proposing that verse should continue to utilize formal conventions (rather than being either free or experimental) but also proposing that a commitment to the tradition was necessary for a poet’s work to matter, and thus as well, for the writing individual to matter as a poet. The 1935 Introduction shows Jeffers proposing that he had been (in 1914) worrying that he was “still imitating dead men.” “The Palace” suggests that he was, at that time, actually insisting that emulating the work of “dead men” was the game genuine poets had to be play and that this game had a double goal: to do one’s duty as a poet by laboring to maintain the “palace” of poetic tradition and to earn recognition (fame) from, and within, the “palace” by doing so. “The Palace” as a document from 1914 and the 1935 *Roan Stallion* Introduction structure the dichotomy between Jeffers and those he termed his “more advanced contemporaries” in quite different ways. For the apprentice Jeffers anxious about originality, the tradition was the field within which to renew and revitalize the permanent. For the modernists, the tradition was a field within which to enact the new and thereby alter the tradition. For both the apprentice Jeffers and

his modernist contemporaries, originality was related to tradition but differently so and with a different view of what the tradition might be as archive and organism.

If "The Palace" proposes the historical, cultural and aesthetic arena of tradition as the poet's locus of being, achievement, and recognition, then "Two Garden-Marbles" reveals the insufficiency of the tradition, even as it deploys classical material and uses traditionally formal means to enact the poem within the tradition. The sonnets, and the figurative garden-marbles they commemorate, are decorative emblems that draw from history as an atemporal archive rather than history as force, process, change. And this, in turn, casts the garden as an imitation of nature—composed from natural elements but abstracted from nature for the aesthetic pleasure or comfort this move offers. The presentation of "nature" within the garden, like the presentation of history within the poem, is a tableau that obscures our being within nature by obscuring what Jeffers terms, in "Metempsychosis," "the endless dance of suns," which is to say the macrocosm's ceaseless flux. And it further obscures our being within nature by obscuring our fundamental reality as materiality ("this flesh new dirt") subject to flux, which is the inevitability of the microcosm's death.

"Metempsychosis," then, whether read as a response or reaction to "Two Garden-Marbles," marks a decisive turn in Jeffers' development: a turn away from society, culture, and history as the ground of being in order to turn, instead, to nature as the ground of being (even at the risk of destroying identity in the usual sense). And aesthetically, this turn replaces tradition (either as Jeffers had imagined it in "The Palace" or as the modernists variously theorized it) with nature as the genuine arena for poetry. In rejecting fame's "high lamps" in order to "love" the anonymity of the "low hills," and thereby assume nature instead of society or culture as one's being, Jeffers was, this suggests, freeing himself not only from the need to resist (reject) Pound's call to "make it new" through formal experimentation but also from a view of poetic ambition that was inherently an allegiance to the tradition—an obligation to "make it old" (or more precisely to *re-make* the old). And by grounding his poetic project in nature (its materiality, processes, and beauty) rather than grounding it in culture and its archive ("tradition" as Eliot staged it in *The Waste Land* and analyzed it in "Tradition and the Individual Talent"), Jeffers shifted how nature functioned in his poetry, so that it was no longer (as in

Californians) a kind of scene or character or symbolic mediator (as in Wordsworth) but instead an all-comprehending reality—indeed the being of being.

In retrospect, the turn “Metempyschosis” marks in Jeffers’ work seems clear, which raises, again, the question of why he omitted it from *Tamar*, even after recasting it as “The Hills Beyond the River” sometime in 1921 in the midst of writing “Salmon Fishing,” “Natural Music,” and other prototypical *Tamar* lyrics. This takes us into the supposedly forbidden territory of intentionality, but the texts themselves open up important issues that plausibly factored into the decision, and are in any case, relevant to understanding Jeffers’ aesthetic project.

In the spring of 1919 when Jeffers wrote “Metempsychosis,” the construction of Tor House was still to come. To the extent that Tor House figures in these ten lines, it isn’t yet the house as refuge or as sacral space that’s in play; it’s the move—symbolic and actual—from Carmel, from Carmel as an artist colony, from Carmel as a community of collaborations and competitions where artistic reputation is in play and at stake. Stripped of the four lines adapted from “The Beginning of Decadence” that spliced in the “stone belts” of the house, the poem as originally drafted proposes something more radical than retiring from the distractions of society and culture in order to contemplate nature. “Metempsychosis” proposes identifying not simply *with* nature but *as* nature, thereby acknowledging that one is an element of its materiality and its processes, and thereby becoming nature. Not only does this proposed *en-naturement*, erase the need for society or culture or the poetic tradition as a context for being, action, or meaning, it also erases the need for contemplation. To be nature precludes contemplating nature. And not only does this move erase the significance of fame, of poetic reputation, it also erases the need for expression, which is to say it erases the rationale for poetry and the need for it. At the aesthetic level, this is the equivalent to Orestes turning away from Electra at the end of “The Tower Beyond Tragedy”:

Orestes walked in the clear
dawn; men say that a serpent
Killed him in high Arcadia. But young or old, few years or many,
signified less than nothing

To him who had climbed the tower beyond time,
consciously, and cast humanity, entered the earlier fountain. (CP 1: 178)

Having “cast humanity” (both in the sense of his ties to others and having cast his own humanity by “consciously” moving “beyond time,” both as consciousness of time and consciousness of one’s self in time) Orestes enters the “earlier fountain” of being in nature’s ceaseless becoming, a reality more fundamental and more comprehensive than one’s mortality. To enter nature in the sense Jeffers imagines here and in “Metempsychosis” is to enter a realm where consciousness (as awareness of self and otherness) is superseded by one’s unconscious or preconscious or a-conscious participation in the ground of being. It is to extinguish the self, which is to say that it is to become silent. The glory of the full perceptual being in the fullness of creation is attained by erasing not simply the alienated self but the alienating self as well.

The desire for becoming one with the body of the “low hills” in “Metempsychosis” can be seen as a kind of sublimated suicide or perhaps an alternative to suicide—a kind of half step where one cancels one’s own “identity” (self) in order to become an element in the “identity” of the low hills (which is actually a state of no identity). Put another way, what is left once one sees through the illusion of the “high lamps,” sees them as illuminating a nothingness rather than glory? To erase identity by identifying with nature is one option; to erase one’s self through death is another. “Suicide’s Stone,” written in close proximity to “Two Garden-Marbles” and “Metempsychosis” shows that Jeffers was both aware of this more total and final option and perhaps tempted to it.

As published in *Tamar and Other Poems*, “To the Stone-Cutters” (another poem behind which Shelley’s “Ozymandias” may be lurking?) immediately precedes “Suicide’s Stone,” and “Wise Men in Their Bad Hours” immediately follows it. “To the Stone-Cutters” acknowledges that death will ultimately destroy not only those who are “Challengers of oblivion” but whatever “monuments” they might construct. Even so, the poem ends on a positive, if tempered note: “Yet stones have stood for a thousand years and pained thoughts found / The honey peace in old poems.” The ending of “Wise Men in Their Bad Hours” is similarly stoic:

Ah grasshoppers,
Death’s a fierce meadowlark: but to die having made

Something more equal to the centuries
 Than muscle and bone, is mostly to shed weakness.
 The mountains are dead stone, the people
 Admire or hate their stature, their insolent quiet-
 ness,
 The mountains are not softened nor troubled
 And a few dead men's thoughts have the same temper.
 (CP 1: 10)

If one's "thoughts," the poem suggests, have taken on the "stature" and "quietness" of stone (a matter of accepting one's human being within nature rather than understanding one's human being within the "Foolishly reduplicating / Folly" of human psychology and human society), then one's "thoughts" (and poems as the product of those "thoughts") can "have the same temper" as stone. In *Tamar*, that is, the poems that frame "Suicide's Stone" assert nature's transcendent reality, subordinate the human sphere to it, and reveal the inadequacy of the human (in and of itself as either psychological or social action) as a basis for identity and meaning in order to propose, instead, an awareness of the self within nature. In both "To the Stone-Cutters" and "Wise Men" such awareness of one's mortality within nature and one's immortality as nature requires both a kind of courage and a commitment to endurance.

As revised for *Tamar* and positioned between "To the Stone-Cutters" and "Wise Men," "Suicide's Stone" seems hewn from the same block of granite. The poem offers death as an end to the rigors of life and consciousness, a welcome enfolding into nature's permanence, but the poem's speaker, a suicide, declares from the grave "you [the living] shall not reach a finger / To pluck it [death] unripe." Living is "the covenant of courage." And this covenant is with God, which is to say nature's body and nature's being. A sin against nature, suicide disrupts the order of things (an aspect of nature) and thereby alienates one from nature's being rather than merging one into it. But "Suicide's Stone," as composed in spring 1919 as part of the same phase of work as "Two Garden-Marbles" and "Metempsychosis," is a rather different poem, even though the initially completed 1919 text and the published, 1924 text differ in only a few words. In the 1919 version, the speaker is not a suicide speaking from death to the living but is instead one of the living, and this living speaker is "hungering pitifully" for death, yet rejecting suicide in spite of the "whipstocks" of "life":

one shall not reach a finger
 To pluck it unripe and mongrel-proved
 Creep to cover; it needs more whipstocks
 Than life has wasted on us yet
 To make us denounce the covenant of courage. (CP 5: 292)

As reworked for publication in *Tamar*, “Suicide’s Stone” is a dramatic poem, the speaker a character speaking from death to the living. But as first composed, it reads more as a confessional poem, and its compositional proximity to “Two Garden-Marbles” and “Metempsychosis” suggests that the desire for dying into nature’s life expressed in “Metempsychosis” is not simply a desire to turn away from fame but also (and more urgently?) a matter of seeking an alternative to suicide. If so, “Metempsychosis” proposes setting aside consciousness (the locus of despair?) in order to transfer one’s being, one’s soul into another living body (nature), and the conceptual and experiential innovation of the poem—what makes it fundamental to the work that would follow—is that this other living body, this alternative being, is nature imagined and experienced as the living body that comprehends all (more temporarily) living bodies within it.

But if “Metempsychosis” is fundamental to the work that follows and if it marks a shift in how Jeffers was coming to view consciousness and being in nature and being as nature, this again raises the question of why he recast the poem as “The Hills Beyond the River” and why he then discarded that further iteration or evolution of the poem. The biographical and imaginative importance of Tor House in his work offers a possible answer to the first question: he wanted to preserve the lines evoking the “stone belts” of Tor House when he decided to discard “The Beginning of Decadence,” and converting “Metempsychosis” into “The Hills Beyond the River” was a way to accomplish this. But why, then, discard the result? Perhaps Jeffers, as he worked *Tamar* into final shape, realized combining these two blocks of work (the lines that were “Metempsychosis” and the lines adapted from “The Beginning of Decadence”) failed to cohere thematically. Both units celebrate nature’s centrality, its primacy, but to subsume one’s self into nature (“Metempsychosis”) and to contemplate nature from the privileged vantage of Tor House are different things. Projecting one’s being into the veins of the “creeks” is not the same thing as imaging the “stone belts” of the house. The former can be read as a kind of metaphorical equivalence but is

actually offered as an identity that transcends and erases metaphor. The latter is a kind of simile that treats the house as a second body (or perhaps the actual body's clothing). Jeffers may have seen no clear way to resolve the disjuncture marked by the extended ellipsis where the four later lines are grafted to the ten earlier lines.

It's also possible that a rather different logic drove the recasting of "Metempsychosis" into "The Hills Beyond the River." And that is the possibility that Jeffers adapted and added the lines alluding to Tor House in order to salvage "Metempsychosis," not the reverse. To enter nature as Jeffers evokes it in "Metempsychosis" is not just to move beyond personal identity in order to identify outward with nature, it is also to erase the need for consciousness. Through consciousness one apprehends the possibility of metempsychosis whereby one's soul enters nature's being, but in metempsychosis consciousness disappears, and with that disappears not only contemplation of nature but celebration of nature. There is no vantage point. There is no role for poetry or basis for writing it. "Metempsychosis" (especially if read as a turn away from the "high lamps" of fame in "Two Garden-Marbles" and as an alternative to nihilistic despair as considered in the original iteration of "Suicide's Stone") expresses the possibility of imagining the self within nature rather than within society and culture (which, as a corollary does not eliminate society and culture or history or individual psychology but instead grounds them in, and contextualizes them within, nature). What "Metempsychosis" does not do is address the problem of consciousness with its doubled capacity to alienate the self from nature and its capacity to become consciousness of nature's beauty, its being, its divinity.

What's missing is a way to conceptualize poetry within the context of nature as opposed to culture, which is to say, a way to understand a role for poetry within nature, even though nature, the more comprehensive ground of being, has no need for, or use for, either poetic vision or poetic expression. Poems may emulate stone (as in "To the Stone-Cutters"), but invoking the being of stone is not the same thing as possessing or being possessed by the being of stone. There is, of course, a way beyond this dichotomy. We can imagine this aesthetic regarding of nature's beauty from the "Window" as what one achieves by withdrawing from the social and political while one lives, with one's veins becoming the veins of nature in one's death. But even so, the added lines obscure and

undercut the more radical (and confessional?) apprehension of being within nature found in the original ten-line poem and fail to address the fundamental visionary, conceptual, and (yes) aesthetic problem it raises.

At the least, if we overlook the more radical apprehension in "Metempsychosis," the original form of the poem, we miss something of the radical nature of his visionary commitment to nature as the ground of being as a basis for his mature aesthetic and his mature vision. And we miss, as well, the way poems like "Salmon Fishing," "Continent's End," and the other later lyrics gathered in *Tamar* (and indeed much of Jeffers' subsequent work) variously construct and probe the dichotomy of subsuming being into nature (a transcendence or erasure of awareness of self and individual consciousness) and of attaining a heightened consciousness of nature, in which one is reflexively aware of standing apart from nature's totality and yet absorbed into nature's all-comprehending being as a part of nature's totality. And if we overlook the more radical apprehension in "Metempsychosis," we are also apt to misconstrue or fail to notice the central aesthetic problem for Jeffers, as illustrated by the ending of "The Tower Beyond Tragedy." When Orestes enters nature's being, he moves beyond history, beyond society and culture, beyond self in a transcendent transfiguration. He ceases to be Orestes; he enters silence. Poems are not silence, neither for the person writing nor the person reading. The poet as witness to nature stands, at least momentarily, outside of nature's being. The self-absorbed into nature's being is silent. In Jeffers, the poem becomes a liminal space where the dichotomy of witness and participant can be engaged and can momentarily (within the being and action of the poem) become a dialectic, a process of participatory witness, in which being and consciousness of being may temporarily fuse.

ENDNOTES

1. See CP 5: 56 for evidence relating to the dating of "Salmon Fishing" and CP 5: 317-322 for details of its revisions, which may bear on Jeffers' recasting of "Metempsychosis" as "The Hills Beyond the River" and the subsequent decision to not publish the poem in *Tamar and Other Poems*. For a discussion of these revisions, see "A Poetics of Witness: Jeffers' "Salmon Fishing" and the Apology in "Apology for Bad Dreams." *Jeffers Studies* 10.2, 11.1; & 11.2 (2006 & 2007): 1-17.

2. When Tor House was built summer 1919, Jeffers apprenticed himself to the stone mason, learning the craft and contributing to the labor. The Jeffers family took up residence in August. The importance of Tor House, both as an actual and figurative location is apparent in a number of the poems.

3. See CP5: 35-39 for an illustration of how Jeffers' approach to meter and rhyme can inform dating and identify instances where later work is interpolated into an earlier poem.

4. "The Beginning of Decadence" can be seen as precursor to "Shine, Perishing Republic," which Jeffers also omitted from *Tamar* before adding it back in when he expanded the collection into *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems*.

5. This refers to the lyrics from late 1920 forward along with the title narrative, not to the poems from 1917 and 1918 brought forward from *God's Peace in November* or *Brides of the South Wind*.

6. Prior to 1987 there was reason to believe Jeffers had discarded most of the work variously grouped as *God's Peace in November* and *Brides of the South Wind*. Manuscripts for nearly all the presumably lost poems were donated to Occidental College by Melba Berry Bennett, who had stipulated that the packet of material not be opened until 1987, the centenary of Jeffers' birth.

7. "The Daughter of God in Russia," written spring 1918 (CP 4: 464-481), illustrates these "political hopes."

8. In both the 1920s when his fame was at its height and in the 1950s when it had ebbed, Jeffers wrote various poems (unpublished and most of them sketches more than completed works) commenting on fame and proclaiming he had no use for it. These pieces reflect, I'd suggest, his conviction that reputation was unimportant, yet their existence and their tone suggest as well that he wasn't completely immune to the allure of reputation.

9. The documentary evidence does not establish a clear basis for dating either "Two Garden-Marbles" or "Metempsychosis." In the discussion of chronology in Volume 5 of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, I proposed that the two were probably written about the same time and suggested fall 1919. In developing the reading of these two poems for this essay, I've come to think that the two were more likely written spring 1919 before construction began on Tor House. That the two poems were composed in 1919 is highly likely. Whether they were composed spring or summer or fall of that year is necessarily, given the state of the evidence, speculative. While this discussion is not explicitly an argument about the dating of these poems, it is implicitly

so, and as such it is a reconsideration of the discussion of the dating of these two poems in *Collected Poetry* (CP 5: 51-52).

10. For a discussion of this poem, see "Jeffers and 'The Palace' of Tradition." *Jeffers Studies* 7.2 (2003): 15-23.

WORKS CITED

- Hunt, Tim. "A Poetics of Witness: Jeffers' 'Salmon Fishing' and the Apology in 'Apology for Bad Dreams'". *Jeffers Studies*, 10.2, 11.1, & 11.2 (2006 & 2007): 1-17.
- . "Jeffers and 'The Palace' of Tradition." *Jeffers Studies* 7.2 (2003): 15-23.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Tim Hunt, 5 Vols., Stanford University Press, (1988-2001).

JAMES KARMAN

THE EDITH WHERRY MUCKLESTON COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARY

Novelist Edith Wherry Muckleston (1876–1961) and Una Jeffers met in 1907 at a sorority event at the University of California, Berkeley. Edith describes their meeting and the friendship that ensued in a 1929 memoir titled “A Poet’s Wife — Una Jeffers.” The memoir is included among Edith’s papers at the University of Oregon, along with ten letters to her from Una, one from Robinson, and a draft of a letter from Edith to Robinson. With the generous permission of Edith’s grandchildren, these documents are published here for the first time.

1. Biographical Introduction (With Synopses Of Novels)

When Una Call enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley in 1901, she soon joined a local sorority, Alpha Beta Sigma. Six years later, by then married to Teddie Kuster and living in Los Angeles, Una returned to Berkeley for a special event. Her sorority had been granted a charter by Alpha Omicron Pi, a national organization, and former members were invited to participate in the initiation ceremony on Wednesday evening, February 6, 1907. Edith Wherry was among the women who welcomed Una when she arrived—with something of a flourish, as she recounts in “A Poet’s Wife—Una Jeffers.” Edith was a student at the time, having returned to the university to complete her degree after traveling and living in Paris for several years. She was older than her sorority sisters and “had seen rather more of the world” than they, but she was grateful for

the camaraderie sorority life provided. She was older than Una as well, but, as she candidly admits, “in spite of my superior years, my travels, and larger experience of life . . . I worshipped Una at first sight.”

Edith Margaret Wherry was the fourth child and only daughter of Rev. Dr. John Wherry (1837–1918) and Sara Ellen Brandon Wherry (1843–1908). She was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania October 10, 1876, during a brief furlough in the missionary activities of her parents. Her older brothers—Elmer, John, and Robert—were all born in China. The family returned to China in 1878, where Dr. Wherry resumed his life of scholarship and service. He was a member of the committee that created the Chinese Union Bible, an influential translation that was both literary and accessible; he helped establish Peking University, now one of the most important centers of learning in China; and he lived through the anti-Christian, anti-Imperialist Boxer Rebellion, including the Siege of Peking during the summer of 1900.

Dr. Wherry remained in China until he died in 1918; his wife Sara, however, returned to the United States with the couple’s children around 1892 and never went back. Following in their father’s footsteps, the three sons graduated from Princeton University. Elmer, the eldest, became a physician; John and Robert practiced law. Edith attended Wellesley College from 1897 to 1900. When her mother and a brother moved to California, she joined them and enrolled at Stanford University for the 1900–1901 academic year. She then took classes at the University of California, Berkeley, but she did not earn a degree. Next came a period of wandering, with the hope of becoming a writer—spurred on, perhaps, by the publication of a poem, “By St. Mary’s Bay,” in the November 1901 issue of *Century Magazine*.

In the spring of 1903, Edith found her way to Byrdcliffe—the newly formed arts community established by Ralph Radcliffe and Jane Byrd Whitehead in Woodstock, New York. Sources identify Edith with arrivals from Jane Addams’ Hull House (a group that included Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Hervey White, and other writers), so it is likely that she spent a length of time among the social activists, Bohemians, and artists of Chicago. At Byrdcliffe, Edith attended the weekly dances, fell in love with an artist, entertained at gatherings by speaking Chinese, and acquired a reputation as an engaging free spirit. One member of the community reports that Edith was

called “the Flamboyant Bat”—for “when the dew fell and the stars began to twinkle over the hilltops, she would wrap herself in a somber cape and flutter up and down the hill roads joining parties of night riders or walkers, doing Overlook [a nearby mountain], or haunting moonlit meadows and streams on the lookout for a pixie or two.” Brief descriptions of Edith at Byrdcliffe can be found in *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*, edited by Nancy E. Green (Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, 2004); *Remembering Woodstock*, edited by Richard Heppner (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008), and *Woodstock: History and Hearsay* by Anita M. Smith (Woodstock, NY: Woodstock Arts, 2006).

Edith left the colony rather suddenly in the fall of 1903 for extended travels in England, Scotland, Italy, Switzerland, France, and other European countries. A note in the November 25, 1903 issue of the *Wellesley College News* announced her departure: “Miss Edith Wherry, formerly of 1901, sailed from New York in September to join Miss Florence Wilkinson, 1892, in Italy.” Wilkinson, a poet, had traveled to Europe earlier in the year with S. S. McClure, McClure’s wife Hattie, Ida Tarbell, and other friends affiliated with *McClure’s Magazine*, then one of America’s most influential and progressive journals. Despite Wilkinson’s modest talents as a writer, McClure had accepted some of her poems for publication, and it soon became known to Hattie and her close associates that her husband was in the midst of an affair with Wilkinson. Hattie’s anguish over this betrayal, like that of McClure’s friends and business partners, was exacerbated by fears concerning the future of the magazine. Since McClure’s had staked a claim to the moral high ground in America, a scandal of this sort would be devastating.

As time passed and “L’Affaire,” as it was referred to by Tarbell and others, cooled down, everyone was jolted by another revelation. Wilkinson informed Hattie McClure that her husband was involved with yet another woman—her friend and former traveling companion, Edith Wherry. The allegations were confirmed in June 1905 when Edith sent Hattie a package of material she labeled “The Shame of S. S. McClure, Illustrated by Letters and Original Documents.” In a letter to McClure himself, Edith expressed feelings of guilt along with a desire “to live henceforth in truth and honor.” She also thought Hattie should know that after McClure’s “conversion”—after, that is, McClure said he would never see Edith again—he returned to her with the same ardor as before. For the

fullest account of these events, see “The Staff Breakup of McClure’s Magazine” (Chapter III, “The McClure’s Schism”) on the Allegheny College website devoted to Ida M. Tarbell (allegheny.edu/tarbell). Information can also be found in *Success Story: The Life and Times of S. S. McClure* by Peter Lyon (New York: Scribner, 1963), and in other print and online sources.

When her relationship with McClure ended, Edith was living in Paris, where she enrolled at the Sorbonne and earned a *Certificat d’études françaises* in 1906. Knowing she needed a U. S. degree in order to teach at home, Edith returned to the University of California, Berkeley, where she met Una in February 1907 and graduated a few months later.

Edith taught French at Mills College in the 1907–1908 academic year but resigned her position in order to care for her mother, who died in August 1908. In 1910 she returned to Paris, having spent the interval working on a novel, and she would have remained abroad had she not become reacquainted with Harold Struan Muckleston, a Canadian she met at Stanford ten years before. Muckleston received an A.M. degree from Stanford in 1900 and taught Greek and Latin there the following year. He then enrolled at McGill University in Montreal, where he received M.D. and C.M. (Master of Surgery) degrees in 1905. Harold and Edith were married in August 1911, just a few months after Edith’s highly regarded first book was published—*The Red Lantern: Being a Story of the Goddess of the Red Lantern Light* (New York: John Lane, 1911).

Set in China during the Boxer Rebellion, *The Red Lantern* tells the story of Mahlee, the daughter of a British nobleman, Sir Philip Sackville, and a Chinese peasant, Yang-Ling, whose mother accepted money from Sackville so that he could use her daughter as a concubine. After Yang-Ling died following childbirth, Sackville gave more money to Mahlee’s grandmother, with the demand that she leave Mahlee’s feet unbound. He then departed, with no intention of ever seeing her again. Mahlee grew up to be a beautiful young woman, but with her large feet, blue eyes, a taller than normal stature, curly black hair, and no last name, racial dysphoria was inscribed on her body. She was a misfit, a “child of Europe and Asia, and scornfully disowned by both.”

The ensuing story of Mahlee’s painful path to self-awareness leads through time spent in a missionary compound where she endures the condescending friendship of her half-sister, Blanche Sackville

(without either of them knowing of their actual relationship), an ongoing experience of unrequited love with a young American missionary, and her eventual enthronement as the Goddess of the Red Lantern Light, a charismatic Jeanne d'Arc of the Boxer cause. When she finally learns the identity of her father and meets him face to face, she plaintively asks for his acknowledgment, but, in the presence of his daughter Blanche—who is blindly devoted to him—he coldly refuses to give it, forsaking Mahlee once again. In the broader symbolism of the story, Sackville's failure to take responsibility for his actions reveals the moral emptiness at the heart of colonial power. The novel ends with the defeat of the Boxers by western forces, Mahlee's suicide, and a chauvinistic call for a Christian burial by the American missionary Mahlee loved—a man of God who loved Mahlee in return at some level, but who could not overcome his revulsion for her yellow skin.

Edith and Harold Muckleston settled in Montreal after their marriage, where Harold established a medical practice. Madeline Margaret Muckleston, the couple's first child, was born August 27, 1912. Like Robinson and Una's first child Maeve, who was born less than a year later, Madeline did not survive. A second daughter, Eleanor Ferres Muckleston, was born December 1, 1913, just a few months before the outbreak of World War I. The couple's third daughter, Margaret Christian Muckleston, was born December 29, 1917.

From 1914 to 1918, Harold served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps, first as a Captain, then as a Major. Rather than rebuild his medical practice in Montreal following the war, Harold decided to start over in the United States, so the couple moved to Los Angeles in 1918, where they lived for the remainder of their lives. During the war years, while caring for her children, Edith wrote and published a second novel, *The Wanderer on a Thousand Hills* (New York and London: John Lane, 1917; Toronto: S. B. Gundy, 1917). For this and subsequent publications, she continued to write under her maiden name, Edith Wherry.

The Wanderer on a Thousand Hills is set in China as well, in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The main protagonist of the story is Tung Mei, "Winter Almond," the bright but burdensome child (because of her gender) of an impoverished widower. Against all odds and the wishes of his parents, the good-hearted son of the village bully and self-styled "king" chooses to marry Tung Mei.

Already despised by her parents-in-law, Tung Mei sinks even lower in their esteem by giving birth to a daughter. When her husband dies in a thunderstorm, his enraged parents drown the baby in a cistern and throw Tung Mei from their shared home. As she makes her way through the darkness, frantic with grief, Tung Mei encounters the lost six-year-old son of missionaries, a boy she knew and loved. Thinking, in her distressed state, that the gods have given her a son to raise, she claims him for her own, and, in doing so, steals not just his life, but his very soul. Delicate in mind to begin with, and traumatized by his ordeal in the storm-wracked wilderness, the boy loses memory of his former self and grows up believing he is Hsie Chin, Tung Mei's son. Groomed by her to be a scholar, he rises to the very pinnacle of success—"Scholar Laureate of China"—at just that moment when he discovers his true identity.

A lasting reunion with his natural parents turns out to be impossible, and he leaves them to return to Tung Mei, only to discover that she has died of shame and a broken heart. Thereafter, Hsie Chin becomes the "wanderer on a thousand hills," regarded by those who see him (once every ten years or so, when he leaves his isolated hermitage) as a saint or a madman. Traversing in his tortured mind the no-man's land between East and West, his mission, as he travels the countryside visiting monasteries and temples, is to find the lost Epistle of St. Paul to the Laodicians, a document his missionary father had once mentioned. This letter, a "Voice" told him, contained a revelation of ultimate truth—specifically, a message concerning the essential harmony of all the world's scriptures and the oneness of the world's spiritual teachers. The precious document lay hidden in the vastness of Asia, the Voice also told him, but where, exactly, it did not say.

Like *The Red Lantern*, *The Wanderer on a Thousand Hills* was also well received, but its success was overshadowed by the premiere of the cinematic adaptation of *The Red Lantern* in 1919. This major, high-budget film starred Alla Nazimova (a favorite actress of Robinson and Una) as both Mahlee and her half-sister Blanche Sackville—a casting decision that brought the underlying physical relationship between the two women into clearer focus, despite their apparent cultural differences. A brief review in the *Los Angeles Times* dated May 27, 1919 describes *The Red Lantern* as a "vivid tale of the Orient" and a "gorgeous film spectacle" that "is sweeping the whole country by storm" and drawing "record-breaking crowds" to

theaters. A book about the production, *To Dazzle the Eye and Stir the Heart: The Red Lantern, Nazimova and the Boxer Rebellion*, published by the Flemish Service for Film Culture in 2012, contains a remastered DVD of the film.

To coincide with the release of *The Red Lantern*, a new edition of Edith's novel was published by the Macaulay Company in 1919, featuring three still photographs of Nazimova drawn from key scenes of the film. The reprint was the same as the original in all other ways, including the dedication—"To My Friend Theodora Pollok." In 1911, these words would have meant little or nothing to most readers. By 1919, however, they carried more weight. Theodora Pollok Rhoades (1879–1974) was a social activist, involved in the women's suffrage movement, feminist causes generally, prison reform, poverty issues, the abolition of capital punishment, workers' rights, and other social issues, such as the trial and conviction of labor leader Tom Mooney. In February 1919, Pollok was the only woman among more than forty men—all Wobblies (members of the International Workers of the World)—convicted for crimes committed under the Espionage Act. According to an article in the February 13, 1919 *Los Angeles Times* (p. 11), Pollok was charged with being "the directing genius behind a plan that 'involved plots to foment strikes in shipbuilding and other industries, to destroy manufacturing plants and crops, and to harass the government in prosecution of the war.'" Despite the government's claim that Pollok was "the most dangerous woman in America," it soon became apparent that the charges against her were largely fabricated, and she was released from prison after paying a small fine. Whether readers approached *The Red Lantern* from the political right or left in 1919, the dedication, with its subversive undertone, would have forced them to see the book and its author in a new and more intellectually challenging way.

The same can be said for *The Wanderer on A Thousand Hills*. As a lens through which to examine a foreign culture, the book provides an unsettling portrait of a social order controlled by men—an order wherein female infanticide is acceptable, and oppression of females generally is a pervasive fact of life. As a mirror—as some readers might have seen it—the book also presents a variegated image of prejudices found throughout the world, including the United States, where, at the time the book was written, a woman's right to vote was just one of many feminist issues sparking angry debate.

Like her older contemporaries Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) and Kate Chopin (1850-1904), Edith had a compelling interest in the archetypes of “mother,” “father,” and “child,” with special emphasis on psychological rupture—as when a child grows up without a mother, or when a mother experiences the death of a child. Edith already knew how it felt to lose a daughter, but she suffered the same pain again when her eight-year-old Eleanor died in April 1922, possibly a victim of influenza. “Learning of this,” Edith writes in her memoir, “Una broke a silence of several years and wrote me an unforgettable letter.” Regrettably, that letter is missing, but a second letter written soon after, in late spring or early summer 1922, marks the beginning of their renewed friendship. The epistolary record of that friendship is lost for a few years but picks up again in 1928.

Two years prior to this, Edith’s third novel was published—*Jade Mountain* (London: Hutchison, 1926). By this time in her journey as a writer, Edith’s interests had taken a more metaphysical turn. Unlike her first two books, which make use of omniscient narrators, *Jade Mountain* is written mostly in the first person. The story, also set in China at the close of the nineteenth century, is told by Richard Olliphant, a twenty-five-year old English civil servant. In Shanghai, Richard befriends a fellow Englishman, Michael Moran, who is near to him in age, and the two travel together to Peking. Along the way, we learn that Michael is in love with a gifted but dour older woman named Lydia Ward, who has rebuffed his earnest attention, and that he has a brilliant Chinese friend, Ling Feng Chih, whom he met at Oxford. We also learn that Richard and Michael share a compelling interest in the 13th century Sung Dynasty, and in a particular court intrigue involving Mu Ch’i (or Muqi, an artist who actually lived in the period) and a beautiful princess. In the course of their journey, the two men encounter a fourteen-year-old Eurasian girl named Pau-Chu (“Precious Pearl”), who had been taken from her mother at birth and raised in an orphanage. Pau-Chu is on her way to meet her father for the first time, a man who turns out to be none other than Michael’s friend Ling Feng Chih. Pau-Chu’s mother, we discover, is Lydia Ward, whose severe and melancholy disposition resulted from years of longing for her lost daughter. These disparate strangers are forced by powers beyond their control to meet on Jade Mountain, home of the Lohan (or “Luohan”)—a Guardian hermit-sage, possibly

immortal, known variously in Asia as an Arhat, Rishi, or Xian. Richard, who possesses clairvoyant powers, is chosen by the Lohan to “See! . . . Hear! . . . Know!” the truth about himself and others in the assembled group. In a trance, the full story is revealed to him. A third of Edith’s novel is devoted to that story—which happens to involve the passion, jealousy, and violence that rocked the Imperial Court of the Sung Dynasty in the 13th century. Upon release from the trance, Olliphant understands that he and the others are reincarnations of the very individuals involved in those distant events, and that he and they were brought together to face their interwoven destinies once again. With “*Omito Fo! Omito Fo!*”—an invocation of the Absolute similar to the Amitabha mantra—ringing in his ears, Richard is brought to the realization that “there is no death.” Nothing, he is given to understand, “not even one heart-beat of the smallest bird, is lost; . . . everything that has been, still is, and will always be.” Though the others in the group do not fare as well, Richard and Pau-Chu, who suffered tragedy as lovers in the 13th century, live to love again.

An “Author’s Note” in *Jade Mountain* offers a succinct summary of Edith’s goals as a writer.

Some years ago I conceived the idea of writing a Trilogy of China, that is to say, a trio of books about the country in which I spent my early life. Although not connected in plot or character, these were to be bound by some association of idea.

Thus in “The Red Lantern,” a story of the Boxer uprising of 1900, it was my endeavor to portray the eternal attraction and repulsion between East and West, or what the philosophers of history call the conflicting rhythms of Eastern and Western civilizations—their clash and the consequent tumult. As symbol of this bitter conflict, I set in the middle of the stage an Eurasian girl who, driven by the strife and unrest in her soul and the battling currents of her blood, finally, in mingled exaltation and despair, espouses the Boxer cause.

In my second book, “The Wanderer on a Thousand Hills,” this same theme is carried on, but this time in gentler mood. Again it is a case of conflicting rhythms, but not as before in contrary currents of blood in the same veins. Now it becomes a question: Which is stronger, the call of the blood—heredity, or the influence

of environment? For the hero of this book is an English youth, who had been kidnapped as a child by an intelligent Chinese woman, and brought up and educated as her own son. Caught while still a young boy in the vast and ponderous system of Chinese education, he at last emerges as the Scholar Laureate of China. Later, when he learns of his birth and comes into contact with Europeans, it is too late. China has cast over his soul her ancient spell. After much sorrow and struggle, he makes his choice and remains her loyal child, consecrating his life to a search in the temples of Asia for that inspiration which will bring about the "Concord of all religions and the harmony of the Masters."

In the present volume, which completes my Trilogy, the keynote will be found in the mystic phrase *Tat twam asi*,* which, affirming the essential Oneness of the great Spirit of Life with each of our own spirits, supplies that profound truth which alone can create a complete sympathy and goodwill for our brothers of every colour and creed. In the heartfelt acceptance of this underlying principle of all true religions lies, I feel sure, the way to the final harmonizing of those rhythms of East and West which have been dissonant for so many ages.

*Translated *Thou art That*. The phrase is used by the greatest Vedanta teachers. P. D. Ouspensky explains the expression as meaning: "*Thy soul is the Brahman*; or, in other words, the subject and the object of knowing are one and the same."

In the summer and fall of 1928, Edith and Una revived their friendship. Una's letters to Edith speak of their ongoing hope to see each other again, but nothing comes of it at that time. In the spring of 1929, Edith sent Una a draft of her memoir, "A Poet's Wife — Una Jeffers," which Una received with gratitude. Robinson also appreciated Edith's flattering portrait and wrote a letter telling her so. A return letter from Edith to Robinson exists as a draft, but she may or may not have sent a final copy. The rest of the letters in the collection were from Una to Edith just before and during the Jeffers family's 1929 trip to the British Isles. There is no record of correspondence after that date.

At age seventy-nine Edith published her last novel—*The Lamp Still Burns* (New York: Vantage Press, 1955). Released in the wake of

World War II, the book is dedicated “To All Soldiers” who “find on returning home that there are still battles to be fought and victories to be won.” The book may have been written long before World War II, however—possibly in the late 1920s or early 1930s—because it concerns events that occurred just prior to, during, and after World War I.

The Lamp Still Burns tells the story of Oliver Rhodes and Evadne Fairchild. When the two meet in 1914, they are on a ship bound for the United States from China. Oliver, a youth of about twenty, is traveling with his wealthy mother, a foolish, hateful, and supremely self-indulgent woman. Evadne, whose missionary parents died in a cholera epidemic when she was a child, is a fifteen-year-old orphan traveling with her grandmother. Oliver and Evadne are drawn to each other in superficial and subconscious ways, and by the end of the voyage they feel a nameless, incipient love. Crippled by childhood trauma, however, and bound by a promise never to marry, Oliver treats Evadne like a Vestal Virgin, a role her nun-like innocence compels her to accept—especially when Oliver tells her, as he goes off to fight in World War I, that her spotless virtue will keep him safe. Oliver’s father was a munitions manufacturer, so when he returns from battle, physically scarred and even more tormented, he is fabulously wealthy. But neither money, nor fame from a play he wrote titled *Matricide*, nor Evadne’s purity, can quiet his mind. The arrival in New York of Dr. Hu, an initiate-sage from China and a true Master who poses as a humble servant in order to help Oliver, begins the process of recovery. Finally aware of what his obsession has cost him, and freed from his promise not to marry, Oliver pursues Evadne, who has returned to Mother China. Prior to leaving, he gives up his wealth to establish a foundation that will provide schools for the poor and the blind.

Meanwhile, Oliver’s vindictive mother—a true nemesis—surreptitiously follows him. When she appears unannounced and attempts to stop him from marrying the one person in the world he loves, he tries to shoot her with a pistol that once belonged to his father. Evadne grabs his hand, however, and she is killed instead. Wanting to end his own life, Oliver sails out to sea in a small boat. Delirious after weeks of drifting, he is eventually rescued by Dr. Hu, and taken to Hu’s monastery in the mountains. Fifteen years later, two married friends of Oliver and Evadne who are in charge of Oliver’s school-building program worldwide, are traveling in

China. Wondering if Oliver is still alive, one of them says, “Who knows? Genius can change its form like everything else. From preoccupations with evil, it can turn to contemplation of the good—to purest ecstasy. There are growing rumors of an unknown singer who has begun to do for China what Tagore has long since done for India. Far up near the sources of rivers, from little boats, are heard lovely songs of great spiritual beauty, which are repeated in remote mountain hamlets and in little fields on the outskirts of civilization, like those we are passing now.”

Edith died in 1961, six years after her last book was published. Her daughter Margaret was the mother of five children by that time, having married Edward Thomas Price, Jr. in 1942. Price obtained a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of California, Berkeley in 1950 and taught at the University of Cincinnati and California State University, Los Angeles, before completing his career at the University of Oregon. Margaret’s children—Lawrence, Acyutánanda Avadhúta (formerly Alan), Kenneth, Edith Margaret (called Peggy), and Susan Webb — donated Edith’s papers to the University of Oregon library. In addition to personal and professional correspondence, manuscripts, photographs, and Chinese materials, the collection includes Edith’s portrait of Una and a dozen letters, all but two from Una. An announcement concerning the collection was posted online in September 2012, after the publication of Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers*. All of the letters are provided here, but only three of them (marked with an asterisk) would have been included in the Stanford edition. Transcription procedures are the same as those found in the *Collected Letters*—see Volume 1, “Methodology” (pp. 139–144) and “Editorial Devices” (p. 149). The letters are lightly annotated. For more information about the people and events mentioned in the documents, consult the indexes in the *Collected Letters*. Edith’s memoir is transcribed according to her intentions, with interpolations and changes silently added. In a few instances, punctuation has been altered for consistency and convention.

It remains to be said that Una appreciated the attention she received from her friend. In a letter to Melba Berry Bennett dated August 9, 1935, written when Melba was collecting material for *Robinson Jeffers and the Sea*, Una mentions Edith and her memoir. “I am sending you a ms. by Edith Wherry Muckleston whom (see “Who’s Who” old vol. XI 1920–1921) I haven’t seen for many years,” she writes.

"I admired her tremendously when I saw her in my girlhood—she seemed so *sophisticated* and her French was so perfect, and her remote Mediaeval aspect fascinated me! Genthe had taken a whole series of pictures of her because of her unusual beauty. and she wrote good verse." "I was amazed when I read this article she wrote on me," Una confesses, playing it down somewhat. "It hasn't her mature—rather Walter Paterish style—its a bit sophomoric & it is so enthusiastic about me that it seems great vanity to show it—*but* you can discount it and it gives a certain aspect of my life you may be interested in."

Una then adds one more comment: "If Robin saw me with anything like her partiality perhaps I won't need to seem to be a consoler to win him!" In earlier years, such words could be readily dismissed, but in 1935 they held more meaning. They reveal, in a yet unconscious way, a fissure in Una's relationship with Robinson that was just beginning to appear—a fissure that would break wide open three years later during the couple's disastrous 1938 trip to Taos, New Mexico. In fact, anyone familiar with the basic details of that event will see in Una's brief remark oblique references to some of the marital issues that were breaking them apart. In the immediate aftermath of the Taos crisis, Una mentions Edith's memoir in an October 19, 1938 letter to Lawrence Clark Powell, who was then working on a revised edition of *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and the Poet*. While acknowledging that it gives "an exaggerated account of my elegance and beauty," she affirms its value: "But so I looked to this cosmopolite!" Exaggerated or not, Una valued Edith's memoir. It provided an image of herself and of her marriage that helped carry her through one of the most challenging moments of her life.

Edith could not have known that her portrait of Una would serve that purpose, but it would not have surprised her to learn that it had. One sees, through her novels, that Edith was an intuitive person, sensitive to stirrings in the invisible web of life, and deeply attuned to the mystery of love—the delirium of its presence, the ache of its absence, its place in the heart beyond space and time.

2. Memoir

A Poet's Wife—Una Jeffers by Edith Wherry

Some time ago, coming back to my home in Hollywood one day late in the afternoon, I saw a package addressed to me in Una Jeffers' handwriting. It was from Tor House in Carmel-by-the-Sea on the

California coast. Even the wrappings of this package were not commonplace, for on the inner side of the first thick brown paper a previously inscribed address read, "To Mr. Robinson Jeffers," and in a corner were the words, "From Mary Austin, Santa Fe, N. M." A large paper folder announcing some of the most exquisite editions from the publishing house of Jacques Povolozky & Cie, Editeurs, 13 rue Bonaparte, Paris, had been used as an inside covering. Even if I had not recognized the handwriting, or noticed the postmark on the outer wrapping, it would have been easy to guess that the gift about to be revealed came from a literary household. The gift, itself, of course was a book; it was Mr. Jeffers' recently published volume, *Cawdor*, the last of his astounding trilogy in which *Tamar* and *The Women at Point Sur* are its predecessors.

On opening the book I discovered, to my great delight, that the first page had been inscribed by the author, "For Una's Edith Wherry," with a long quotation from "Apology for Bad Dreams" beginning: "He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor / From the bruised root . . ."

So pleasant a courtesy from the tragic poet whom I had never seen, but who is now proclaimed by important critics as probably the most distinctive poet of our time, was to me entirely unexpected and started a train of memories about one of the most charming figures of my younger days. This was Una Call Kuster, now Mrs. Jeffers, of whom her husband has testified: "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears, she arranged my life."

"Yes," I reflected, when I first read those words, "it would be exactly like Una to do all those things for the man she cared for supremely." For love, coupled with a joyous vitality and courage, is the outstanding quality of this woman, which she possesses in superabundant measure.

I shall never forget the first time I saw Una. Indeed only a very dull person could fail to remember a first meeting with that exquisite child—for she appeared scarcely more than a child at that time, in spite of the fact that she had been married several years. She must have been an incredibly young bride! Nothing else out of the ordinary routine that I can recall happened on that day. Una simply came, and that was enough!

The scene was a sorority house in Berkeley, where I lived during my senior year in the University of California. My studies had been interrupted by an operation for appendicitis a few years before, and

I had spent much of the intervening time in Paris, taking courses in French history and literature at the Sorbonne, with a view to teaching. But I needed a degree for this purpose, so I returned to Berkeley; there I found myself welcomed by a group of girls several years younger than myself, who were at that time the active members of the local sorority which I had previously joined. They treated me as an elder sister who had seen rather more of the world than themselves, and our relations were extremely cordial. The group was about to become absorbed by one of the big national sororities, and the initiation ceremony was soon to take place. This was an extremely important event for us all. Was not the founder of the Mother Chapter coming all the way from New York to conduct the secret rites? This great Personage arrived duly and was treated with profound respect. All the girls who had left college, once members of our original group, were invited to come back for the initiation. Already a number had arrived.

Then one morning, shortly before the great occasion, the air in that house became vibrant with expectation, which expressed itself in a kind of joyous chant: *Una is coming!* One girl after another burst into my room to tell me the news: *Una is coming!* On the stairs I heard it: *Una is coming!* At breakfast, luncheon and dinner, and every hour between when I was not actually at classes, I listened to the same joyful refrain, always given with smiles, little ecstatic hugs, and tenderness immeasurable by those excited girls. When I asked who Una was, they cried: "Oh, just wait and see! Nobody can describe Una." And a junior added proudly: "She is the most popular person on the Coast." It was with some difficulty that I learned the more substantial facts that she had previously spent a year or two at college and had afterwards married a young lawyer whom she had met at Berkeley and who had taken her to Los Angeles to live.

Unusual preparations were made, fresh flowers put in the vases in the living-room, big logs in the fireplace all ready to be lighted just before the advent of Una. She was to arrive about eight o'clock in the evening—I have forgotten now from where, but probably from her home in Los Angeles. If it had been from the moon, or from the remotest star in the Milky Way, the sense of suspense could scarcely have been more thrilling. The tall handsome president of the Chapter went out immediately after an early dinner to meet her. Two other girls also went. I remained with the rest of the

group in the living-room. At precisely ten minutes to eight a fair-haired freshman, at the bidding of a senior, applied a match to the kindling under the logs on the hearth. In performing the act, the freshman wore the mien of a Vestal Virgin. The logs began to blaze gayly. Blue, brown, hazel eyes glowed joyously in the firelight. *Una is coming — Una is coming! In a few minutes Una will be here!*

And then the door burst open, and our tall handsome president came in with the two other girls and—Una! I had just time to catch a glimpse of a slim little figure wrapped in a fur-trimmed coat and wearing a large picture hat, before it was entirely blotted out from my view by the bodies and eager out-stretched arms of a score of girls. “Oh, Una, you darling—here at last—We’ve been expecting you all day long,” etcetera, etcetera, in an ardent chorus of welcome. And then a young woman’s answering voice, easily distinguishable from all the others by its low rich music and its peculiar charm of inflection.

“Oh, girls, how glad I am to be with you all again! Gertrude, Rose, Isabel, Bernice! It’s wonderful to see you! But just let me take off my things, won’t you, please? You’re really suffocating me a little, you know.”

There was laughter, a slight withdrawal from the idolized object after at least seven girls had helped with the removal of the big picture hat and the fur-trimmed coat. Out of these wrappings Una emerged like a soft white moth from a chrysalis. She was drawn tenderly towards a big cushioned chair by the fire. But she did not sit down at once. Instead she looked once more into her companions’ faces. “Wonderful—wonderful to be here!” she murmured again. “Do I know you all?”

“No, not quite all,” replied one of the girls. Here’s our Edith; I think you haven’t met her yet. She’s just lately come back from Paris. Behold our proud globe-trotter!” and she pointed dramatically to me.

“O, Edith Wherry!” cried Una, springing towards me in a bound, and putting into mine a lovely white hand from the flowing sleeve of her scarcely whiter dress. “I’ve heard so much about you. I’ve longed to see you. It must be thrilling to live in Paris. And you used to live in China, too, the girls told me.” Then, after I had confessed to these exotic sojournings, she pleaded half under her breath, “I do hope you will like me just a little bit.”

But that was impossible, as the charmer well knew. For like all the others in that room, in spite of my superior years, my travels, and larger experience of life of which I was fully conscious, I worshipped Una at first sight. Liking her "just a little bit" was quite out of the question. She drew me to the big throne-like chair which had been reserved for her, and with a gentle push made me sit down in it. Then she perched on one of its broad arms while she bent her beautiful head down towards mine confidingly.

"When we know each other better," she said in that peculiar caressing tone which no one could withstand, "You will tell me all about your travels, won't you?" and I promised with great delight that I would certainly do so.

During the few days of her stay with us she kept me to my word; she plied me with questions, but so tactfully and intelligently and with such discriminating comments that I was never bored. She was without doubt one of the most brilliant members of our sorority. Yet those who had known her during the year or two of her actual academic life at Berkeley told me that never did a girl take her studies more lightly. She had many admirers in the fraternity houses, and almost every night she was out at a dance or attending some other lark, but for all that she managed to carry a full course of difficult subjects in which she maintained a consistently high grade. Coming back in the "wee sma' hours" of the night after a party, she would open her Homer or her Horace for a few moments, and the next morning make a faultless recitation. And, what is still stranger, there was nothing mechanical in her learning. Her literary acumen, whether in the classics or in English, was remarkable for so young a girl, and she had long since become an omnivorous reader. But she never tried to "show off," nor did she ever appear conscious of her own brilliancy. On the contrary she was often carried away by the most genuine admiration for the cleverness of girls far more ordinary than herself. For she had an intense appreciation of the gifts of other people, while her own appeared to her negligible. And it was the same with her sympathies which she gave generously to everybody in trouble without a vestige of pity left for herself. Young as she was, there was in her affection for us all, manifested even during that brief visit, a mothering quality. A late visitor at Tor House tells me that this is still a marked trait in her character, shown not only towards her twin boys but especially towards her husband, the author of the most starkly tragic tales of modern times.

But over and above all other qualities which I might name, it was her ineffable charm which drew everybody to her as if she were a powerful magnet. And in what did this charm consist? How can such a question be fully answered? Partly, I might reply, in her beauty—a milky whiteness of skin set off about the brow and cheeks with a wealth of long hair of a rich chestnut brown, such hair as a Maeterlinck heroine might possess, a snare for young poets, a lovely memory for all her friends to take with them when they parted from her. At night she wore it in two heavy braids which hung down to her knees. Her large eyes, too, were remarkably beautiful, shedding forth a bewitching gaiety of youth but keeping ever in their depths a Sibyl-like wisdom far beyond her years. Although she was slightly built, her physical energy was inexhaustible. If it was true that she had been wont to dance or frolic during two-thirds of the night in those early years at college, she must have enjoyed sound and refreshing sleep during the last third, for it was said that she never appeared tired. She was seldom even late for breakfast, and would have scorned taking a midday nap. This darling of the sorority was not only one of its most gifted members but also one of its most practical. She knew how to cook, to sew, to darn gossamer stockings and lace, and she was a born manager. But for all her activity, a fine atmosphere of repose and leisure enveloped her. She was never hurried; her motions were swift but serene, her laugh like her voice was low and musical and very sweet.

In that garden of girlhood of other days she was the natural queen, ruling by some divine and inherent right.

On one other occasion at Berkeley I saw Una. It was a year or so later after my own graduation from the University. I had taught a short time, but the prolonged illness and subsequent death of my mother had obliged me to give up my position. I was still living alone in the little cottage where my dear mother had died, and which I had not had the heart to abandon. To distract myself from my grief I began to write my first novel, *The Red Lantern*, which was produced in 1919 as a cinema with Nazimova in the leading role. I had seen little of my sorority friends, and had, I fear, gained a reputation for being rather unsociable. But one day, when I heard that Una was in town, I suddenly decided to invite the girls who had formed themselves into an alumnae chapter to meet at my house. They came, and Una with them. I remember that I let the hot chocolate, which I intended to serve as a beverage, scorch while I talked

with her. I was much chagrined, but Una made such a merry joke of the mischance that everybody began to declare in unison with her that a slightly burnt taste added greatly to the pleasant flavor of that drink. I still have my doubts of the honesty of this conviction on the part of my friends, but I can recall at least that the chocolate was consumed in liberal potations and with immense gusto.

And before the last adieus were made, Una managed to express by a tender word or two so much true sympathy for me in my recent loss that I was left comforted.

When next I saw Una it was in her quaint little English brick house, surrounded by a low wall, on one of the residential streets of Los Angeles. On my way East (and eventually to Europe) I made her a visit of several days and once more came under the spell of her extraordinary charm. At that time she was still living with her first husband, Edward Kuster—"Teddy" she called him—a young lawyer of artistic tastes. Una seemed, if anything, younger than when I had known her at Berkeley. Her gaiety was even more exuberant, making one think of the gambols of young animals in the spring. A continuous playful banter went on between her and "Teddy," but whenever she left the room he would turn to me and say in a tone of admiring awe: "Don't you think Una is wonderful?", or "Isn't she a marvel?", and I always replied by an enthusiastic affirmative. For I had noticed that the little house, adorned by objects of rare interest and beauty, was managed with clockwork precision. Delicious meals appeared as if by magic on the table; flowers bloomed in all the vases—my room was continually fragrant with them. Social and business engagements were met and disposed of with the consummate ease of a veteran by this little lady who looked as if she were still in her teens. If a duchess had been the guest, instead of my humble and untitled self, the *grande dame* could not have felt more welcome and honored than I did in that house.

But above everything else it was the number and the quality of the books which I saw in the cases and on almost every table and stand which gave me the secret of Una's power. For these books by no means represented the literature usually associated with a young society woman even though she be a clever one. Rather they were such as one might expect to find in the study of a savant or a philosopher. In short they were books suited to the needs of a mature and vigorously penetrating mind—and they were Una's books. No subject seemed foreign to the interests of her catholic

taste; the classics, history, philosophy, metaphysics, astronomy, biology including plant and marine life, psychic research and even mechanics, mathematics, and surgery were grist in Una's mental mill. But of course her greatest enthusiasm and devotion were manifested in the realm of pure letters, and particularly in that of poetry. Even at that early time she had a flair for old and rare editions, and nothing was more certain to bring a flush of pink to her cheeks and an eager sparkle to her eye than a discussion of the treasures she had already acquired or of those she most coveted in this line.

Yet I am sure it would not have occurred to anyone in those days to call Una a bookworm or bluestocking. Her vitality was too great and her interests apart from the library too varied to admit of pedantry. At a time when few women knew how to drive an automobile, she drove one with masterly skill. I have been with her in the midst of the heaviest traffic in the most congested centers of Los Angeles and have felt as safe as if we had been on a smooth country road. One time on a city boulevard, over which we were spinning at a rather dizzy speed, she whispered mischievously: "A traffic cop is just behind, but never fear—he'll not catch us!"—And she began to dodge in and out among the other vehicles with a dexterity worthy perhaps of a better cause. In any case the long arm of the law was quite too short on that day to reach the nimble Una.

My friend had three lively playfellows in the little brick house; bulldogs they were, each boasting an enviable family tree. Una's special favorite was ugly beyond the power of my pen to describe, a perfect gargoyle of a dog, bow-legged with bloodshot bulging eyes and a heavy protruding jaw with all the teeth showing. He possessed every "point" that distinguishes the thoroughbred of his race. In a fight he would probably have been a frightful object of tenacious fury, but fortunately I was spared seeing him in a belligerent mood. With Una, and soon even with me, he was amiability itself. He shared in an intense and whole-souled fashion the adoration universally inspired by his lovely mistress, and would, I believe, have made short work of any nightly marauder bold enough to enter that house. Una loved him fondly and made him a pair of flannel pyjamas in which on cold nights he slept in a large well cushioned armchair drawn up beside her bed. Before the lights were put out she always had a frolic with her snarling barking trio, but, though

they looked most hideously ferocious, they could be trusted not to hurt so much as one of her little white fingers.

It was either during this visit or soon afterwards, when I was living abroad, that I learned that Una was about to enter the University of Southern California for the purpose of finishing her college course, interrupted by her early marriage. That news was more significant than I realized at the time. For it was at this university that Una Call Kuster met the young poet Robinson Jeffers. In nineteen hundred and thirteen they were married, two years after my own marriage to a physician of Montreal.

After the signing of the Armistice in 1918 I came with my husband and two children from the Canadian city to the milder climate of Southern California. In the spring of 1922 we had the great grief of losing the elder of our two daughters, a beautiful and gifted child of eight years. Learning of this, Una broke a silence of several years and wrote me an unforgettable letter. Thus twice in great sorrow I have received the comfort of her rare sympathy.

Not long afterwards she wrote again inviting me to make her a visit at Tor house.

I should simply *adore* having you. I have a quaint little, very English bed-sitting-room with an open fire and books, which looks out over the cliffs and sea—an enchanting view. Many, many of my friends have enjoyed that room. An English girl with whom I coached through Cornwall visited me last year, and she constantly exclaimed at the Cornish coast outside these windows.

My little boys are just five, and, since they play only together, are not rough, so young Margaret would have companions. Also I am a crank about children's diet, so *that's* provided for.

I hope I've made this sound attractive enough so that you'll take advantage of it if you can manage.

But alas! I could not "manage" either then or since, though the kind invitation has been several times repeated. In one of these notes she said:

It would be such happiness to see you again, my dear. You are one of the vivid and interesting figures of my first years in California. My life has become steadily more laborious as well as more thrilling. Carmel seems to be visited by every interesting person who comes to Califor-

nia, and many of them find their way to Tor House. I have tutored my boys up to High School, almost entirely without outside help, and with Robin's work you can imagine a full life. I long to hear about you and yours. Send me a line in advance."

Last summer I made definite plans to go to Carmel. But bad luck in the shape of a sprained and swollen ankle again prevented me from realizing this long-hoped-for pleasure. In September Una wrote:

I was very much disappointed that you did not drive up to our door this summer. I looked forward to picking up the threads spun during these long years and resuming our pleasant intercourse.

Most of my life has been lived since I left Los Angeles; everything of importance, nearly, has happened since then. I am your same loving Una, but somewhat more mature in mind, I think. After my family whom I adore very much—too much for quiet comfort—comes literature always my most eager interest. Wouldn't I love to talk with you of that! For six years, too, I have been devoted to old ballads—English, Scotch and Irish, both set and unset to old music. I have some very rare old books. I think my choicest ones are Elizabethan with lute and virginal music. I have three quaint little organs in various rooms, and spend every odd moment with a ballad book. *You* would combine with the *virginal* music if you retain that detached and mediaeval air you wore of old, as if you had just stepped out of the golden mellow days of William Morris' people of Burgdale.

I agree with you, Robin's verse is disturbing. Many people seem to agree that he is a great poet. I know that as a human being he shows more elements of *greatness* than I have met before in one person, an extraordinary serenity and calm, a complete unselfishness and charity, an amazing dignity of mind and life. We have had fifteen years together and I have known great happiness.

Another allusion to her husband sheds light on that strange genius. In writing of a young man who wished help for a brochure on Robinson Jeffers, she says:

As a matter of fact what he gets from us must be gotten out of *me*, for Robin will neither listen to anyone on

the subject of his writings nor say one word about them himself unless actually *compelled*. I have never known him to read through any article on himself that exceeded two paragraphs in length.

It is a fortunate thing that a poet so indifferent to his own fame should have a wife like Una. In the Christmas edition of *The Carmelite*, dedicated to Robinson Jeffers, she is quoted as saying that her husband would not have published anything during his lifetime if she had not insistently wished him to. "He would have written and stored his poems; he might have written and burned them." In fact once he did destroy a long unpublished poem called "An Alpine Christ" which she declares was a marvellous thing. He was likewise perfectly careless of the fate of his manuscripts after they once appeared in print, until Una besought him to give them into her keeping.

But Una would cease to be Una, I venture to affirm, if she were a mere conserver of genius. I, who remember her so vividly, need not be told that she is as well its daily inspirer. She sees, she hears, she reports, and influences her poet in ways too subtle to name. "My private life is ridiculously happy," Jeffers once exclaimed, and one of our Hollywood critics [Edgcomb Pinchon] asks, "Is it that Robinson Jeffers finds himself—here where the yellow poppies come down to the sea . . . —so shamefully happy that he has to bend his back to stones and his brows to tragedy lest he dissolve in a ludicrous bubble of joy?" That would be a queer reason to explain the dark and at times demonic genius of Jeffers, but remembering that Una has for sixteen years been constantly at his side, I am almost ready to accept it.

When I recall, too, Una's warm friendliness, her gift for lively sociability, her many happy contacts with her fellow-mortals, it is sometimes difficult for me to realize that she has become the mate—and apparently the perfect mate!—of the most silent man on earth, one whose pen never ceases to lash humanity and whose counsel to his sons is:

And boys, be in nothing so moderate as in love of man, a clever
servant, insufferable master.

There is the trap that catches noblest spirits, that caught—they
say—God, when he walked on earth.

Yet is there not a clue in the last line of the stanza which I have quoted? Has not "the trap that catches noblest spirits" caught

likewise the noble spirit of Robinson Jeffers? Reading between the lines of his mighty diatribes, behind all the horror and the passion, I feel increasingly that here is not a hater of his fellow-men, or one who is indifferent to their fates. His preoccupation with rocks, trees, hawks, the ocean and the sky, is real and unfeigned, but deeper than this preoccupation, and just as elemental is his concern for the frenzied human creatures of his imagination—the Women of Point Sur driven by the Hag of Terror, the girl Tamar and her brother, with the taint of incest in their blood, the woman California of still more unnameable passion, and last, Cawdor, piercing with the flint his own eyes to hide himself from the face of his ghastly wife Fera. Is not pity, akin to that which moved the great tragedians of Greece, likewise the moving force in the soul of Jeffers as he contemplates mankind?

But to come back to the poet's lovely wife—how interested she is in other people! In a recent long letter she gives me in most affectionate language details of the old sorority "girls" whom we had both known in Berkeley, and whom she had recently met at the home of one of them.

Of one she writes: "She is the same happy-go-lucky person, full of fun; one son with her—a charming boy. She lives in Pekin now." Of another: "Matronly-looking, but distinguished. Her hair is white and her dark skin and eyes are fine with it. She was very jolly and had as always a clever little twist to her phrases." Still another: "has a beautiful, sad and worn face. Her hair also is white—the other girls are not even grey. She has had a very hard life . . . but has had happiness too—two beautiful children." Of a fourth she reports: "She has a very beautiful home in San Jose with one daughter and an adopted son. She gives one, as always, an impression of fine integrity and judgment." Another "talked with as much eagerness as ever and told of difficult years lived through successfully in remote mining camps."

Whatever may be the truth concerning the reputed misanthropy of Jeffers, surely it would be very hard to find a trace of that quality in these kind and warmly interested comments of his wife upon her former companions.

No letter, or even note, from Una is without its allusions to books that she is reading. Books, books, and more books! I have not the space for a tenth of the titles of those she has been eagerly devouring. In her last letter she mentions at least half a dozen. I had sent her

one of my own novels of China, and a reprint from a medical journal of a thesis by my husband entitled “Angina Ludovici and Kindred Affections: An Historical and Clinical Study.” Apologizing for not at once acknowledging their receipt, she writes:

Duty impelled me to finish a pile of borrowed books first—amongst them the ten-volume *Life of Scott* by Lockhart, which I had from the State Library. That’s a superb biography in the old manner.

Then after richly appreciative words about my own book (how generous she is with a friend!), she says:

I was extremely interested in your husband’s study of throat infections in spite of its technical nature. Surgery fascinates me intensely. I wish very much that one of my boys would show a talent for it. I am reading *Orlando* and Clive Bell’s little volume on Proust and Yeats’ *Oedipus*. I have also that new life of Hardy (Vol. 1) by his wife; it looks thrillingly interesting. Would you were near enough to talk them over!

But even now as the wife of a famous man, Una does much more than read books. She markets, she cooks, she sews and cleans house—for the simplicity of Tor House tolerates no servant—and in the evenings after supper, preceded often by long rambles with her husband and sons along the shore or in the canyons of Carmel, she sits down patiently to darn and mend for her three male creatures. An upon occasion, if the need arises, she will even seize the gun and protect the family woodpile from theft with all the spirit of her Celtic ancestry. In a recent issue of *The Carmelite* there is a capital story of her valor in this line and of the joke which she made afterwards of the adventure. She is never ill, needs little sleep, and squeezes out of every waking moment the last drop of life’s juice. Her mind is as nimble as a squirrel. I have no need to visit her to see her, by inward vision, turn from a savory Irish stew in the making, to tell me that *Roan Stallion* has been translated into French by Eugène Jolas, or to show me a carved stone head of an apsara from Angkor Wat in Indo-China, or proudly to display one of her rare old editions. But I could wager that she would return just in the nick of time to keep the stew from burning!

And now she is all agog to be off in June for her long-planned trip to Europe.

Yesterday I made reservations for our sailing to Belfast. We are expecting to spend a year in the British Isles. I adore England and have some very dear friends there. Our plan is to take a house in several different places and stay three months at a place. We shall buy a little car and also walk a great deal. Do you intend to go over this year? It would be jolly to meet.

In a previous letter she mentions this same subject.

Now I've written such a long letter that I've no time to tell of our plans to spend a year abroad. We've always been putting it off until we felt bored here. I think now that will never be. We wish to spend six months in Ireland keeping house and gazing our fill upon Irish round towers and sculptured remains, with part of the time in England where I feel more at home than in any other place in the world where I've been. That is really where I should live but we have been so happy here at Tor House that we can never make a home elsewhere.

Profoundly do I feel the truth and significance of this, the last sentence which I shall quote from my friend's letters. Her wise mind and heart must tell her that her husband's destiny, as well as her own, is inextricably bound with the wild and remorseless beauty of that stretch of the Pacific Coast which sixteen years ago they chose as their home country. What the poet has said about that experience is already a kind of legend: ". . . and when the stage-coach topped the hill from Monterey, and we looked down through pines and sea-fogs on Carmel Bay, it was evident that we had come without knowing it to our inevitable place."

Once after they had lived for several years in Tor House, which I am told is an exact copy of an old Tudor barn in Surrey much admired by Una, she expressed to her husband a desire for a tower. Quite simply he set about granting that wish, and seizing upon granite boulders on the beach, hauled them with his own hands to an inclined plane upon which he rolled them up to become the stones of the now famous Hawk Tower. It took Jeffers six years to build it, but what are six years in the thought of such a poet! I think that Una was pleased with her forty feet of piled granite, for I am sure that it was no mere whim that actuated her request, but a real spiritual need. Doubtless she felt the profound correspondence between her husband's character and genius and the

stone, "baptized from that abysmal font the sea," which went into both house and tower. Perhaps she wished him to leave behind a material monument to his memory, worthy to match the strange strong poetry which he will bequeath to the world.

"She has arranged my life" he has declared of her. But if I know Una, that is not enough to satisfy her indomitable spirit. She would also arrange his fame—his immortality—which will outlast his life. In any case Hawk Tower in its four-square strength looks as if it might still be standing a thousand years hence. In a small rocky chamber at its top, the poet sits some hours each day hewing out his verse from the hidden caverns of his soul. In the lowest room near the ground, the twin boys, Garth and Donnan, play on rainy days. In a chamber between is one of the three quaint little organs which Una loves to touch gently while she sings her old ballads. The builder of the tower warns us:

If you should look for this place after a handful of lifetimes:
Perhaps of my planted forest a few
May stand yet, dark-leaved Australians or the coast cypress, haggard
With storm-drift; but fire and the axe are devils. . . .
My ghost you needn't look for; it is probably
Here, but a dark one, deep in the granite, not dancing on wind
With the mad wings and the day moon.

Yes, one who has read the pages of Robinson Jeffers would probably agree with that. His ghost would not be easy to find. If there at all, it would be hidden and silent. But I like to believe that as long as Hawk Tower remains erect, a voice rich and low and very sweet will be heard coming from the window of its middle chamber, singing a very, very ancient ballad.

Postscript

Since writing the preceding pages which for several months have lain half-forgotten in a drawer, while I was off holidaying, two events have occurred with a direct bearing on my subject-matter. First, I have been at Tor House; second, a letter has come from Una written at Cushendun on the extreme north-east coast of Ireland.

The proverbial irony of fate never seemed to me quite so complete as when I stood this summer for the first time in front of my friend's home and realized that it was empty. Poet, wife, and children had sailed a month previously for Europe. I had known that this had happened, and yet when I reached Carmel it seemed impossible that

I would not see Una. At my request my husband drove immediately to the rugged bit of coastline which terminates the Jeffers estate, and there looking up from the road, I saw Tor House and Hawk Tower set against the dark green of a young forest of trees. They looked exactly as my imagination, aided by photographs, had pictured them. From a neighbor, left in charge of the premises, we gained permission to walk about a little and see the trees planted by the poet. We lingered until the rough sea-shrubbery of the almost flowerless garden had been dyed a deep rose by the sunset, and a wild canary of purest yellow had settled down on a bush almost at our feet. Then, after picking a few bits of lavender and sweet william, we turned away a little forlornly and yet—strangely, too—more than a little comforted. I, at least, can truthfully say that seldom before on the American continent have I visited a place which has given such instant and perfect rest to my spirit.

And now, from the land of her ancestors, come joyful tidings from my friend, of weeks spent in exploring the wild glens of Antrim, and motoring to remote corners of Ireland. Happy expectations there are too of similar excursions in Scotland, followed by a sojourn in an old farmhouse in Oxfordshire, and later some winter months spent in Dorset or Cornwall. Only four scant weeks are to be reserved for city life in London. Such is the holiday chosen by Una for her poet-husband and her sons. I can think of none better.

3. Correspondence

*UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston**

[Spring 1922]
Wednesday

My dear Edith—¹

You will forgive me for not answering your letter instantly when I tell you I have just returned from the hospital where I underwent a severe major operation.² I, who have never been under a doctor's care in my life (except when babies came!) My step-sister Edith is here looking after my little boys— I am rapidly convalescing now ♦ and will within a couple of months be stronger than ever I think. You didn't give me any hint of when you might be able to come, but if it were later in the summer I should simply ADORE having you. I have a quaint little very English bed-sitting-room with an open fire and books in it, which looks out over the cliffs and sea an

enchanting view—with a double bed in it for you and Margaret.³ Many, many of my ♦ friends have enjoyed that room. An English girl⁴ with whom I coached through Cornwall visited me last year and she constantly exclaimed at the *Cornish coast* outside these windows. —My little boys are just five and since they play only together are not rough so young Margaret would have companions. —Also I am a *crank* about children's diet so *that's* provided for.

I hope I've made this sound attractive enough so you'll take advantage of it if you can manage.

My warm love
Yours
Una

In a recent letter to Grace McPherron⁵ I told her of the death of Virginia Judy's husband.⁶ I also enclosed a clipping from a San Francisco paper telling of the strange taking-off of the *former* husband of Céleste la Coste, —Dr Etcheverry—didn't you know him?⁷ Perhaps Grace will tell you about it.

ALS. Oregon. 3 pages. Letterhead: Tor House.

1. For references to Edith in the *Collected Letters*, see Volume 2: UJ to Melba Berry Bennett, August 9, 1935 (p. 469) and UJ to Lawrence Clark Powell, October 10, 1938 (p. 911).

2. The operation was a hysterectomy.

3. Margaret Christian Muckleston (1917–1997).

4. Alberta "Bert" Gearing. See *Collected Letters*, Volumes 1 and 2.

5. Grace Adams McPherron (1877–1957), an 1898 graduate of Pomona College, was one of Una's sorority sisters at UC Berkeley, where she earned a second A.B. degree in 1904. McPherron then taught high school Greek and Latin in Los Angeles. In 1927 she obtained an M.A. from UC Berkeley with a thesis titled "Caesar in the Year 60 B.C."

6. Emily Virginia (Judy) Esterly (1882–1946), a sister of Una's intimate friend Clinton Judy, was also a member of Una's sorority at UC Berkeley. She married Ward Benjamin Esterly (1883–1922), a construction engineer, in 1910. At the time of her death, Virginia was dean of students and assistant to the president at Scripps College in Claremont, California.

7. Celeste (Lacoste) Etcheverry (1883–1978), another member of Una's sorority at UC Berkeley, graduated from the university in 1905. In June of the same year, she married Michel Etcheverry (1879–1922), a French-born San Francisco physician affiliated with the French Hospital; the marriage ended around 1921.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

[June 1928]
Sunday

Dearest Edith—

Do forgive my not replying instantly to your note which I mislaid and lacked your address—having put your note in a book I was reading and put aside for days!— It would be such happiness to see you again my dear—you are one of the vivid and interesting figures of my first years in California! ♦ My life has become steadily more *laborious* as well as more thrilling. Carmel seems to be visited by every interesting person who comes to California and many of them find their way to Tor House. I have tutored my boys up to High School almost entirely without outside help. —and with Robin's work—you can imagine a full life. I long to hear about you and yours. Send me a line in advance.

With love as always
Faithfully, Una Jeffers

ALS. Oregon. 2 pages. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

*UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston**

September 11, 1928

Dearest Edith—

I was very much disappointed that you did not drive up to our door this summer. I looked forward to picking up the threads spun during these long years—and resuming our pleasant intercourse.

Most of my life has been lived since I left Los Angeles—everything of importance has happened since then— I am your same loving Una—but somewhat more mature in mind I think! After my household whom I adore very much *too* much for quiet comfort—comes literature—always my most eager interest. Wouldn't I love to talk with you of that! —For six years too I have been devoted to old ballads—English, Scotch and Irish—both set (and unset) to old music. I have some very rare old books. I think my choicest ones are Elizabethan with lute and virginal music. I have three ♦ quaint little organs in various rooms and I spend every odd moment with a ballad book. —*You* would combine with the *virginal* music if you retain that detached and mediaeval air you wore of old, as if you

had just stepped out of the golden mellow days of W^m Morris people of {Burgdale.}

I agree with you, Robin's verse is disturbing. Many people seem to agree that he is a great poet. I know that as a human being—more elements of *greatness* than I have ~~known~~ met before in one person. An extraordinary serenity and calm, a complete unselfishness and charity, an amazing dignity of mind and life. We have had fifteen years together and I have known great happiness.

I am mailing you some clippings which are destined for a man in San Pedro who desired them for some article—{Perhaps they will interest you.} Will you after you have looked them over send them to Louis Adamic PO Box 966, San Pedro, California.

My dear love and hoping you'll come in a not distant time.

Una.

ALS. Oregon. 2 pages. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

[c. September 26, 1928]

Dearest Edith—

I was just about to write you this afternoon when your letter came about Adamic. —I have never seen him but once. He came to call a few months ago with a young lawyer from Los Angeles, a friend of George Sterlings. He {(Adamic)} is a Yugoslav of some variety and translated for the Vanguard Press series the book by Ivan Cankar called "Yerney's Justice."¹ (Its very well done too—) —We were favorably impressed with him—in fact I found him discriminating in his literary judgements. —I remember talking with him at length about George Moore's "Héloïse and Abelard" and about Proust's "Sodome et Gomorrhe" which I had just finished reading. He sent me a couple of books after he left— Then I forgot all about him until I had a letter from him enclosing one from Glen Hughes,² who edits that series of Chap Books {for the Univ. of Washington,} —do you know them —they are interesting and delightfully printed—I have here one on {1} D. H. Lawrence by Richard Aldington, & {2} Three Woman Poets of ♦ {Modern} Japan —etc.— Apparently Glen Hughes knows Adamic & his work and said in this letter that he hoped Adamic would write the brochure on Jeffers they had been talking over and there was every probability he would find it

acceptable for the Chap Book series. He said that there was a great deal of interest and curiosity about Jeffers' personality and life and he wished Adamic would *stress* that. —Adamic said that he hoped we would not mind if he wrote it but he would need help on actual details. I replied I would help but was awfully short of time and I hoped he would prepare a list of questions and let me have them to give me an idea of how much help he would have to have.— As a matter of fact what he gets from us must be gotten out of *me* for Robin will neither listen to anyone on the subject of his writings nor say one word about them himself unless actually *compelled*. I have never known him to read through any article on himself that exceeded two paragraphs in length. ♦

In going over some articles for another purpose I found those duplicates and thought they might suggest something to him so I forwarded via *you*— So, my dear Edith, do just as you like about seeing him—he seemed a gentleman and would not intrude I think—and perhaps my personality as it influences Robin might be of interest to him— Certainly you could show him my letter— I did not write him that I was sending those clippings and it may ~~be~~ {be} that he thought *you* knew {somehow} he was contemplating this brochure and wished to assist.—

What I meditated writing you about was a party at ~~Edith~~ {Ethel} Clark-Wilder's³ in San Jose last Saturday, for some of us old AOP girls—

Helen Henry⁴

Ethel—

Gertrude Davis Arnold⁵

Una—

Martha Rice Furlong⁶

Hattie Fish-Bacchus⁷

Daisy Mansfield-Shaw⁸

Isabel Henderson-Stewart⁹ ♦

Gertrude is back with her four children from China and is living in Mill Valley for this college year. Two boys in U.C. She is the same happy-go-lucky person—full of fun. One son with her—a charming boy. I suppose Gertrude has had many curious experiences out there but its hard to get her to tell about them unless one asks a definite question. She lives in Pekin now.

Helen Henry is rather heavy and matronly looking but distinguished! Her hair is white and her dark skin and eyes are fine with

it— She was very jolly and has as always a clever little twist to her phrases—

Martha has a BEAUTIFUL *sad* and worn face. Her hair also is white—the other girls are not even *grey*— She has had a very hard life. Herbert has had one desperate illness after another for many years (beginning with some kind of intestinal infection caught in a Mexican dungeon). She has taught at Miss Ransom's School in Berkeley for ten years, but ♦ has had happiness too—two beautiful children. The boy succeeding on the stage, the girl (an AOP junior) has just been given a year in Paris by some friends— Martha and Herbert had a gorgeous Mediterranean trip of three months (by winning a prize-contest in {a S. F.} newspaper!)

Ethel has a very beautiful home in San Jose and one daughter & an adopted son. She gives one as always an impression of fine integrity and judgement.

Hattie had her daughter along—a dear girl (AOP senior) Hattie talked with as much eagerness as ever and told of difficult years lived through successfully in remote mining camps —now living near S.F.

Isa very quiet and subdued but sweet. I did not find out much news. No children.

Daisy I knew very little at college.

We spoke of you. I am told your husband is a handsome creature—that you were much envied by your feminine friends <over> ♦

Now I've written such a long letter—no time to tell you that we may go abroad next year too. We have planned a year over there sometime (always putting it off until we felt bored here—I think now that will never be.) Six months {of it} in Ireland keeping house and gazing our fill upon Irish round towers and sculptured remains! Part of the time in England where I feel more at home than any place in the world that I've been—that is really where I should live but we have been so happy here {at Tor House} that we can never make a home elsewhere.

Dear Edith I *hope* your tooth has quieted down. Almost at the moment I rec'd your letter I had one from a friend in Chicago who had just put in days of misery with an impacted wisdom tooth! He had never been ill before and was utterly astonished to find how one can *suffer* & still live!

Are you writing?

My dear love.

Your devoted Una.

A strange and lovely little thing your “Babes in the Wood”

ALS. Oregon. 6 pages. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

1. Ivan Cankar, *Yerney's Justice*, translated by Louis Adamic (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926).

2. Glenn Hughes (1894–1964), professor of English and innovative director of the drama program at the University of Washington, was the founding editor of a popular chapbook series published by the University of Washington Press from 1927 to 1931.

3. Ethel Clarke Wilder (1880–1959) married Francis A. Wilder in 1920. Her husband was a cannery owner, San Jose businessman, and later in life, a senior government advisor in Washington, D.C. See also *Collected Letters I*: 288, note 2.

4. Helen Natalie Henry (1879–1939), born in China, taught briefly at Mills College and served as the executive secretary of the Woman's Educational and Industrial Union of Boston.

5. Gertrude Davis Arnold (1880–1947) was the wife of Julean Arnold, commercial attaché to China. In 1907, the year of their marriage, Gertrude and Julean climbed Mount Jade (also known as Yu Shan, Yushan, Mount Morrison, etc.) in present-day Taiwan. They were the first Americans, and Gertrude was the first woman, to climb the 13,000 foot peak. See also *Collected Letters I*: 749, note 7.

6. Martha Bowen Rice Furlong (1881–1974) married Herbert W. Furlong, a geologist, in 1905.

7. Harriet “Hattie” Anna Fish Backus (1885–1977) was the wife of George Stitzel Backus, a mining engineer and assayer. Harriet tells the story of her life at the Tomboy Mine near Telluride, Colorado and other camps in *Tomboy Bride: A Woman's Personal Account of Life in Mining Camps of the West* (Boulder, CO: Pruett, 1969).

8. Daisy Julia Mansfield Shaw (1883–1938) married Norman Waite Shaw, an architect, in 1910.

9. Isabel “Isa” Henderson Stewart Babson (1881–1960) was a teacher in Oakland, California. After her first husband Benjamin F. Stewart, Jr., a civil engineer, died, she married Stephen E. Babson, a California land developer.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

January 16, 1929

Dearest Edith—

I do wish I had written you at once to thank you for your book but I waited to read it and several weeks elapsed because duty impelled me to finish a pile of borrowed books first. —(amongst them the 10 vol. *Life of Scott* by Lockhart which I had down from the State Library —That's a superb biography in the old manner!) —At last I've read “The Wanderer” and find it *beautifully* done, with the sense

of China and Chinese character done from within— Do you know of whom I thought often as I read your pages—my adored Pater—particularly *Marius* which I read every year of my life— There is in your book the same mellow serenity and decorum, a steady controlled rhythm. That is very precious to me.

I yesterday made tentative reservations for us ♦ June sailing to Belfast. We are expecting to spend a year in the British Isles. I adore England and have some very dear friends there. Our plan is to take a house in several different places and stay ~~three~~ three months at a place. We shall buy a little car and also walk a great deal. Do you intend to go over this year? It *would* be very jolly to meet— I wonder whether your husband knows Hans Barkan the eye specialist in San Francisco. He and his family are going to Vienna in March and are coming to Ireland to meet us later for some lark—

I was extremely interested in your husband's study of throat infections in spite of its technical nature.¹ I am so intensely interested in surgery. I wish very much that one of my boys would ~~should~~ ~~a~~ show a talent for it. I have been interrupted several times my reaction is an ink blot.— I am reading *Orlando* and Clive Bell's little vol. on Proust and Yeats' *Oedipus*— {I have also that new life of Hardy Vol I. —by his wife— it looks *thrillingly* interesting— Would you were near enough to talk them over. (ink blot)}² ♦

Roan Stallion has been translated into French by Eugène Jolas.

You asked about other books by Robin—you mentioned them all but if you are in the library sometime ask to see the American Poetry 1927 *Miscellany* edited by Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt Brace, Pub.) It contains a group of poems by Robin which have been very much liked —particularly "*Apology for Bad Dreams*." These will be included sometime in regular editions

The Book Club of S. F. got out a special limited edition of R. J. *Poems* last Sept. The edition is exhausted but ~~most~~ {some} of them are in the Cawdor vol. and some in this group from *Poetry* which Harriett Monroe persuaded him to contribute when she visited us.

I am sending you today a copy of *Cawdor*. I ♦ know you spoke of having a copy but I thought you might enjoy an *inscribed* one.

Lovingly—and hastily,
U.J.

Have you ever travelled in Indo-China? I have a very strange little carved stone head of an apsara from Ang-Kor Vat, given me by Lucille Douglass who illustrated Mrs Ayscough's "Chinese Mirror"³

My devoted love dear Edith, Una.⁴

ALS. Oregon. 4 pages. Letterhead: Tor House.

1. H. S. Muckleston, "Angina Ludovici and Kindred Affections: An Historical and Clinical Study," *Annals of Otology, Rhinology & Laryngology*, Vol. 37, issue 2 (June 1928), pp. 711-735. As befits his training in the classics, Muckleston begins this study with a discussion of the Greek and Latin sources of "angina" and other terms.

2. Written in right margin, page 2.

3. Written upside down at top of first page.

4. Written in left margin, page 2.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

[April 1929]

Thursday

Dearest Edith—

Your Mss. came just now and I have just glanced at it briefly— I am glowing with joy that you remember me so beautifully—and with confusion that I don't deserve it all more perfectly—but this is a note to tell you briefly why I did not reply to your former letter.— I have been through a very trying five weeks—beginning Feb 22.— {and whirling to get my balance since!} Robin and both boys had flu. —one at a time Robin and Garth slight attacks—then Donnan who had never been ill in his life took it—and was *desperately* ill—abscess in both ears (temp 105°) which was not diagnosed immediately because curiously enough he had no pain there {just a slight tenderness} — Both ears had to be operated and mastoid trouble was feared—he was on the verge of pneumonia with some evidence of abscess forming on lung —Robin and I were frantic with anxiety for three days. Many times during that period my thoughts turned to my dear Edith— ♦ with the terror that I would have to endure the same agony I sensed had been ~~yours~~ *hers*— —All is over now—he is quite well—and we are thankful his hearing is normal. He was quite deaf for a few days. But to prolong my trials I realized that I was having headache every day which became acute— I had flu too! and it ~~f~~ had done things to my frontal sinuses! Another ten days to get through with that, (with radical

treatment)— Alas —I had pictured us getting started quietly and efficiently with no bustle (which troubles Robin!) —Details are easy for me— —but with those weeks lost I find we are going to scramble madly before we are well away. We expect to leave Carmel June 7 and sail from Montreal the 14th Today an Irishman Ernie O'Malley {from Dublin} came to call. We have common friends—he expects to get for us for a couple of months the little house of ♦ Maude Gonne at Glenmalure near *Glendalough* one of the places in Ireland I had most hoped to stay in. —You must know about Maud Gonne that “most beautiful woman in the world” that tragic Irish patriot ~~that~~ {whom} Yeats loved and wooed for thirty years and wrote so often into his verses. —She is old now and half-blind. I feel so near to her through long conversations with her friend Ella Young the Irish folklorist who lectured in America. They had a house together for years at Rathfarnham.

I wonder whether your husband knows the eye specialists in S. F. —the Barkans (Otto and Hans Barkan)— The Hans Barkan family leave for Vienna tomorrow They expect to meet us in Ireland in August— He is a charming person, —also meeting us there in the autumn are Dr. Baynes & Dr Carey Baynes his wife. He is a well known London psycho-analyst. They two have recently published two volumes of ♦ translations of Jungs “Contributions to Analytical Psychology.” These essays are absorbingly interesting (although I would never alter the course of my life through any psycho-analyst’s advice would you?) Its just interesting *theoretically*. He is a darling Englishman with many strange chapters in his life such as a long period with Jung in Africa studying the reactions of a native tribe—the Swahili—and the clearing up in Persia of the cholera & typhus camps for the English gov’t. He was in regular practice then— Mrs. B. was formerly ~~Mrs~~ {Dr.} De Angulo a dear friend of ours— she was on the faculty at Stanford for a year or so once—biology— Does your husband know her?

I must rush off now to fetch little boys from school. I could not wait to tell you how I loved having you do the article—

With all my love—in a hurry—
Una.

ALS. Oregon. 4 pages. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

*RJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston**

Tor House, Carmel.

April 28, 1929.

Dear Mrs. Muckleston:

Una has let me read your altogether delightful paper about her—you'd have laughed indeed to see the three men of this family, one after the other, absorbed in those pages. (I meant to read it aloud to the boys, as I do so many things, but they got ahead of me.) It is truthful—so far as relates to Una at least, though we don't tell her these things—and charmingly written, and observed with amazing accuracy.

I am writing to ask a favor: may I have a copy typed before we return the original? Not that we haven't got Una by heart; but it is delightful to have her on paper too. —And thank you much for having put her there.

Sincerely yours,
Robinson Jeffers.

ALS. Oregon. 1 page. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

Edith Wherry Muckleston to RJ

[May 1929]

Dear Mr. Jeffers,

Your letter gave me great pleasure. It is something—it is much!—when a man recognizes the true lineaments of his wife in a portrait, (whether ~~made by~~ of pen or brush,) which has been wrought by another. And when the subject of the portrait is Una, and the appreciator of the effort is yourself, you may imagine what a glow of happiness your kind words of praise created in me.

Yes, certainly you may ~~keep the manuscript~~ have a copy typed from the original; I am glad to think that it means enough to you (and, as I hope, to the sons) [for you] to want ~~to copy~~ it. Do you wish me to make any further efforts to get the article published? If so, perhaps you will ~~be good enough to~~ give [me] some suggestions. A few words of approval from you ~~which I~~ sent with the *ms* might help. What are the magazines that ~~might~~ would [be likely to] take it? I know so little of these matters as all the work I have ever done (aside from a little verse and a very few short stories) is my trilogy of China.

My chief reason in wishing to see my study of Una in print is because ~~as I explained in my letter to her yesterday,~~ I think it is high time that the world should know more about ~~the little lady~~ the valiant and charming woman who, as I so strongly suspect, has salvaged a great poet, from a ♦ state of too-contented obscurity and given him to America—and to the world. You see, I am more than a little jealous for Una's fame. I do not want it too much overshadowed by your own!

~~I have loved Una for a long time and though {alas!} I have not seen her for many years~~

Having {yourself} “got Una by heart” ~~you will be~~ {you} are able, I am sure, to understand how I feel. For I {too} got her *by heart*, ~~too~~, long ago. Indeed that's the only way to get Una, and to keep her. In spite of the long years of separation, she has persisted there and I believe will persist to the end. Charm like hers does not easily fade from the memory.

⊕ Una asked me in her last letter if my husband knew Dr. Barkan, the San Francisco eye-specialist. Please tell her that he ~~knows him~~ has met him at least once (~~probably oftener~~) at a medical dinner {at Santa Barbara} where they sat side by side. {He called him a charming fellow.} Also may I ask you to tell her that I should have said *vaccine* instead of anti-toxin in speaking of the beneficial “shots” which {we} took during the flu epidemic. My husband likes me to be very particular about these medical terms but now and again I fall into error!

I hope ~~{that} you will get off for the long-planned trip without too much hurry and strain and {that} what you see, hear, taste, touch and smell over there will come back to us on these shores after it has passed through the crucible of your finely creative mind.~~

Sincerely yours,
Edith W. Muckleston.

ALD. Oregon. 2 pages.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

Sept 6 [1929]

Only incessant occupation with a thousand things to be attended to every moment kept me from writing you darling Edith. I should manage it soon. We've been 2½ mo. in this dear spot in the wild glens of Antrim from which as a base we have motored into every corner of Ireland (over 5,000 miles) Tomorrow we leave for Scotland

to motor until the 19th, then to an old farmhouse we've rented from a friend ~~near~~ {in} Oxfordshire. Then to London in a month—then if we stay for the winter to Dorset or Cornwall where it is comparatively warm.

My warmest love,
Una

APS. Oregon.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

Nov 11. [1929]

Dearest Edith—

I wish now that I had sent you frequent cards so I wouldn't lose connection with you but I thought to have time for a long letter—and never have! Such a busy time! We stayed in Ireland for 2½ months—rented a house on the coast in the Glens of Antrim—wild and beautiful. —bought a car the first week we arrived and motored over 5,000 miles in Ireland. We made the beautiful inexplicable Irish Towers our *theme* and strung our ♦ adventures around them. We managed to visit 24 of them. —We also saw one of the two there are in Scotland and there are none in England! —We {twice} visited Yeats tower & cottage in {near} Gort, Co Galway. Drove through Lady Gregory's great forest and saw her plain Georgian house {such yew trees! *covered* with berries & I have always thought *one* yewberry magical} —went all over Edward Martyn's Tillyra Castle (pronounce Til-lyra) —went to George Moore's ruined but lovely {Moore Hall in Lake} Carra in West Mayo, twice —then to Achill Island & Donegal—everywhere really—we explored it with a microscope! ♦

Sometime I hope to tell you about it all. Ireland is very beautiful! Then to Scotland—motored way up to John O'Groats, {wild & bare up there—with the Orkneys in hand's reach across that gray North Sea} —We were in Oban and Inverness during the Highland Games. —'Tis a grand set of men the Highlanders in swinging kilt and plaids with skirling bagpipes we stayed about Loch Lomond for ten days—one *night* in full harvest moon motored around the edge! On down to Keswick & the English Lakes after Edinburgh & Scott country. —a visit to my ♦ old delights Emily & Charlotte Bronte on down to London—where we stayed for three weeks.

Robin still refused to meet anyone—I really would have enjoyed it—except Leonard & Virginia Woolf who published *Roan Stallion* & *Cawdor* over here I will tell you of them sometime *sensitive intelligent—amusing* shrinking from rough scrutiny We had tea with them in the old house in Tavistock Square They live above & in the great vaulted cellars below (once ♦ wine cellars in the great days of the house) is the Hogarth Press.

Then we went to Oxfordshire where we took an old house (& servant) of a friend. We were on the edge of the Cotswolds— we went to W^m Morris Kelmscott Manor & May Morris took us all over the house and to Bibury that perfect little Cotswold village that W^m Morris called the “most beautiful village in England.” — {Dr} Hans Barkan & family came on from Vienna ♦ and stayed at an inn beside us for ten days & we went some *fine pilgrimages!*

Now in Cornwall having been all over Wessex— & visited Hardys grave (at least his heart is there) in beautiful little old Stinsford Church.

We had intended to stay the winter in Cornwall. Virginia Woolf got us a house in Zennor, but I see that Robin is now anxious to get home. It will soon be too stormy for motoring or walking much & if we must be still, home is best! So I engaged ♦ passage for us for Dec 10— & even then when we get home we will have been gone over seven months I planned everything for a year but when we went so reluctantly I often thought if I kept us here 3 months I'd think it a success!

We are on our way to Zennor now. Stopped here last night when night fell. This hotel is just opposite St Michael's Mount and the castle is marvellous this morning. A horrible tempest ♦ of wind & rain is raging The causeway is hidden by breaking waves and the castle piles up grim & superb above the tumult. We are going presently to Lands End. —The tempest will be gorgeous there. —Onto Tintagel in a few days. I loved Cornwall better than any other place when I was over in 1912.

Now dearest Edith this isnt any sort of letter—its an outline without any color or telling what our trip has done to us really— all that we can ♦ portray later! —

I think I have never told you how much we enjoyed those reviews you sent. Robin seldom reads reviews but he spoke again & again of the Pillow Book¹ one, so beautifully done We read them on {train & ship board. Such a queer trip—dense fog all the time. Two

nights the engines were stopped all night—& the foghorns sounded all night. We were surrounded by icebergs. One day the sun came through ♦ the fog & two ice bergs gleamed magnificently white and menacing within a mile.

~~I~~ I wish you could look out this window & see the gale and the dash of waves against rock and the gray castle!

Now soon we must start to complete our John O'Groats to Land's End!

Dearest warm love for my Edith—and hopes of seeing you before many months are gone!

Your faithful loving
Una!

My sons were thirteen day before yesterday!

ALS. Oregon. 10 pages. Letterhead: Godolphin Hotel, Marazion, Cornwall.

1. Probably a review of *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, translated by Arthur Waley (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929).

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

Dec. 9. [1929]
Belfast Ireland

My love dearest Edith and all good wishes for the holiday time and the New Year. —We are sailing in a few days and hope to be home by New Years Day. The weather is abominable here.

Yours,
Una.

APS. Oregon.

UJ to Edith Wherry Muckleston

[March 2, 1930]
Sunday

My dearest Edith—

What a *darling* girl you have—I was so glad to receive the picture and regret not having written instantly to say so. —and yet my conscience doesn't blame me too much for I wished to write more than a note and when *do* I have time for ~~purely~~ purely friendly letter without any duty mixed in. I answer Robin's letters and they seem to take all my letter-writing time. If I force him to them, he cannot

write any verse *that* day—and visitors! Everyone who comes to the coast now-a-days comes to Carmel. Edna St. Vincent Millay and her *charming* husband [Eugen Jan Boissevain] were here a day & half. —She is really a dear person. I've heard so many preposterous tales of the life of her particular set in New York that I wasn't prepared for her *quiet* & tender appreciativeness of every beautiful thing. She is tiny with golden hair & eyes and vivid— All one golden day we sat in our courtyard or on the tower or in our cove and talked. —Today ♦ Max Eastman has been with us—another darling person and I had imagined him *all* revolutionary with red banners overhead! Sinclair Lewis & his wife Dorothy Parker¹ have taken a house for a few months. I don't like his Main Streets but he is an amusing clever person with an explosive brilliance that *resounds* throughout the room and keeps one in gales of laughter or heated argument. —Then have you ever heard of *Mable Dodge* the woman with the brilliant salon in “Peter Whiffle” and the woman in Florence [Italy] with another brilliant salon that Muriel Draper tells about in “Music at Midnight”? She has taken a house just close to us & expects D. H. Lawrence & his wife soon for a long visit. An extra-ordinary person, she is with an enormous place in Taos, New Mexico the meeting place of all brilliance of every kind? Ten years ago for a mad whim as everyone thought she took for her third husband a full blood Pueblo Indian ♦ Tony Lujn. Strangely enough it *worked* and he is with her here. Dark & dignified he seldom speaks but is *most* dignified [& sensible when he *does* talk]. We four & Ella Young the Irish folklorist went to a rather swagger dinner party at John O'Shea's the other night and it was ~~extraord~~ extraordinarily amusing to see Tony & Robin—so very different except for their *complete silence* & monumental dignity! Side by side! She is extremely interested in mystical philosophy & eastern religions— —and I gather from her talk that in him she senses a tremendous subconscious force and repose—and certain powerful natural ~~po~~ faculties lost or forgotten by more sophisticated races. — These are just a few of the people who swirl through my days —and with the boys lessons, housework and readings—*always* that— Day after tomorrow I am going with them & the Lincoln Steffenses & Sinclair Lewis up to Los Gatos for the day to the beautiful estate of Charles Erskine Scott Wood ♦ His wife is Sara Bard Field writer of delicate verse (“*The Pale Woman*”) An enchanting pair—

One person we had tea with in London perhaps you would have been interested in —*Virginia Woolf* (& her husband Leonard Woolf. He published *Roan Stallion*, *Tamar*, & *Cawdor* at his Hogarth Press.) You must have read “Orlando”— She is so delicate & sensitive & intellectual— {very fair & pale and *thin*!} They have an old house in Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury The Hogarth Press down below in great stone, vaulted cellars (once for wine in robust days)

Have you read Nicholas Roerich’s *Altai Himalaya*. We just finished it. Marvellous bits of description—and always searching for {traces of} the new Buddha & for the Oriental version of the Christ story. Tonight Robin finished reading aloud Dostoeffsky’s “House of the Dead” this is the fourth of his he has read to the boys.

We liked your nice husband, Edith with his keen, intellectual *trained* face. I wish we could have seen more of him. —I ♦ was at the time suffering (for several hours each day) with an initiated frontal sinus (all right now) but my pleasure in meeting him was not dimmed.

Now I must go to bed—its long after midnight and the boys are to ride horseback at 9:15 in the morning so I must go— I shall add some tomorrow—

A heavy sea pounds at the cliff tonight. —Its devastating to love any spot as much as we do this. We cannot stay away. Today I have a tall spray of asphodel in flower {against the gray wall in courtyard.} (A friend of ours brought the bulbs from Greece —*pale* gray-pink flowers elusive and strange— & I got out to read again that fragment of Vernon Lee’s “Asphodels Enough” —one day the whole sweep of a hill in the Compagna aflower with asphodels—

After all I had no time to write yesterday and now must just get this off as it is. Tuesday morning

My dearest love, Edith
Your ever devoted Una.

ALS. Oregon. 5 pages. Letterhead: The Hawk Tower.

1. Dorothy Thompson, not Dorothy Parker, was married to Sinclair Lewis.

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring
 the savors
 From the bruised nut: a man having bad dreams,
 who invents victims, is only
 the ape of that God.
 He washes it out with tears and many waters,
 calcines it with fire in the
 red crucible,
 Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the
 spirit flies out and stands
 naked, he sees the spirit,
 He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his
 hand, the atom is broken, the
 power that massed it
 cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have
 come home to myself, behold me,
 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 I am I moving the stars that are me."
 --- From "Apology for Bad Dreams."

For Una's Edith Wherry.

Robinson Jeffers.

Tor House, Carmel, California.
 January, 1929.

Robinson Jeffers' inscription for Edith Wherry's copy of *Cawdor*—a passage from *Apology for Bad Dreams*

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Drake. *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism*. Cornell University Press, 2018.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT ZALLER

DISSENTING FROM THE “GOOD WAR”: BEARD, JEFFERS, AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Charles A. Beard was an historian; Robinson Jeffers a poet. They never met or corresponded, and only once referred to each other in print. Yet their paths crossed fatefully in their opposition to World War II, and, although no one has hitherto sought to systematically compare them, their names remain coupled by this to the present day. Perhaps the occasion of Richard Drake’s new study, *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism* (Cornell University Press, 2018), will provide impetus to do so.

Beard (1874-1948) and Jeffers, despite a half-century age difference, emerged from much the same late Victorian world and shared many of the same cultural and intellectual presuppositions. Beard’s earliest mentors were John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, from whom he imbibed a sense of modern industrial society as a machine that leached out all human value, and, in Carlyle’s words, could only be destined to “perish in frantic suicidal dissolution.” Jeffers’ own pessimism derived from Wordsworth and Hardy, but both men felt too the long shadow of Darwin, and with it the waning of traditional religious faith that made the renewal of value a deeply problematic enterprise.

One such source of value would be Marxism, but Marx appealed neither to Beard nor Jeffers, although Jeffers wondered (rather briefly) whether the Bolshevik Revolution might be the herald of a new order. Both men would be, to borrow William Appleman Williams’ description of Beard, ‘Tory Radicals’—men of skeptical temper whose rejection of capitalist society was strong and often as trenchant as that of any committed Marxist. The lack of doctrinal ballast made them prone to inconsistencies and errors,

but it also saved them from misconceiving the Soviet Union as it hardened into a system no less exploitive and even more terroristic than that of the capitalist West. For Beard, human history would be too complex and in some respects too aleatory a field to yield simple causal judgments or reliable projections of the future, while for Jeffers, with his Jeffersonian view of freedom, virtue could only be cultivated, at least on a social level, by democratically dispersed power and individual self-sufficiency. For both men, mass society, under whatever banner it flew, was inimical to a world based on properly human values.

If the appellation ‘Tory’ in some sense suited Beard—one of his late friendships was with Herbert Hoover—he came to what would be his first mature conception of politics through John A. Hobson’s pioneering study, *Imperialism*. For Hobson, foreign conquest was contrived by elites for their own interest and profit, at the expense not only of those subjugated but of the domestic population that paid its costs in blood, treasure, and wages depressed by servile labor from abroad. No Marxist himself, Hobson’s book influenced Lenin’s own study of imperialism. For Beard, it was an intellectual awakening that bore fruit in the work that made his reputation, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913), which described the Constitution as the product of a ruling elite determined to advance its own interests and to chart an expansionist and ultimately imperial path for the new Republic. With one brief period of exception, Beard would hold to this view for the remainder of his career, developing it both as an historian and a public intellectual. It made him an admired although never uncontroversial figure on the left, and, in his middle years, the dean of his profession.

Robinson Jeffers was never a man of the left, despite being praised and courted by it at the height of his own renown. Jeffers did allow that social justice was a rightful goal, skeptical as he was that it would ever truly prevail. In this, his views were congruent with those of Beard, who, influenced by Henry George and the so-called realist Italian school, saw oligarchy as the invariable mechanism of government, whatever forms it took. Neither man could rest content with this as a matter of principle, as Jeffers himself made clear in his 1941 Library of Congress address, “The Poet in a Democracy”; but neither could deny it as a matter of fact.

The first intriguing parallel between Beard and Jeffers, though, can be traced in their reaction to World War I. Ideologically, Beard's embrace of Hobson's anti-imperialism and his own construction of the American polity should have made him see the war as Eugene Debs and Robert La Follette did, as a struggle among European elites in which America had no proper stake. In part prodded by his own Anglophilia and in part by a sudden access of 'realism' in which he took corporate plutocracy as more amenable to reform in Britain and France than Germany, he supported America's entry into the war on behalf of the Allies. This might have been an arguable position, but he then embraced one flatly contradictory to his previous views, namely, Woodrow Wilson's description of the war as a crusade to make the world "safe for democracy." As Beard had written La Follette in 1913, America had never been a democracy, and if this were true in a country notionally founded on popular sovereignty, it was even more so in England and France, the world's leading imperial powers. Democracy could not be made safe for the simple reason that it had never actually existed.

Beard's temporary intellectual lapse ceased with the Treaty of Versailles, and he would later regret it in print. It must be noted too that he resigned his position at Columbia University in support of colleagues who had been dismissed for expressing antiwar dissent. As for Jeffers, he had no such prominent position, and his views on the war can only be inferred from such poems as "The Alpine Christ," in which he portrayed it in terms of a general civilizational crisis and took no sides. When America became a belligerent, however, he was suddenly eager to enlist, and persisted in attempting to do so despite being rejected for a heart murmur. His obsession with the war lingered, however, and caused serious strains in his marriage. Unlike Beard, he offered no explanation of his sentiment, and, again, we are left to construe it only from the evidences of his verse. As he would write in the Prelude to *The Women at Point Sur* (1927):

You are tired and corrupt,
 You kept the beast under till the fountain's poisoned.
 He drips with munge and stinks through the oubliette window.
 The promise-breaker war killed whom it freed
 And none living's the cleaner.

What “promise” the war broke is unspecified, but the “mange” from which it arose is clearly the felt sense of cultural crisis that was its context. The promise it did keep was to ‘free’ in the only manner it could, by killing, at horrific cost and no profit to the living. Nor did the dead lie still; in *The Women at Point Sur* and “Resurrection,” and after World War II in “The Love and the Hate,” revenants of the slain come home to exact justice, thus confounding the idea of war altogether. All Jeffers was left with was the idea of war come home as domestic tragedy, and the conviction that the decline of the West, if not immediate, was nonetheless irreversible.

Jeffers did not rest content with this formulation, however. In “Shine, Perishing Republic,” written in 1923, he lamented the ruin of what had once been the hopes of the American republic, which had in the Great War taken its fatal step toward empire. This had been, perhaps, a fated tragedy, as he suggested in “Woodrow Wilson” (1924), which depicted Wilson as the dupe of an overreaching ideal; it was, in any case, irrevocable. Beard, himself having been seduced by Wilsonian rhetoric, would have nothing to do however with such apologetics. Empire had been built into the fabric of the republic from the beginning; the Great War was not its fateful but its final step; and America, now clearly the successor to the British and French empires, was poised to spread the plutocratic capitalism of its own elites globally. The only question was on what terms the British and the French would accommodate themselves to this, and whether any other power could compete with the world’s new hegemon.

Beard and Jeffers converged more closely as the consequences of Versailles unfolded in the rise of Hitler in the 1930s, and Japan began what Beard saw as a preemptive attempt to defend its own sphere of influence by invading China. Jeffers would still retrospectively celebrate American ideals as an expression of the core Western value of freedom in his “Shine, Republic,” and Beard, in the textbooks coauthored with his wife, Mary, would defend his own version of them as goals that, if yet unrealized, were still a vision of hope. As war loomed in Europe, they were in agreement that America must stay clear of any “kennel” quarrel between the antagonists of the Great War, the failing empires of yesteryear. If the country had had no valid interest in the previous conflict other than the Hobsonian profit of its elites, it had a very positive one for avoiding entanglement in its approaching successor. Whether

one took Jeffers' position that the American version of freedom, however imperfectly achieved, was still a commanding ideal, or Beard's that social justice was a goal that, however unlikely, was never to be abandoned, both men felt that the only result of a new war would be a final devolution into empire whose end was necessarily collapse.

Jeffers and Beard were not alone in their views, even if few fully shared the radical pessimism of their analysis. The vast majority of Americans opposed entry in a new European war, and the Neutrality Acts of 1935-37 dictated a policy of nonintervention. At the same time, both men saw the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt as surreptitiously drawing the country toward war. For Beard, it was the old story of elites expanding profits and consolidating power, compounded by Roosevelt's failure to end the Great Depression: prosperity, as always under capitalism, required periodic war. For Jeffers, it was the trap of empire that, having decimated Europe, would now ensnare America in a second corrupting victory. Both men concentrated particularly on Roosevelt as the catalyst of disaster. Beard saw in him both the ultimate servant of elite power and a politician of genius; Jeffers accentuated what he called his "cripple's power-need" and depicted him as hanging in effigy between the other makers of war.

Once the war had begun, neither man wished for defeat. They could not desire ill for their countrymen in battle, nor could they imagine that America would not be victorious—Jeffers would say later that he never doubted it for a moment. He remained silent for the duration, at least in print, and although Beard continued to publish, he chiefly updated his textbooks and avoided contesting the war. Both men might have withheld their criticism permanently, as did others who had passionately opposed it before Pearl Harbor but now dared not question its success. America had won the war in 1918 but lost the peace; or so the story went. In 1945, it stood alone unshattered among the combatants. This time, it would dictate the peace, and frame a new world order. Who, but for agents from Moscow and perhaps a few worried diplomats, could doubt that this world would be a better place?

Jeffers and Beard were neither Communists nor cynics. They had neither the inevitable victory of socialism nor the verities of balance of power politics to defend. In the triumphalism of the moment, they had nothing to gain and much to lose by denouncing

the war, and especially the architect of its victory. As Drake points out, they would slowly be joined by a camp of scholarly revisionists and, as the Cold War deepened, by political isolationists. But at the moment they spoke they were virtually alone, and each on a pinnacle of eminence, one academic and one literary, that made them instant lightning-rods. Both paid, and still pay, the price.

We have seen how Jeffers came to revile Roosevelt, and he would mock him again in "The Love and the Hate." Beard devoted his last two works, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940* and *President Roosevelt and the Coming of War, 1941: A Study in Appearances and Realities*, to tracing Roosevelt's hand in slowly preparing and eventually forcing the American public into war. If for both men the larger course of events had drawn America into the web of war, Roosevelt emerged as the indispensable political actor who had knit the threads together, at first patiently but then with increasing boldness and finally all-but naked intent. And if Roosevelt had not lived long enough to see final victory, he had left the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and, as Beard had predicted in 1939, "all the wars that [would] follow" the one for which he was then grooming America. There could, indeed, be no talk this time about a war to end all wars, as with the Great War. Rather, World War II would generate a succession of ever-more destructive conflicts. Jeffers thought so too, and in "The Inhumanist," written in 1947, he would be the first writer to depict a third, thermonuclear world war, already imminent in his mind.

Beard's two volumes and Jeffers' 1948 collection, *The Double Axe*, which contained the antiwar poems he had suppressed until then, were treated scathingly by most critics. Beard, already ailing, would die within the year. Jeffers escaped a narrow brush with death at the same time, but he would live until 1962. He published one more collection in his lifetime, the protagonist of whose title poem, a veteran of both world wars, confronts an embodied death that is their final symbol. Politics plays relatively little part in this volume, whose perspective is wider and more detached. The obloquy that had greeted *The Double Axe* subsided into the quieter scorn of neglect and dismissal, and its full text, from whose original edition Jeffers had deleted ten poems after a remonstrance from his publisher, was not made available until 1977. Only then, more than thirty years after the war itself, could Jeffers' fierce and prophetic dissent be appreciated in its full force. Beard's reputation was left

to be defended principally by Mary. It would suffer further from its posthumous association with Harry Elmer Barnes, a Holocaust denier.

As Drake points out, a third major dissent from the emerging Cold war consensus was in preparation that, had it been published, would likely have attracted even more notoriety than Beard or Jeffers did. This was Herbert Hoover's massive study of Roosevelt's foreign policy, *Freedom Betrayed*. Hoover worked on it for many years with his staff, but he refrained from putting it in print, and it was not published until 2011. Drake speculates that Hoover, who had been advised to temper his assault on Roosevelt, ultimately feared for what remained of his own reputation. Beard knew of and supported his project. What he could not do was lend him his own courage. It was left, then, to Beard and Jeffers alone among the major figures in postwar American life to decry what became and remains America's quintessential "good war" as a tragic act of hubris, deceit, and globalized empire-building whose consequences would fatally compromise what had once been the promise of America.

Beard and Jeffers came from different worlds, however much they shared the milieu of the late nineteenth century; their paths crossed only in dissent, not in person. As Drake points out, however, they were nonetheless aware of each other. Jeffers voted to induct Beard into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1946, and the Beards cited Jeffers as one of the most important American poets of the 1930s in their *America in Midpassage*.

Drake's book itself is part of a revival of interest in the anti-interventionist movement that spanned the full spectrum of American politics from the mid-1930s to Pearl Harbor. More broadly, it reflects the long debate on America's proper role in the world that he traces back to John Quincy Adams, and which Beard himself found implicit in the Founding Fathers. In the widest perspective, it must embrace the self-perception of the Puritans themselves as a city on a hill. The question for the country has always been whether that city could serve as a simple beacon to others, or had been charged by Providence to descend from its mount and, welcome or not, spread its light.

The exceptional study Drake has given us restores the most influential American historian of the first half of the twentieth century to his proper place. It is a fine specimen of intellectual biography,

but, more than that, a compelling view of Beard's era with striking vignettes of such half-forgotten figures as Philip Gibbs, Scott Nearing, Smedley Butler, and Gerald Nye. Drake also gives due credit to Beard's wife and close collaborator Mary, who emerges as a fine historian and a critical figure of the period in her own right. For students of Robinson Jeffers, he offers a perspective on one of the most crucial and certainly the most controversial aspect of Jeffers' career. For all of us as citizens, enmeshed as we are in an empire whose wars and costs seem to endlessly proliferate, it recalls two prophets to their place of honor, and suggests the responsibilities we bear and the choices we still must make.

WORK CITED

Jeffers, Robinson. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Tim Hunt, 5 vols., Stanford University Press, 1988-2001.

Robert Zaller. *The Atom To Be Split: New and Selected Essays on Robinson Jeffers*. Tor House Press, 2019.

REVIEWED BY WHITNEY HOTH

Robert Zaller's collection of new and previously published essays, *The Atom To Be Split* (2019), represents a lifework, over thirty years' close engagement with the poetry of Robinson Jeffers in every phase of his career across multiple dimensions. Together with Zaller's earlier studies, *The Cliffs of Solitude* (1983) and *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime* (2012), *The Atom To Be Split* now forms the single largest and most important contribution to Jeffers criticism.

Critical response to Jeffers tends to extremes and is often profoundly personal. To this day, Jeffers remains provocative, an edge case in the tradition of American poetry, resistant to assimilation, his status in the canon unresolved. Noble Laureate Czeslaw Milosz went so far as to suggest it would never be resolved and that Jeffers would remain indefinitely an outlier, irremovable, but for many, fundamentally unacceptable.

Zaller sets himself to change this. He writes as an advocate, defending Jeffers against familiar accusations of fascism, nihilism and misanthropy, providing a comprehensive and circumstantial exposition of the poet's religious and philosophical ideas in the context of his full career, the narratives together with the lyrics, the earliest apprentice poems and the final valedictory fragments. This great mass of articles, written at different times on disparate topics, acquires consistency from Zaller's overriding and passionate desire to rehabilitate the poet's reputation and establish his claim to enduring significance. This criticism is not casual, not even what we might call "academic," it is profoundly invested, written from conviction and seeking to convince.

Appropriately so. For whatever else he may be, Jeffers is an expressly moral poet. Louise Glück even suggests he is "obsessed with morality" (25), adjuring his readers to live according to stringent moral standards explored and dramatized in his narratives, expounded and celebrated in his lyrics. Jeffers demands, and frequently elicits, intense response, often enough negative but also positive, and sufficiently so to keep his memory alive and his work read and discussed for almost a century. Zaller is one of a group of partisan critics in the tradition of Lawrence Clark Powell, William

Everson and Robert Brophy, self-declared admirers of Jeffers whose criticism is grounded in their love of the work and their shared conviction that it is not only beautiful and compelling but morally and philosophically sound, even profoundly needful, representing, as they believe it does, a possible way of living.

Others who appreciate Jeffers' poetry have understandably hoped to move him closer to the mainstream with more conventional critical assessments focused narrowly on textual analysis, genre, influence, relationship to contemporaries, and relevance to current social and political issues. The collections *Robinson Jeffers and a Galaxy of Writers* (1995) and *The Wild that Attracts Us* (2015) are instances of this more institutionally aligned criticism, essentially disinterested responses examining aspects of Jeffers' work in isolation. Zaller has made his contribution to these collections, but he remains a grand synthesizer of much larger ambition.

In the early phase of his career, Zaller's approach to Jeffers was primarily psychocritical. Several essays in this collection reflect it. These are readings of the poems, and notably the poet himself, in terms of a theory of psychogenesis first propounded by the poet William Everson, which Everson eventually termed "The Ordeal of Emergence." According to Everson, and Zaller following Everson, Jeffers traversed a personal Oedipal crisis that transformed him from a minor *fin de siècle* dilettante into a poet of assured originality, the author of *Tamar*. For Zaller, this Oedipal crisis is more than a clinical datum of the poet's private life; it is a constitutive element of Western cultural experience and human being. Zaller's treatment of the Oedipal theme is, to use Freud's own phrase, *metapsychological*, extending individual psychological dynamics to categories of universal experience. The fundamental nature of an Oedipal crisis so understood is the traumatic experience of contingency and derivation, inspiring an unconscious drive to achieve an impossible, unconditioned autonomy, which experience (quotidian or tragic) repeatedly defeats. This traumatic defeat, accepted and integrated, is the precondition of adult cognition, the salutary recognition of final limitation. Rebellious resistance or evasion, exemplified by Tamar's attempt to destroy temporal sequence and become her own origin ("I am the fountain" – CP 1: 63) and Barclay's messianic madness ("I am inexhaustible" – CP 1: 367) represent the flight of psychosis, which Freud, without irony, characterized as heroic but

horribly foredoomed, a form of tragic action which Jeffers' early narratives repeatedly explore.

For Zaller and for Everson, Jeffers' personal Oedipal crisis was mediated through his poetic dramatizations in the early narratives, which achieved a therapeutic resolution for the man and provided a system of metaphoric representation for the poet. Incest, patricide, matricide, castration, the insistent and recurrent themes of so many of Jeffers' narratives are, in Zaller's reading, simultaneously expressions of the poet's personal psychodynamics and vehicles for communicating his achieved philosophical and moral understanding. Thus, for example, incest (the primal Oedipal desire/terror) becomes for Jeffers a metaphor for our disastrous tendency toward mass concentration in burgeoning megacities, an inward-turning mania of self-absorbed mankind, which Jeffers expressly identifies as analogous to infantile regression (CP 4: 418).

Some Jeffers scholars objected to Zaller's approach *in toto*. William H. Nolte wrote a brief dismissive review of *Cliffs of Solitude*, going so far as to say Zaller had denigrated the poet (*Cliffs* 616). Although Zaller has since shifted his critical emphasis away from close reliance on psychoanalytic terminology, it is still an important component of his criticism and requires consideration. There are several ready justifications for his psychocritical approach: (1) Jeffers himself is one of the earliest exponents of Freudian (and Jungian) psychoanalytic explanation in America, as his poems and letters attest, (2) Jeffers' generation, and certainly his creative contemporaries (O'Neill, Faulkner, Dreiser, Fitzgerald), understood their historical experience – the trauma of WWI/the resulting breakdown of patriarchal traditions and Christian morality – largely in Oedipal terms, and (3) the poet's biography almost insists on an Oedipal interpretation: the older, occasionally stern, often remote, clergyman father; the much younger mother of a firstborn son. No one reading the poems, much less the poet's biography, can possibly miss the centrality of Jeffers' father in his life and art, the obvious poignancy and complication of their relationship. Zaller persuasively demonstrates that Oedipal dynamics are manifest in Jeffers' poetry in every stage of his career, forming simultaneously the engine of his imaginative projections, the poems themselves, and the consciously elaborated philosophy they express. For Jeffers, and for Zaller, as for Freud and Jung, the idea of the Oedipal crisis

is both psychological and ontological, a personal experience of a universal archetypal pattern.

Zaller has been at pains to insist his psychoanalytic reading is hermeneutic rather than clinical, but the boundary between man and work, biography and text, frequently blurs. Zaller is much less reliant than Everson was on biographical speculation, but he is not free of it. For a reader, the final test of his approach is whether the poems seem reduced by it or elucidated. Many of the early narratives have the flooded atmosphere of a dream, and a psychoanalytic reading seems especially apposite. The nightmarish complications and horrors of *Tamar* and *The Women at Point Sur* seem deepened rather than trivialized by these readings, and their bewildering repetitions and duplications appear purposive in terms of dreamwork analysis. What might otherwise appear as meaningless excess becomes arrestingly meaningful in terms of such categories as manifest/latent content, displacement, condensation, overdetermination, and representability. The objection that Jeffers' narratives fail to meet naturalistic standards in representing character and motivation is a category error. Robert Brophy interpreted them as myths, Zaller as dreams. Both readings are congruent. Zaller's readings suggest the stakes in these uncanny and sometimes repellant dramas are very high. Vivid dreamscapes not failed realism.

In his psychocritical essays, Zaller is writing in the philosophical-inflected psychoanalytic idiom of Bloom, Kristeva and Lacan. If the premises of this Freudian and post-Freudian psychocriticism are accepted, his readings are compelling instances.

Many of Zaller's essays have, however, a quite different emphasis. Several involve a schematizing, almost taxonomic, approach to narrative reminiscent of the categorizing criticism of Northrop Fry, and like Fry's studies, they are similarly helpful in ordering and organizing a large mass of text. One of the most fruitful of Zaller's many classifications is the distinction between heroes of transgression and heroes of endurance. This distinction appears early in *ATBS* and recurs frequently, gaining significance in repeated explorations until it emerges as a dominant interpretive trope in the later essays. At its simplest level, the distinction functions as a periodization of the Jeffers corpus: heroes of transgression comprise the protagonists of the early narratives (*Tamar*, *California*, and *Barclay*), while heroes of endurance are represented by the middle-

period narrative protagonists (Cawdor, Thurso, Fraser). This division of Jeffers' career, which clearly captures the dramatic shift most scholars note in his work following *The Women at Point Sur*, recalls Arthur B. Coffin's phasal division of Jeffers' career according to changes in his engagement with the influence of Nietzsche, but Zaller's two-part division soon becomes a much richer device for examining Jeffers' developing concept of tragedy, of which transgression and endurance are distinctive but interrelated elements.

Heroes of transgression are heaven-stormers whose aspirations invite and risk annihilating ruin. They willfully exceed human limits in their drive to achieve transformative liberation, attempting impossible appropriations of godlike power, Icarian figures courting destruction and finding it: Tamar destroying herself and her entire family in a final holocaust; California sacrificing her husband and the stallion who kills him in a ritual zoolatry; Barclay drawing his followers and himself into madness and death as he imagines himself a god. Against these apocalyptic transgressors, the heroes of endurance avoid unbridled passion and self-destructive risk. They seek self-sufficiency through self-control and disciplined effort. Tragedy befalls them through a transient surrender to rage or desire, which instead of seeking to overcome and escape, they attempt to embrace and endure: Cawdor kills his son in a jealous rage and blinds himself before submitting to arrest; Fraser kills his brother and finally plunges to his death after a prolonged struggle against madness; Thurso, lashed by a cable he attempts to cut down, left by a father whose memory he despises, lies in crippled ruin but refuses to alleviate pain with opiates. Zaller eventually integrates these differing extremes of tragic experience as related components of tragic existence itself, which he terms the "divine agon," the constitutive alteration of strain and release inherent in all material being, which Jeffers terms God. All human tragic experience is reenactment of this constitutive tragedy of being, the endless recurrence of creation and destruction, which in its totality is simultaneously inflicted and endured.

At this pitch of speculation, transgression and endurance become for Zaller a dialectic pairing representing a dualistic antinomy most fully realized in the figure of Jesus in the drama *Dear Judas* (1929), who is both transgressor seeking identification with godhead and enduring sufferer who voluntarily accepts the trauma of crucifixion. The prototype of all these variations of tragic experience is the

self-torturing God Jeffers most fully develops in *At the Birth of an Age* (1935), but which had been present in his mind since at least *Apology for Bad Dreams* (1926), and almost certainly earlier, perhaps as early as *The Alpine Christ* (1916), if only embryonically. Zaller's dualistic classification of tragic heroes develops in *ATBS* from simple observation of differences in dramatic presentation to an interpretive dialectic embracing Jeffers' conception of tragedy as both genre and as symbolic representation of his inhumanist metaphysics, a materialist theology of universal natural process as universal suffering.

Zaller has always taken Jeffers very seriously as a thinker, crediting him with a consistent and coherent religious/philosophical perspective, explicated in detail throughout *ATBS*. Zaller's approach is to select a set of key passages from various poems to illustrate his grand summary of Jeffers' vision: a world of material process simultaneously beautiful, indifferent, and for human consciousness, painful and annihilating. Reading poems in terms of an extractable message is a striking instance of the heresy of paraphrase defined and condemned by Cleanth Brooks, namely, the idea that a poem is ever anything more than a restricted aesthetic object, the "meaning" of which is only whatever is immediately presented in its internal relationships (192-215). For many contemporary critics, Brooks' heresy is now accepted critical orthodoxy, and Zaller's reconstruction of the Jeffersian doctrine from a selective assemblage of passages from poems widely separated in time and by genre may seem problematic. New Critical practice, institutionalized and naturalized over several decades, has effectively displaced (and all but disallows) the idea of message¹. Such critical strictures, often well below the level of conscious articulation, are still operative institutionally in the English-speaking world. These academic conventions are fading, but poet as preceptor has had few serious academic advocates, not since perhaps the Cornell Browning Society, with the arguable exception of Harold Bloom. Poets themselves are considerably less constrained. James Dickey recognized Jeffers as exemplifying "the poet as prophet, as large-scale philosopher, as doctrine-giver" (187-188), and Milosz is still more emphatic, "... to tell the truth, whatever is written about Jeffers ought to carry the subtitle 'World-view and Poetry'" (*Disclosure* 198).

If message is heresy, Zaller makes the best of it. He is not greatly interested in the close analysis of individual poems in isolation in terms of craft: their interrelations of image, statement and

metrical pattern. His essays include some limited close reading, but it is seldom sustained. Zaller is interested primarily in ideas. He has accepted, perhaps without ever having explicitly stated, that Jeffers is a rhetorical poet, a poet with a doctrinal message who uses language to advance it, a type of the poet which would not be strange to earlier centuries but is to ours. We have generally ceased to believe a poet can be an educator of anything other than sensibility, much less a moralist and philosopher. Jeffers, despite mild demurrals, considered himself both, and Zaller accepts him on these terms. Jeffers' moral/philosophical ambition is one of the reasons he has proven difficult to assimilate. He makes large claims and larger demands. He does not simply present or represent experience, although he often does so with skill and power, he seeks primarily to persuade and to convince. The critic Colin Falck characterized this tendency in Jeffers as "applied poetry" (88), and Nolte expressly, and positively, identified Jeffers as "didactic" (*Didactic* 213). Dismissively, we could say Jeffers preaches.² Zaller accepts this. He is fully aware that we would not be interested in the preaching if it were not conveyed with compelling rhetorical and dramatic power, but much of Zaller's criticism simply assumes this power and proceeds to an assessment of the abstractable message Jeffers is at pains to communicate, the worldview he provocatively called Inhumanism.

Much has been written about Inhumanism, and in the view of some Jeffers scholars more than enough, but Zaller's interpretation is both new and immeasurably more sophisticated than previous treatments. Zaller makes a persuasive case that Jeffers' inhumanism is not anti-human, demonstrating in a thorough review of the complete corpus that the concept includes the value of human participation in the totality of natural process. In Zaller's presentation, Jeffers, far from being a nihilist, insists on the value of the natural world in all its manifestations, of which human being is an integral though subsidiary part. Zaller characterizes Jeffers' speculations as fundamentally "a religious quest" and adds, "such a quest always has humanity as its source" (x). Zaller carries us here toward a humanized Inhumanism, the effect of which is to moderate the appearance of aberrance and misanthropy sometimes ascribed to it, and he extends this rehabilitative reading to the fraught question of Jeffers' political alignments: his unrepentant isolationism and manifest fascination with Hitler.

As to isolationism, Zaller establishes that isolationist sentiment was dominant in the United States before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and that Jeffers is only notable (arguably notorious) for continuing his isolationist stance after the outbreak of hostilities and throughout the war. Zaller finds the motivation for this not in some secretive fifth column sympathy for fascism, but in Jeffers' defiantly impolitic adherence to transhistorical perspectives consistent with his Inhumanist position. Milosz's summary description of Jeffersian pacifism expresses Zaller's position perfectly: "In his mature years it was [Jeffers'] fate to follow from his solitude the massacres of the thirties and forties, and what issued then from his pen was laced with fury and sarcasm. To favor one side against another, when he thought both equally criminal monsters tearing each other to pieces, was, in his eyes, a naïve submission to propaganda" (*Carmel* 228).

We may, if we wish, consider Jeffers' position naïve, or a monstrously mistaken false equivalence, a failure to distinguish America's imperialist ambitions from Nazi savagery, but we cannot reasonably consider it fascist. In the bewildering farrago of fascist ideologies, one defining constant is the primacy of the corporatist state, and Zaller convincingly proves that Jeffers' political orientation is clearly and unambiguously anti-statist, corresponding most closely to the anarchic libertarianism of Thoreau or Jefferson. Jeffers himself said that if fascism were active in the United States, he would fight it (*CL* 2: 812), and almost certainly, had there been an effective fascist regime in the United States in the 1930s, the inhabitants of Tor House would have been high on any list of proscription.

Zaller's exploration of Jeffers' attitude toward Hitler is a more difficult challenge, and readers will have to judge for themselves if Zaller is successful. That Hitler fascinated Jeffers is evident, but Zaller rightly emphasizes that fascination alone does not constitute admiration. Jeffers represented Hitler as a charismatic psychopath, a sick child raging and wailing against destructive powers he helped unleash, but he also sometimes describes him in approbative terms as a tragic genius motivated by patriotism and even good intentions.

What seems certain is Jeffers granted Hitler historical greatness, viewing him much as Hegel and Burckhardt had viewed Napoleon, as a world historical figure embodying forces transcending individual moral motivation and purpose. Jeffers is not alone in this view, but granting historical greatness to Hitler is profoundly

problematic and fraught with difficulties. The German journalist, Joachim Fest, in his popular 1973 biography of Hitler broached the question of Hitler's historical greatness to a storm of controversy, although he was careful beforehand to distinguish the concept of historical greatness from any concept of the good.³ Regardless, the management of historical memory in the case of Hitler is still too volatile and unsettled to admit of any objective assessment. It is, to use one of Jeffers' formulas, "too hot in mind." Zaller forthrightly confronts the disquieting aspects of Jeffers' response to Hitler, but his attempted contextualizations do not fully remove the element of sensational uncertainty still attaching to Jeffers' poems, published and unpublished, about Hitler, in which a tone of condescending irony is sometimes troublingly combined with suggestions of tragic ennoblement.

The final four essays in this collection are the longest and most ambitious. They represent a coda of all the themes present in *ATBS*, a comprehensive summa of the many tendencies of the individual studies. In some of the earlier essays, Zaller explored Jeffers' relationship to his poetic contemporaries, notably Stevens, Neruda, and Milosz. In these essays, and in others related to issues of poetic technique and practice, Zaller works very much within Jeffers' own understanding of the crisis of modernity. He accepts Jeffers' view that modernity represents exhaustion, attenuation, fragmentation and diminishment, and that the modernist project must end in solipsistic hermeticism and despair: to use T. S. Eliot's phrase, "Etiolated, alembicated, /Orotund, tasteless, fantastical, / Monotonous, crotchety, constipated" (307). Zaller's response to the modernist critical dismissal of Jeffers is essentially a Coriolanian "I banish *you*."

These essays covering Jeffers' poetic contemporaries have their interest, but they are not central to Zaller's critical concern. He believes Jeffers is a poet who transcends the self-limiting hesitations of modernity and is successful in reclaiming for poetry, what Jeffers himself described as, "substance and sense, and physical and psychological reality" (*CP* 5: 391). It is this reclaimed sense and substance Zaller most wishes to explore, what poet-critic Dana Gioia called Jeffers' "big, naked, howling ideas" (49).

The titles of the final essays in *ATBS* announce their intention to explore "howling ideas": *Jeffers, Pessimism, and Time*; *Jeffers, Cosmos, and Mind*; *Jeffers and Divinity*, and *Jeffers and the Anthro-*

pocene. The first of these attempts to situate Jeffers in the tradition of pessimist thought, chiefly its revival in the will-philosophy of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries exemplified by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger. Zaller does not, as earlier critics did, attempt to assign Jeffers to one or another of these philosophers as their expositor, as merely a poetic voice for the expression of influence. Rather, he ranks Jeffers as an original and co-rival contributor to the tradition of pessimist speculation. Zaller acknowledges that Jeffers was influenced by his predecessors, but insists his formulations are unique and distinctive. Zaller argues that the defining element in pessimism is a concept of time as recursive: progress is illusory; the future is the past; existence is repetition. This applies to history as it does to the cosmos as it does to the lives of individuals; we are bound to the wheel. We know that Jeffers was conversant with cyclical concepts of history espoused by Vico, Petrie and Spengler, and he embraced quite early a cosmology of continuous regeneration, celebrated in late poems as the endless expansion and contraction of a cosmic heart. Jeffers, like Schopenhauer and like Nietzsche, rejected any concept of progress, eschatological or secular. The universe isn't going anywhere, and neither are we. The strain of creation is interminable, and the fiery violence of his heroes of transgression, and the stony impassivity of his heroes of endurance, enact with differing emphasis this root tragedy of material existence.

Zaller correctly observes that pessimism has been until recently a marginal aspect of philosophical speculation in the West. Bertrand Russell noted Schopenhauer's peculiarity among philosophers since almost all the others, at least since the advent of Christianity, were primarily optimists (*Schopenhauer* 722). Pessimism, long dominant in the religious traditions of the East, and still evident in the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world, returned to Europe with Anquetil-Duperron's 1802-1804 Latin translation of the *Upanishads* from a Persian abridgement, the *Oupnek'hat*, read by Schopenhauer in 1814. Beginning with Schopenhauer, pessimism was reestablished as an alternative to the melioristic optimism regnant in the West before WWI, and Jeffers is in this tradition as Zaller convincingly demonstrates.

Robert Hass has argued that Jeffers is not important as a thinker (147). Certainly, he is not a systematic thinker developing his thought by propositions, but philosophical pessimism deliberately devalues

systemic coherence, believing it evidence of exaggerated reliance on reason, since reason, a useful adjunct of human cognition, is finally inadequate to compass non-human, transhuman reality. Freud's conception of the unconscious owes much to Schopenhauer's idea of the irrational will as the ground of existence, and Jeffers' hypostatized God is another signifier for the unknowable totality that exceeds human reason. Zaller elevates Jeffers to the status of a great and original thinker in this revived tradition of pessimism, and he believes Jeffers' distinctive contribution is a pessimism of affirmation, which radically unlike Schopenhauer's ethical revulsion, accepts the world of being as value and beauty; and contrary to Nietzsche's self-generated Superman, sees human conformity to limit and finitude as wisdom, the *recognition* rather than *experience* of tragic insufficiency. According to Zaller, Jeffers' term for the tragic recognition of transhuman, inhuman magnificence is "beauty," the ego-less admiration of what infinitely exceeds us. The concept is very close to Spinoza's *amor dei intellectualis*, the intellectual love of god, a condition of enlightened rapture and absolute acceptance having no reference to individual interests or advantage. In Jeffers' sparse formula, "it is our privilege and felicity to love God for his beauty, without claiming or expecting love from him. We are not important to him, but he is to us" (CL 2: 365).

This perception of beauty in the transhuman manifestation of elemental being, in both tragic suffering and tragic perception, is the experience of the sublime: in the words of Rilke, "the beginning of terror we are still just able to endure" (151). It promises nothing. Requires nothing. It simply is. For Zaller, Jeffers is the supreme poet of this annihilating sublime who rejects as delusional all political utopianism, any conception of progress, and any escape or refuge from pain, suffering, and death. In this sense, in Nietzsche's formulation, "it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (32). Very early in his career, Jeffers suggested that if we had the strength to overcome "divisions of desire and terror," we should be able to perceive beauty in the "rage of hunger-bitten cities" as readily as in "some girl's breathing who dances alone . . . dreaming of lovers" (CP 1: 6). Jeffers remained true to this conception of the transhuman sublime to the end of his career, inviting us to see the beauty inherent in manifestations of violence ranging from wars to supernovas. The disinterestedness required to achieve this sublime perception derived reinforcement

from the stoic pessimism of nineteenth and twentieth century science: Freud's statement that "the intention that man should be *happy* is not included in the scheme of *Creation*" (27), and Bertrand Russell's assertion that "the importance of man . . . receives no support from a scientific view of the future of the solar system" (*Outline* 82). Zaller locates Jeffers' conception of the sublime in his confrontation with the scientific discoveries of his time, ranging from Hubble's discovery of the extra-galactic position of nebulae to the increasingly inarguable evidences of natural selection.

The penultimate essay in *ATBS* is an extended exploration of Jeffers' conception of God. In *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime*, Zaller established Jeffers' connection to the long history of protestant evangelism in the United States, including his blood relationship to the great Calvinist philosopher/theologian Jonathan Edwards. Jeffers' own father, William Hamilton Jeffers (1838-1914), was a Presbyterian minister and professor of Old Testament theology involved in the late-nineteenth century confrontation between creationist literalism and Darwinian evolution that eventuated in varieties of reformist compromise or intransigent antagonism, as we see to this day. His poet son, despite dramatic self-condemnation as an apostate in such poems as "To His Father," continued his father's work, and the work of Emerson, Thoreau, Dickinson, Whitman, and all those involved in translating and transforming the Puritan heritage of American culture into a new conception of the secular sublime. Jeffers is one of those who helped achieve, in the words of M. H. Abrams,

the secularization of inherited theological ideas and ways of thinking to save traditional concepts, schemes and values which had been based on the relation of the Creator to his creature and creation [by reformulating] them within the prevailing two-term system of subject and object, ego and non-ego, the human mind and consciousness and its transactions with nature. (13)

Zaller echoes Abrams' conception of a secularized theology in his brief summation, "Inhumanism is a neostoicism linked to a non-credal Calvinism" (479). Indeed, it is, but what constitutes this non-credal Calvinism and its God?

For Jeffers, according to Zaller, God is finally a metaphor, but a metaphor that provisionally warrants credence since it expresses the best understanding available to us in the scientific knowledge

of our time. Zaller observes that Jeffers, like Lucretius and Dante, develops his vision of the world and its ultimate meaning based on the most advanced cosmology of his age, and Jeffers posits nothing of his God that contradicts the facts as science states them. He is, as Zaller says, “faithful to what he sees empirically” (449). His speculations exceed the facts but do not contradict them. In this sense, we can grant Jeffers’ conception of God contingent belief because it is *not* absurd, *pace* patristic paradox. As Jeffers insisted, “this is physics . . . as well as religion” (CL 2: 365). Jeffers does not deny the possibility of purpose and design or consciousness to the universe, and he imagines what these might be like according to what we experience, but his intuitions are tentative suggestions tested against the limits of what it is possible to know. His self-tortured God is a metaphorical representation of the possibility that consciousness is an attribute of matter in all its manifestations and that the endless permutations of material substance may involve a consciousness of pain similar to that experienced by human beings, a concept of panpsychism of ancient origin, as the mythological record of mankind attests, but also entertained by modern and contemporary philosophers ranging from Alfred North Whitehead to David Chalmers.⁴

If the universe is conscious, it experiences the violence of unending transformation, but since it is the totality of all that exists, then it necessarily endures the violence it creates, an ouroboros serpent consuming only itself. Jeffers goes yet further, again tentatively, imagining, in the person of his self-tortured God, universal acceptance of transformation and pain as purposive and intended, although both the purpose and the intent necessarily transcend any human scale of value or comprehension. The congruence of this with the essential spirit of Calvinist theology is powerfully expressed in Zaller’s summary: “. . . this world is . . . valorized in and of itself, [and] confronted in terms that admit of no negotiation or complaint. It exists, rather, strictly for and as itself, self-sufficient and, even in the fluxions of its process, final. If it appears indifferent to human concerns, the adjustment is man’s to make, and the flaw, – also part of a larger design – is in himself” (447). Zaller makes the case convincingly, perhaps inarguably, that Jeffers is “Calvinism’s last major poet” (201). Other critics, notably Hass and Everson, have recognized the Calvinist strain in Jeffers,

but it remains to Zaller to have fully appreciated its centrality as the foundation of the inhumanist vision.

The final essay in the collection, "Jeffers and the Anthropocene" brings us to our present moment and raises the question of Jeffers' continuing relevance more than a half century after the posthumous publication of his last volume of verse, *The Beginning and the End* (1963). Zaller considers Jeffers a prophet, and fundamentally agrees with Frederick I. Carpenter that "we look back from the future [Jeffers] prophesied" (87). The scope of our current crisis, a possible species-level event entailed in the concept of the Anthropocene, in which collective human action now alters and possibly disrupts previously transhistorical forces, was envisioned by Jeffers in both of its potential outcomes: environmental catastrophe or total administrative dominance. The first takes the form of mass die-offs, civilizational collapse, and possible planetary extinction; the second, a terminal anthill existence of regimented mass populations sustained by machinery in artificial environments from which all nonhuman referents are excluded. The former represents the intolerable experience of terror: "they'll die faceless in flocks" (CP 3: 441); the latter a condition of diminished puerility decried earlier by Tocqueville and Nietzsche, their denunciations of "petits et vulgaires plaisirs" and "erbärmliches Behagen"⁵ echo in Jeffers' contempt: "They have sold themselves for toys and protection: No, but consider awhile: what else? Men sold for toys" (CP 1: 373). Zaller brings this disturbing vision of an entirely humanized world painfully up-to-date, observing that "the computer and the internet . . . created a global city without walls – and, consequently, without escape" (509). Jeffers' furious catastrophizing of the 1930s and 40s may have appeared fantastic and extreme to his contemporaries but seems increasingly prescient to us.

Zaller notes that accelerating global warming and species extinction would not have surprised Jeffers, although the specifics of both were unknown at the time of his death. Born in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee and dying within months of the world's closest approach to a full thermonuclear exchange, Jeffers extrapolated the exponential growth of our technological power and its misapplication with remarkable foresight: ". . . you children/Not far away down the hawk's-nightmare future: you will see monsters" (CP 3: 120). But it is characteristic of Zaller's criticism that he understands Jeffers' prophetic role as more than simple prediction; Zaller

sees in Jeffers' prophetic power constitutive formation of the reality it anticipates. Jeffers' visionary insight creates the perspective by which we recognize the advent of the future he predicted. The Anthropocene as a scientific description of observable human impacts on the planetary surface is revealed in the Jeffersian worldview as fulfillment of an inherent human proclivity, the species narcissism essential to us and all but inescapable, which unfolds as a predetermined transit from dominance to decline. Individuals may free themselves, conceptually, from the delusional death-drag, but the "dream-led masses" are going "down the dark mountain" (*CP* 2: 515) and the civilizational edifice with them.

Here again the foundational Calvinism of the Jeffersian perspective is evident, for Jeffers arrived in his late work at a secular concept of sin, the idea that mankind harbored an essential flaw inseparable from his capacities that doomed him to destruction. As Zaller makes clear, Jeffers insists this inevitable end is also part of the totality of natural process from which man cannot be separated, and is therefore consistent with the purposiveness of God, the Heraclitean God of endless transformation in which destruction and creation are synonymous. Zaller believes Jeffers offers us the "only value . . . accessible . . . in a despoiled world" (528), the salutary recognition of our insignificance permitting us disinterested knowledge of a supervenient reality "independent of man and his purposes" (495). This is "not counsel for the many" (528), Zaller notes, and remains even for the few, "a state seldom undividedly realized" (504).

Zaller is true to Jeffers, and he is similarly unsparing. Falck has said, "Only someone whose condition exactly mirrored the dark or morbid regions of Jeffers' psyche could embrace his vision in its entirety" (87). Whatever the prerequisites for fully embracing the Jeffersian vision, Zaller possesses them. Those of us who share something of that vision will favor strength as the enabling requirement, and it is in this sense that Zaller is one of Jeffers' strongest critics. He has understood Jeffers, as Jeffers wanted to be understood, better than anyone has before. If Jeffers "gives us courage" (529), as Zaller claims in the final sentences of *ATBS*, it is also true that he requires it, and Milosz is certainly right that some of Jeffers' poems "demand of the reader dedication and strong nerves" (*Disclosure* 197). Everson invoked the concept of "discipleship" to describe his own lifelong dedication to a poet he once described as "intrinsically terrible" (2).

Zaller's sustained attention over decades, and his evident love of the work, bespeak a similar commitment.

The scope of *ATBS* is, finally, encyclopedic, and a fair portion of its content could be organized alphabetically, ranging from Atomic Sublime to Narratology, from Misanthropy to Zooerasty. No review can do more than glance at a few of its major themes and concerns. One of these is the commanding authorial voice that is so important an aspect of Jeffers' poetry. Zaller refers to this vatic speaker, – (borrowing a phrase from Robert Boyers)⁶ –, as the *Sovereign Voice*, the voice dominating many of the lyrics and authorial comments in the narratives. Zaller correctly notes that this voice, imperiously commanding and authoritative, is often profoundly divided. Jeffers frequently conducts a dialogue with and against himself in his poems, a complex interchange of assertion and counter assertion, involving dramatic disclaimers ("Am I a God that I should know?" - CP 3: 402) and self-recriminations ("I hate my verses" - CP 2: 410). The powerful schematic drive of Zaller's criticism sometimes obscures this multi-valent instability of the sovereign voice. His effort to deliver Jeffers from accusations of misanthropy and nihilism leads him to de-emphasize the manifest presence of both in poems where they figure as acknowledged temptations. When strong sympathetic readers like Milosz and Falck see suggestions of nihilism and misanthropy in Jeffers, they are seeing something that is there. Jeffers is finally a poet first and a philosophical moralist second, and his thought embodies contradictions and uncertainties reflecting the divided truth of his experience. Zaller does masterful service in demonstrating that Jeffers' poetic vision cannot be reduced, on any fair and comprehensive reading, to nihilism and misanthropy, but he sometimes overlooks or disregards the extent to which both attitudes exist powerfully expressed and often imperfectly contained in individual poems. Zaller's brief for Jeffers establishes a coherent picture of the poet's highest aspirations and intellectual achievement but is sometimes considerably removed from the conflicted intensities of individual poems. This is a natural consequence of his synoptic vision and organizing ambition.

In praising Everson's pioneering Jeffers studies, Zaller observes, "the strongest – and often the soundest – criticism is based on empathy and intuition" (64). If this was true of Everson, it is also true of Zaller and *ATBS*. This monument to his long study of Jeffers

will remain, with Zaller's other studies, the best guide to both the poet and his poetry for generations to come. Great critics before Zaller – Radcliff Squires, Robert Brophy, William Nolte – have made substantial contributions to Jeffers scholarship, and there will be others to extend and contest Zaller's powerful interpretations for as long as Jeffers is read, which Milosz suggested would be for as long as the English language itself endures (*Disclosure* 198). Zaller is currently our Jeffers scholar *par excellence*, and his work is a permanent contribution to our understanding and appreciation of the poet. After decades of relative neglect, the Jeffers canon and its criticism now has stable foundation. Zaller's critical investigations, Tim Hunt's standard edition of the poems, and James Karman's collection of the poet's letters will remain the three enduring pillars of any future Jeffers scholarship.

ENDNOTES

1. The New Criticism is no longer active as a militant critical ideology but remains pervasively influential, a *habitus* of institutionally-managed reading. Even seemingly antagonistic critical practices often share the same foundational formalism. See "Cleanth Brooks 1906-1994" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd Edition, W.W. Norton & Company, 2010, p. 1213-1217.

2. On the question of didacticism in Jeffers, see Tim Hunt's problematizing discussion in his introduction to *Robinson Jeffers and a Galaxy of Writers: Essays in Honor of William H. Nolte*, edited by William B. Thesing, University of South Carolina Press, 1995.

3. Fest was one of the principals in the West German *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) of the late 1980s, pitting conservative and left-leaning historians against each other over the question of the "uniqueness" of Nazi war crimes. The debate is pertinent to an understanding of Jeffers' own transhistorical perspective on the question of national complicity and responsibility in WWII.

4. Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), *Adventures in Ideas* (1933) and David J. Chalmers (1966 -) "Facing Up to the Problems of Consciousness," *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2 (3), (1995): 200-219. An excellent brief summary of the history and current revival of panpsychism is available from *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* online at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/panpsychism/>.

5. "Small and vulgar pleasures" – Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol II, Part IV: Chapter VI, (1840), and "wretched ease" – Friedrich Nietzsche, "Zarathustra's Prologue," Section 3, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, (1883). Tocqueville and Nietzsche, reacting here to different phases in the nineteenth-century expansion of popular democracy, share a conservative

distrust that democracy reduces governance to the orchestration of mass appetite, the provision of material sufficiency as an end goal of social organization. Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) is the most famous instance of this conservative apprehension, as Thomas Carlyle's "Pig Philosophy" in *Latter-day Pamphlets* (1850) is perhaps the most ferocious. Jeffers' *The Broken Balance* (1929) and *The Trap* (1935) extend this tradition; both poems represent castigations of consumer-society *avant le lettre*. Jeffers' opposition to FDR derives some of its force from a conservative reaction against the materialism of New Deal rhetoric, Keynesian emphasis on consumption as primary and self-justifying, as well as from Jeffers' staunch anti-militarism.

6. Robert Boyer. "A Sovereign Voice." *Modern American Poetry: Essays in Criticism*, edited by Jerome Mazzaro, David McKay Company, 1970.

WORKS CITED

- Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1973.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well Wrought Urn*, Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1947.
- Brophy, Robert J. *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in his Narrative Poems*, Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973.
- Carpenter, Frederic I. "Robinson Jeffers Today: Beyond Good and Beneath Evil." *American Literature*, vol. 49, no. 1, Mar. 1977.
- Coffin, Arthur B. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Inhumanism*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1971.
- Dickey, James. "Robinson Jeffers." *Babel to Byzantium: Poets and Poetry Now*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968.
- Eliot, T. S. "The Triumph of Bullshit." *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917*, edited by Christopher Ricks, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996.
- Everson, William. "Robinson Jeffers' Ordeal of Emergence." *On Writing the Waterbirds And Other Presentations: Collected Forewords and Afterwords, 1935-1981*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1983.
- . *The Excesses of God: Robinson Jeffers as a Religious Figure*, Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Falck, Colin. "Robinson Jeffers: American Romantic?" *Robinson Jeffers and a Galaxy of Writers: Essays in Honor of William H. Nolte*, edited by William B. Thesing, University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- Fest, Joachim C. *Hitler*. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and its Discontents*. Translated by Joan Riviere, The Hogarth Press, 1951.
- Gioia, Dana. "Strong Counsel (*Robinson Jeffers*)." *Can Poetry Matter?* Graywolf Press, 1992.
- Glück, Louise. "Obstinate Humanity." *Poets Teaching Poets: Self and the World*, edited by Gregory Orr and Ellen Bryant Voigt, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

- Hass, Robert. "The Fury of Robinson Jeffers." *What Light Can Do*. Ecco, 2013.
- Jeffers, Robinson. *The Alpine Christ and Other Poems*, edited by William Everson, Cayucos Books, 1974.
- . *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by James Karman, 3 vols., Stanford University Press, 2009-2015.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Tim Hunt, 5 vols., Stanford University Press, 1988-2001.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. "Carmel." *To Begin Where I Am: Selected Essays*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001.
- . "Jeffers: An Attempt at Disclosure." *Beginning With My Streets: Essays and Reflections*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Translated by Shaun Whiteside. Penguin, 2003.
- Nolte, William H. "Robinson Jeffers as Didactic Poet." *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*, edited by James Karman, G. K. Hall & Co., 1990.
- . "The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers." *American Literature*, vol. 56, no. 4, Dec. 1984.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. "Duino Elegies: The First Elegy." *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Translated and edited by Stephen Mitchell, Vintage International/Vintage Books, Random House, 1989.
- Russell, Bertrand. "An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish." *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell 1903-1959*, edited by Robert E. Enger and Lester E. Denonn, Simon and Schuster, 1961.
- . "Schopenhauer." *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge, 1996.
- Tangney, ShaunAnne, editor. *The Wild That Attracts Us: New Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*. University of New Mexico Press, 2015.
- Thesing, William B., editor. *Robinson Jeffers and a Galaxy of Writers: Essays in Honor of William H. Nolte*. University of South Carolina Press, 1995.
- Zaller, Robert. *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime*. Stanford University Press, 2012.
- . *The Atom To Be Split: New and Selected Essays on Robinson Jeffers*. Tor House Press, 2019.
- . *The Cliffs of Solitude: A Reading of Robinson Jeffers*. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jim Baird has been a Jeffers reader since 1959 and a Jeffers scholar since 1974, when Robert Brophy introduced him to the field. He has published articles on the poet in *Jeffers Studies* and other publications. He is past president of the Robinson Jeffers Association. His other scholarly interests include The Blues, the music of Bob Dylan, and military history.

Richard Drake is Professor of History at the University of Montana. He has published several studies in European, notably Italian, history. His main field of study is currently the domestic resistance to the United States' expansion into imperialism and the economic and social changes this stance brought about. He has written a book about a political figure who embodied this resistance, Senator Robert LaFollette. He has recently turned his attention to the historian Charles Beard, who, with his wife Mary, wrote several books challenging imperialistic policies on constitutional and moral grounds. Drake's most recent book is *Charles Austin Beard: The Return of the Master Historian of American Imperialism* (Cornell University Press, 2018).

Whitney Hoth is a graduate of the University of Michigan and studied with Jeffers scholars Radcliffe Squires and Stephen Tonsor. He has presented on Jeffers at the Western Literature Association and is a long-standing member of the Robinson Jeffers Association. He served as Chair of the School of Language and Liberal Studies at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario, Canada from 2004-2010. He is currently serving as Associate Editor of *Jeffers Studies*.

Northern California native *Tim Hunt* is the editor of the Stanford University Press *Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (1988-2001), author of *Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction* (1981/2010) and *The Textuality of Soulwork: Jack Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (2014). He is also an award-winning poet of four collections: *Fault Lines*, *The Tao of Twang*, *Poem's Poems & Other Poems*, and *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*. Educated at Cornell University, Hunt has recently retired from Illinois State University, where he served as Professor

of English. He is a recipient of the RJA's Lawrence Clark Powell Award for distinguished scholarship.

James Karman, Emeritus Professor, Department of English and the Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities at California State University, Chico, has published or edited many books and essays on Robinson Jeffers. He is best known as the compiler and editor of the three-volume *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers, with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers* (2009-2015). He is a recipient of the Lawrence Clark Powell Award for distinguished scholarship.

Robert Zaller is Emeritus Professor of History at Drexel University. He is the author of *The Cliffs of Solitude* (1983) and *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime* (2012). His latest publication is *The Atom To Be Split* (2019), a collection of essays on Robinson Jeffers published by the Tor House Press. He is the most recent recipient of the Lawrence Clark Powell Award for distinguished scholarship.

Jeffers Studies (ISSN 1096-5076) is published annually by the Robinson Jeffers Association.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Jim Baird, Editor, and Whitney Hoth, Associate Editor.

ADVISORY BOARD

Charles Altieri, Albert Gelpi, Dana Gioia, Robert Hass, Mark Jarman, Brenda Jeffers, Lindsay Jeffers, Thomas Lyon, Scott Slovic, Gary Snyder, Diane Wakoski.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & MEMBERSHIPS

A subscription to *Jeffers Studies* is included with Robinson Jeffers Association membership. Annual dues are currently \$10 (Student), \$35 (Regular), \$60 (Sustaining), \$125 (Patron), \$1000 (Lifetime). Institutional subscriptions are \$50. The RJA is a tax-exempt corporation under section 501(c) (3) of the IRS tax code. Dues have a tax deductibility limit of 60%.

ADDRESSES

Jeffers Studies submissions and editorial communications: Jim Baird, email <jbaird@unt.edu>.

RJA membership applications: Charles Rodewald, RJA Treasurer, 5140 Cutty Way, Las Vegas, NV 89130, email <charlier10@mac.com>.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Submit double-spaced, MLA formatted Word files of critical essays, book reviews, short articles, and news items as email attachments. The author's name should appear on the initial page only. All copies are non-returnable. Citation of Jeffers's poetry should be from the *Stanford Collected Poetry*, abbreviated CP. Citation of his and his wife's letters should be from the *Stanford Collected Letters*, if the letter was published there, and abbreviated CL. Formatting should follow the *MLA Handbook*, eighth edition, with parenthetical citations, endnotes, and works cited. Final revisions of accepted articles should be submitted as email attachments.

VOLUME 19
2015/2016