

JEFFERS STUDIES



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EDITOR'S NOTE

With this issue, Whitney Hoth, previously Associate Editor of *Jeffers Studies*, becomes Co-Editor of the journal. We make this change not only in recognition of his editing skills, but in honor of the time and energy he contributes, like the rest of us who love Robinson Jeffers and his work, to keeping the spirit of that artist alive in the world. Another longtime admirer and supporter of Jeffers' work who has contributed to the last three issues of *Jeffers Studies* is Paula Karman, whose thorough checking of content, quotations, and typography speeds the journal to the press. We acknowledge her work by naming her Editorial Assistant.

This issue features new works by four old friends—of each other and of readers of *Jeffers Studies*—back with more to tell us about each of their specialties. We also welcome a new contributor who presents a comparative view of one of Jeffers' most successful works, *Medea*, adapted for the Broadway stage.

Many readers have come to Jeffers through *The Beginning and the End*, the small volume that his biographer, Melba Berry Bennett, assembled from scraps and fragments found after his death. Perhaps the book has had more influence than it deserves because it is his presumed last work and because it is short. It may not deserve such influence because it is unclear how Bennett decided what was a poem. In some cases, fragments which may have been notes were stitched together into what Bennett thought was a poem. Tim Hunt, editor of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, returns to this battlefield with more conclusions about how Bennett made her decisions and how the book should be regarded in the Jeffers canon.

Jim Karman, in company with his wife, Paula, has expanded our knowledge of Robin and Una's world with their edition of the couple's letters. One of the most remarkable features of that work is that every recipient of a letter from one of the Jefferses is identified, and, where possible, a short biography is provided. Some of the

correspondents deserve more than that. Blanche Matthias was one of Una's most interesting friends. In the archive of her papers at the Huntington Library is an account of some of her visits with the Jefferses. Also in the archive is a letter from one of Blanche's friends, Charles Roberts Aldrich, who gives his assessment of Mabel Dodge Luhan, the Jefferses' hostess on their annual visits to New Mexico, and well-known artistic parvenu meddler in the affairs of others. Aldrich warns that Luhan, who fancied herself as an organizer of cultural movements, would try to "vamp" Robin. Her attempts to draw Jeffers into her plans very nearly destroyed Una and Robin's marriage. The Aldrich letter shows that Luhan's reputation as a troublemaker was deserved.

Blanche's account of her relationship with Robin and Una is followed by the story of her life, "Portrait." She was the wife of a successful businessman with whom she travelled the world, visually and spiritually feasting on the various cultures they visited and increasing Blanche's interest in the arts and religion. Those interests blossomed into friendship with the Jefferses and other major figures in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly pioneering women. Blanche grew up and married in Chicago, where she was part of the art and literary scene, publishing poems in literary journals, directing plays, and working as an art critic. Her friends other than the Jefferses were important. Blanche was an early supporter of Georgia O'Keeffe, and knew both the novelist Margery Latimer and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, who introduced Zen Buddhism to the United States. Blanche lived until 1983 and produced memoirs and books of poetry on her own.

Robert Zaller continues his investigation of both the process and the content of Jeffers' poetry with his essay on the archetypal metaphors of "fountain" and "net" as they apply to not only our understanding of that poetry but of Jeffers' basic task in determining exactly what he was trying to describe and identify. Zaller first focuses on Jeffers' repeated use of the word "things" in his early poetry to describe a world of apparently separate and undifferentiated objects which he knows to be a unity, not static, but constantly changing. Our human bodies, senses, and consciousness enable us to experience the world as a welter, but they limit our ability to hold that experience in a larger framework. In Jeffers' view, the physical world is all there is, and that "is" is God. There's a problem—the statement should be "God" because Jeffers has to use conventional

language to describe something indescribable—this very effort reveals the problem which Zaller is probing. Without language, our human perception of the world and our place in it could not be communicated, but the language itself is flawed and incomplete.

To not resolve, but help us with this impasse, Zaller turns to the two archetypal concepts on which he bases his analysis. A fountain is a burst of energy—Jeffers describes the stars Arcturus and Antares as “fountains” not of liquid but of fire—which a human observer sees as one thing, but which is simultaneously a constantly changing aggregate of parts which anyone observing it must recognize as being the many things which make up a grander aggregate. Our recognition of this processive multiplicity reveals the world of “things” as a continuum of interminable transformation we can only call “God.”

The second archetypal metaphor is the net, familiar to Jeffers’ readers as a description of the human condition (“The Purse-Seine”). We are caught in a trap of desire and egocentricity which our super-animal singularity is clever enough to devise, but which our animal nature cannot escape. In this study, Zaller contends that Jeffers uses this construct to show that even God itself cannot escape the cycle of existence, destruction, and renewal. All of existence must be always existent (net), yet always changing (fountain). The fountain contains the net and the net the fountain.

Our new voice belongs to Professor Kathryn Chew of the Department of Classics and Religious Studies at California State University at Long Beach. Her focus is on the imagery Jeffers uses in his version of *Medea*. Drawing on her classical background, Chew describes what features of the actual history of Athens might have been recognized by citizens who attended a performance of Euripides’ version of *Medea* and analyzes that playwright’s imagery. Then she examines Jeffers’ play and finds imagery associated with destructive forces of nature, linking the sorceress with uncontrollable violent power. Perhaps, because Jeffers returns to the original ground of Greek mythology, his version of this story might be considered more Greek than that of Euripides.

Finally, past president of the Robinson Jeffers Association Geneva Gano has written a new book, *The Little Art Colony and US Modernism: Carmel, Provincetown, Taos*, which contains much about Jeffers. This book is reviewed by *Jeffers Studies* co-editor Whitney Hoth with his characteristic thoroughness and survey

of connections with other critical works and literary theories. Gano's first contention is that modernism, often associated with disillusioned artists weighed down with the excesses of industrial society, appeared in other, more bucolic locations such as the three towns she examines. There, another form of modernism took its growth and reaction against contemporary values from interest in nature and other cultures which flourished first in those locales. Jeffers' reputation as modernist, which has been challenged by East Coast grumps, makes better sense if considered from these roots. Gano also contends that Jeffers, as a member of one of those little art colonies, was considerably more politically left than in his later "Forget social justice" years. But that strand of modernism was soured by the same kind of boosterism that infected small towns everywhere in the 1920s. Carmel, which seems to have been designed as a hobbit-like Disneyland for rich aesthetes, turns out to be a place where greed was a major incentive. That must have soured Jeffers, too, as more and more philistines built houses on Carmel Point. Even more sourly, he must have noted that he was the first one there. This book offers evidence that between the wandering student of the pre-World War I days and the angry isolationist of the thirties and forties, there may have been a very different Jeffers.

As this issue was going to press, we learned of the death of Dr. Robert Brophy, Emeritus Professor of English at California State University at Long Beach. Bob Brophy was the dean of Jeffers scholars and critics, and you will learn more about his life and work in the next issue of *Jeffers Studies*. For now, we are trying to adjust to the loss of not only a scholar, but a kind and comforting friend.

THIS ISSUE OF *JEFFERS STUDIES* IS DEDICATED TO
THE MEMORY OF

ROBERT J. BROPHY

FEBRUARY 6, 1928 ~ AUGUST 16, 2021

TIM HUNT

PROBLEMATIC AUTHORITY:
The Beginning and the End as an
 Edition of Robinson Jeffers'
 Last Poems

For most readers of Robinson Jeffers, *The Beginning and the End* (1963) has shaped their sense of his work following *Hungerfield and Other Poems* (1954). Assembled for publication by Jeffers' biographer Melba Berry Bennett, *The Beginning and the End* collects lyrics and brief meditations from Jeffers' last years and includes a number of strong poems, some of which (such as the often anthologized "Vulture") have come to be regarded as part of the core of the Jeffers canon.¹ There is, then, good reason to regard *The Beginning and the End* as one of Jeffers' primary collections and an important episode in his poetic career. If *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924) might be cast as the opening chapter in the story of Jeffers' mature poetry and *Hungerfield* seen as a kind of elegiac conclusion, *The Beginning and the End* is perhaps a summative coda. There is, however, a problem with this organization. While the poems Jeffers wrote following the submission of *Hungerfield* in the spring of 1954 until his death in January 1962 can be rightly viewed as a coda, one that both recapitulates and extends the career, *The Beginning and the End* may not adequately or accurately present this material. In the best of all editorial worlds (if *Candide* were, that is, a textual scholar), a new edition of Jeffers' poetic production from the final nine years of his life would replace *The Beginning and the End*. In the absence of such a new edition (or the prospect of one), we can at least have a clearer understanding of the limitations of *The Beginning and the End* and of some of the difficulties inherent in this material that would complicate shaping a new edition of the last poems that would more accurately convey Jeffers' work in these years.

The textual issues with *The Beginning and the End* are inherent in the material. Although various notes on the manuscripts show that Jeffers clearly intended to publish a final collection, he died before selecting what poems would be included and left much of the material in hard-to-decipher handwritten drafts. A further problem is that the distinction between completed poem, working draft, and fragment is not always clear. And an additional complication is that Jeffers sketched plans for various long poems (narratives and meditative sequences). In some instances, he seems to have come to regard pieces drafted as he tried to develop a long poem as independent poems ("Oysters," for example) while he may have continued to think of other pieces as still a part of an abandoned project. The archive, then, presents three problems: (1) which pieces are actually completed poems as opposed to fragments or units from discarded long projects, (2) how to decipher Jeffers' handwriting (and various cancelations and insertions) to determine what the texts of these poems should be, and (3) what to do with the attempts to develop a final long poem, since these efforts, in spite of their importance to Jeffers and to his hopes for a final collection, exist primarily as notes, sketches, and brief fragments.

The front flap of the dust jacket for *The Beginning and the End* notes that the poems in the collection were assembled "from hand-written manuscripts by his sons and secretary after Jeffers [*sic*] death in 1962." An account of the evidence for how the collection was assembled is included in Volume Five of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (852-58). The evidence indicates that Garth Jeffers was not involved in compiling the collection and that Donnan Jeffers' role was limited to adding the Appendix of three poems ("Animula," "The Shears," and "Birds and Fishes") after the manuscript for the collection had been sent to Random House.² What matters most here is that this evidence on balance indicates that Jeffers was not involved in assembling *The Beginning and the End*. Instead, it indicates that Bennett chose the contents, determined the texts (creating titles for pieces that lacked titles along the way), and arranged the material into four thematic sections, each with a section title. Two features of Bennett's approach are particularly significant. First, she mixed poems that Jeffers had completed (at least in draft) with others that were untitled drafts-in-progress and fragments. There is no way to determine how much this was a matter of Bennett not distinguishing between finished and unfinished work and how much it was a matter of her

wanting to include unfinished pieces because of their intrinsic quality. Second, she decided not to mention or represent Jeffers' attempts at a long poem in these years. There are several plausible reasons for this. To add a note describing this material would have meant describing her role in shaping the collection, calling attention to the collection as her construction rather than Jeffers' own. Nor would it have made sense to include the workings toward any of the long poems because they are so preliminary and unfinished that this would have disrupted the illusion of *The Beginning and the End* as a cohesive collection of fully completed shorter poems. Whatever Bennett's reasoning, her handling of the material led to Jeffers' final primary collection being the only collection other than his first, *Flagons and Apples* (1912), to lack a long narrative poem or verse drama. But it also results in a seemingly authorial collection that presents Jeffers reflecting back across his themes and materials from the perspective of old age and approaching death with a kind of stoic, yet serene and clear-eyed, wisdom. As the regard readers of Jeffers hold for *The Beginning and the End* shows, Bennett clearly constructed a compelling representation of the poetry from these last years of Jeffers' life. But Bennett's version is only one possible version of this material, and her version is not fully accurate to the details of the poems. More significantly, it obscures the provisional nature of many of these final pieces, and (most importantly for an understanding of the nature of Jeffers' work in this period) it fails to convey Jeffers' ambition, in spite of his declining health, to develop a final long poem that would anchor the collection he hoped to complete but never did.

The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas at Austin holds the material Bennett used in compiling *The Beginning and the End*. Even a cursory encounter with these manuscripts underscores the challenges an editor faces in shaping a collection from them. While Jeffers had typed some of the poems, many are handwritten drafts, at times in smudgy pencil. Moreover, Jeffers' handwriting was typically something of a scrawl when he was composing, and it grew even less legible across this period as his health declined. One group of sheets that must have been a stack on his writing desk at one point has a dark stain, apparently from having a glass of red wine spilled on it that soaked down through a group of drafts, further obscuring the writing. There is also the question of overlapping versions as Jeffers attempted various drafts

of related material. And there is the problem of what to do with the sequence of preliminary notes, sketches, and passages for various unwritten narratives and long poems that trace Jeffers' attempts at writing a final long poem but also document his failure to do so. These workings, an array of overlapping and diverging conceptions, underscore Jeffers' commitment to composing a final long poem, even as they reveal his inability to settle on a conception or strategy. They tantalize with what might have been even as they document how little progress he made on any of them.

The nature of this material is such that one could reasonably argue that the only fully adequate and accurate presentation of Jeffers' work in the years following *Hungerfield* is the manuscripts themselves, but the expense of traveling to Austin to access the material coupled with the volume of it, and how difficult it is to decipher, makes this impractical. And even if expense, time, and eye strain were not factors, this approach has another drawback: it casts the reader as primarily an editor of the poems rather than a reader of them, and editing should serve readers and their acts of reading, not become an end in itself. Both practically and conceptually, the archive as edition is not a solution to the puzzle of how to present the work of Jeffers' final years, and this poses the question of how one might construct an edition of this material that would, to the greatest extent possible, present it in readable form, while also adequately conveying the nature of Jeffers' ambitions and productivity as he worked toward the final collection that he was unable to complete. Unfortunately, this is a question that does not yield an answer. Instead, it leads to various possible answers, each partial, each to some degree inadequate. But understanding how this material resists a final, ideal realization can help us better weigh the options for presenting it. Perhaps more importantly, considering the problems inherent in publishing this material can help us better understand the necessarily partial nature of any selection drawn from this archive and the provisional nature of printed, published representations of these manuscripts, factors which should be incorporated in our reading of these poems and this final phase of Jeffers' career.

There have been two editions of Jeffers' work from the years following *Hungerfield*: Bennett's *The Beginning and the End* is one. The section "Last Poems" in Volume Three of *The Collected Poetry*

of *Robinson Jeffers* can be regarded as the other (especially as supplemented by the material in Volume Five). The two reflect different occasions, serve different purposes, and thus differ markedly in how they process the material and present it. Bennett's handling of the material used for *The Beginning and the End* suggests she saw herself as preparing what would function as a typical trade collection for readers wanting to read Jeffers' final poems. Whether the decision to construct a trade collection from the material Jeffers wrote after *Hungerfield* was made by Random House, specified by Donnan Jeffers as what would best serve his father's legacy, or something Bennett determined independently matters little at this point. What matters is how this goal governed not only the selecting and ordering of the pieces, but more importantly, how it dictated that pieces Jeffers had left in untitled working drafts had to be completed for publication by adding titles, choosing between alternate passages, and even deciding what passages should be considered a poem as opposed to a discarded fragment. It is probably the case that Bennett understood what she was doing as primarily a matter of compiling and conveying the work rather than, in a more formal sense, editing it. In any case, it is telling and not accidental that *The Beginning and the End* does not specify Bennett (or anyone else) as the editor, nor does it include a note on the texts. Neither Random House nor (it seems) Bennett thought it necessary to credit her role nor characterize the state of manuscript materials nor delineate the nature or extent of the adjustments she had made to her copy. Conversely, *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* is explicitly a critical edition, where the goal is to present the material as Jeffers left it, which is to say, in its fully authorial form, even when that means preserving manuscript details that reveal that a poem is a work in progress rather than a completed text. Two features point to the basic difference between the two projects. Where Bennett grouped the poems she had chosen thematically and added titles to each of the four sections she had constructed, *The Collected Poetry* attempts to present the poems chronologically. Where Bennett added titles to untitled drafts, *The Collected Poetry* follows the convention of using the poem's initial phrase as its title, which is why, for example, the piece titled "Eager to Be Praised" in *The Beginning and the End* becomes "Goethe, they say, was a great poet" in *The Collected Poetry*. See the Comparison Chart following Works Cited for an explanation of the relationship of the titles in *The Beginning and the End* to those used in *The Collected Poetry*.

Most simply, *The Beginning and the End* presents versions of the late poems in which the manuscripts have been adjusted so that they can be read as if Jeffers completed them for publication, while *The Collected Poetry* presents them in their various stages of completion and incompleteness. The difference in how the material is handled reflects the difference in function. Both approaches serve a purpose; both are legitimate. One optimizes the material for the general reader wanting to experience the poems for pleasure, personal enrichment, and even wisdom. The other better addresses the needs of the critical and scholarly reader whose goal is more a matter of analysis and insight into the creative process.

From this perspective the most significant reservation one might have about *The Beginning and the End* is the way Random House or Bennett, or the two together, characterized the collection as "Collected from" Jeffers' manuscripts rather than indicating that the poems had been selected from and edited from these manuscripts. This erases Bennett's editorial role in shaping the material and the collection. This deprives her of the credit she deserves, while also creating the impression that this process was simply a matter of gathering completed poems that were then set into type rather than a process that involved deciphering manuscripts and constructing, in some cases, "completed" poems from uncompleted manuscript material. "Vulture" provides an example of one of the ways the manuscripts for these late poems force at least some degree of editorial intervention. In *The Beginning and the End* the first word of the seventh line is "Bear," and the sentence in which it occurs reads,

I could see the naked red head between the great wings
Bear downward staring. (62)

The letter that Bennett renders as "r" is, though, plausibly a "k," so that the word in question would be "Beak," and the sentence would read,

I could see the naked red head between the great wings
Beak downward staring. (CP 3: 462)

In the manuscript this detail is open to interpretation; we cannot tell for sure which is the reading Jeffers intended. Contextually, one could construct an argument for either "Bear" or "Beak." "Bear"

suggests an action or motion: the speaker perceives the vulture's head "bear[ing] downward" as the bird stares. "Beak" creates a more unusual sentence and arguably a more static image (The vulture's head is "Beak downward"), and this might incline us toward Bennett's resolution of this detail, but "Beak downward" better anticipates "To be eaten by that beak" (which seemingly echoes and extends "Beak downward") in the penultimate line. To my eye the letter in question seems a "k" rather than "r," and "Beak" rather than "Bear" seems to better fit the context and action of the poem as a whole, but this is only my judgment. The point here is not that Bennett's reading is wrong nor that my alternate reading of this detail from the same document is right. The point is that Jeffers' handwriting in the manuscripts for these late poems is such that some details cannot be determined with assurance and anyone processing these pieces into publishable texts is forced to make interpretive judgments, which can alter, albeit in this instance in a small way, our analysis and appreciation of the poem. While "Bear" instead of "Beak" may not fundamentally change our sense of "Vulture," it is possible that "Beak" (if that is indeed the correct resolution of this uncertain detail) is more immediate and compelling, adding precision to the line, and in a small way enhances the unity of the poem. "Vulture" is not the only poem in *The Beginning and the End* with a problematic detail that stems from the difficulty of deciphering Jeffers' handwriting. In "Nightpiece," Bennett renders the poem's opening sentence as,

If you keep command of yourself
You can hear almost anything. (61)

The third word of the second line may instead be "bear," which makes more sense in the context of the sentence and the poem as a whole. Here, what one transcriber might conclude is a "b" another might conclude is an "h," just as in "Vulture" where one might see an "r" another might see a "k." The unit that Bennett titles "Fierce Music" involves a different sort of possible misreading. In Bennett's transcription, the poem ends:

But weep that we lose so much
Because mere use won't cover up the glory.
We have our moments: but mostly we are too tired to hear and too
dull to see. (57)

In the manuscript the phrase “use won’t” appears instead to read “use and wont.” In *The Beginning and the End*, “mere use” fails to “cover up” the “glory,” which seems at odds with the logic of the poem. While “wont” is a less usual word, it fits the context better: mere “use” and “wont” in combination “cover up” the “glory.”

The point here is not that some details of Bennett’s transcriptions are open to question and possibly in error. Any attempt to transcribe these handwritten drafts in order to render them in print requires resolving uncertain details. While the question of whether a letter is an “r” or a “k” or a “b” or an “h” is a relatively minor matter, Bennett’s adjustments to the manuscripts at times involved more than just resolving unclear details, and these more major changes have implications for *The Beginning and the End* as a portrait of the final phase of Jeffers’ career.

Bennett’s handling of the ending of “Salvage” shows that she at times did more than transcribe the copy. In *The Beginning and the End* the poem ends,

That would make joy in the world, and make men perhaps a little
nobler—as a handful of wildflowers,
Is nobler than the human race. (63)

The manuscript lacks the comma after “wildflowers,” but the more notable adjustment is in the final line where Bennett has, deliberately it seems, chosen to omit “damned” from the phrase “the damned human race.” Why is unclear. Perhaps she felt “damned” distracted attention from the “nobler” and contrasting presence of the “wildflowers.” Perhaps she felt “damned” was unseemly in print. There are two issues here. One is the matter of aesthetic judgment: in the manuscript both wildflowers and the human race are further characterized, one as “nobler,” the other as “damned.” It is not at all clear that Jeffers, having generated this pattern, would have discarded it, had he revised the line (and the evidence indicates that this is Bennett’s editorial adjustment, not Jeffers’ revision). The second issue is that this change indicates that Bennett assumed her authority extended beyond judging unclear details as she transcribed to include providing what apparently seemed to her finishing touches that would improve the poems—perhaps in the belief that Jeffers would have made the changes had he assembled and prepared the final typescripts.

Whether the gain in decorum or possible enhancement of tone by dropping “damned” in the final line of “Salvage” improves the poem aesthetically is open to debate. And the change is still a relatively minor one and probably has little impact on how one reads the poem. Bennett’s handling of other pieces, though, show that she assumed her authority (or her insight into what Jeffers would have done) extended beyond minor adjustments of wording. What appears in *The Beginning and the End* as “The Monstrous Drought,” for instance, is an untitled, seemingly discarded fragment that Jeffers wrote as the possible opening passage for an abandoned narrative. Bennett either misunderstood the nature of the piece (a fragment toward a different, unwritten poem) or seems to have found the unit of description sufficiently arresting that she wanted to use it, deciding to transcribe it, title it, and bring it into print as if it were a completed poem. Her handling of the material from which she constructed “Believe History” shows that the latter may have been the case.

In *The Beginning and the End* “Believe History” reads:

I think we are the ape’s children, but believe history
 We are the Devil’s: the fire-deaths, the flaying alive,
 The blinding with hot iron, the crucifixions, the castrations,
 the famous
 Murder of a King of England by hot iron forced
 Through the anus to burn the bowels, and men outside the ten-
 foot dungeon-wall
 Could hear him howling. Through such violence, such horrors
 We have come and survived time.
 “It came from the Devil and will go to the Devil,”
 The old Norman said.
 But those were the violences
 Of youth. We are not returned to that point.
 These are the grim and weeping horrors of old age. (40)

One issue with her transcription is the word “time” that ends the seventh line. In the manuscript, the sentence ends a word earlier (“We have come and survived”), and “time” is the last word of a crossed-out sentence that at one point followed this line. Why Bennett borrowed a word from a deleted sentence to add to the seventh line is unclear. In Jeffers’ draft, what we have “survived” are the “violences” and “horrors” themselves. In Bennett’s version,

derived from the draft but differing from it, what we have “survived” is “time,” and “time” includes “violences” and “horrors.” Adding “time” slightly mutes the catalogue of details by treating them as subordinate elements to a broader abstract category. As a general matter, Jeffers could have made such a revision, but two factors argue that he did not. The first is simply, most concretely, and definitively that the manuscript shows that the seventh line did not end with the word “time.” The second is that the verse paragraph that follows opens by emphasizing “the violences,” underscoring that “violences” as such, rather than “violences” as an element of “time,” is the focus of the poem. In the case of “Vulture,” whether the problematic word is “Bear” or “Beak” is unclear. In what Bennett titles “Believe History,” it is clear that Jeffers did not intend the seventh line to conclude with “time.”

There is a further (and arguably more serious) issue with Bennett’s construction of “Believe History.” The draft actually ends with the first words of the eleventh line (“Of youth”). Bennett added the period to complete the sentence and then used several phrases that are several inches below where the draft seems to break off for the rest of line 11 and for line 12. The manuscript shows, that is, that Jeffers did not complete this poem. He left it as a fragment. Bennett’s completion of the fragment to construct what she saw as a publishable poem is arguably in the spirit of the draft-in-progress. Also, it is often the case that Jeffers initiated work on a lyric or short meditation by sketching toward the bottom of the page the gesture or recognition or image that would become the poem’s conclusion and then composing the lines that lead to a concluding passage that elaborates the initiating note. The note that Bennett adds to the fragment to complete it may well, then, have been in the spirit of what Jeffers would have composed if he had at some point completed this piece. Or not. At the least it is likely that the second verse paragraph would have been more fully developed and included a catalogue of the “grim and weeping horrors of old age” to parallel the catalogue of the “violences of youth.”

The fragment Bennett completes as “Believe History” is substantial and rich enough that her wanting to include it in *The Beginning and the End* is understandable. The problem is that the text she constructs is not fully Jeffers’ work, even though all the material she uses is present in the manuscript. This example suggests that Bennett believed she was authorized to complete Jeffers’ works-in-

progress and believed her sense of what he would have composed was sufficient for her to infer what he would probably (or at least plausibly) have done had he finished them. In critical editing, the usual goal is to establish what a writer actually wrote. In editing as Bennett approached it, her goal was to establish, when necessary, what Jeffers would have written. In the case of "Believe History," Bennett's construction is arguably an approximation of Jeffers' intentions, even though the second verse paragraph is probably less developed than it would have been had he actually picked the draft back up and completed it. In some other instances, though, Bennett's constructions are more problematic and probably muddle or subvert Jeffers' intentions.

Bennett's construction of the opening poem to *The Beginning and the End*, "The Great Explosion," illustrates this on a larger scale. In spring 1954, Jeffers wrote a poem he titled "Explosion." His notes show that he also considered using it as the initial piece in a sequence that would, next, have used the material Bennett titled "The Beginning and the End." In 1958, Jeffers wrote a shorter poem, "The Great Explosion," that has elements in common with "Explosion." For *The Beginning and the End*, Bennett used the 1958 material for the opening two paragraphs of what she titled "The Great Wound," and then completed the rest of her construction of the 1954 poem, "Explosion," by adding an excerpt from the earlier poem that begins midway through the fourth line of its second verse paragraph. Why Bennett opened her version of "The Great Wound" by using, in its entirety, the briefer and later poem with material grafted to it from the earlier poem is unclear. She may have believed the two drafts were contemporaneous attempts at the same piece and decided to construct a finished poem from the material. She may have understood them as successive attempts at the same piece and believed melding them together would yield a more compelling result. The piece Bennett titles "The Great Wound" is another instance of her combining work from two separate pieces, in this case untitled units that Jeffers may or may not have regarded as completed or as poems in their own right.³ With both "The Great Explosion" and "The Great Wound," Bennett seems to have assumed that fragments with a similar conception or a similar conceit must necessarily have been part of the same poem and should be joined into a single poem, even when this required her to hammer, as it were, a square peg into a round hole.

The material Bennett titles “The Beginning and the End” is another instance where her construction and the manuscript evidence are at odds. Preliminary drafts relating to this unit, which Jeffers left untitled, show that it combined what were originally two separate threads of work: the opening seems to derive from an abandoned narrative, and the later material from a poem titled “The Beauty of Things,” which Jeffers then extended under the title “Anima Mundi.” Additional notes and workings show that he subsequently also considered using this material as Part II of an extended and never developed sequence with “Explosion” as Part I. The preliminary sketches lead to an eleven-page handwritten draft and this leads to a six-page typescript that is the basis for Bennett’s text. Typically, Jeffers typed poems only when he considered them completed. Both the handwritten draft and typescript are heavily revised, and it appears that Jeffers typed the poem not because it was finished but because the layers of revision on the handwritten draft had become so dense that he needed a clean draft in order to continue revising and refining the piece. The typescript, then, is probably best understood as an intermediate draft with the penciled revisions to it recording the point where Jeffers either set the piece aside or decided it was finished (CP 5: 874-87).

The extent of the preliminary material to “The Beginning and the End” combined with the extensive process of revision strongly suggest that Jeffers was deeply invested in this poem, and it is understandable that Bennett not only included it in the collection but used the title she assigned to it for the collection as a whole. However, the text she constructed does not, it seems, accurately convey the poem’s ending. Her resolution of the weave of revisions for the ending seems guided by the assumption or belief or intuition that Jeffers, as he composed the short poems, was primarily working out the expression of a conception that was both fixed and prior to actually composing the poem. In this view (held by many and perhaps having its roots in Romantic poetry), the true poem is the creative apprehension or visionary moment and the subsequent process of expressing this moment in writing is at best an approximation of the original apprehension. From this perspective, inspiration is primary; expression is secondary, and there is little reason to consider the possibility that a writer might clarify—even discover—aspects of the material through the process of composing. This may explain why Bennett was inclined

to treat the workings from which Jeffers shaped the poem's ending as cumulative (a matter of A + B) rather than considering them as alternatives (A or B).

Bennett's ending for the material she titled "The Beginning and End" reads in part:

This is man's mission:
 To find and feel; all animal experience
 Is a part of God's life. He would be balanced and neutral
 As a rock on the shore, but the red sunset-waves
 Of life's passions fling over him. He endures them,
 We endure ours. That ancient wound in the brain
 Has never healed, it hangs wide, it lets in the stars
 Into the animal-stinking ghost-ridden darkness, the human soul.
 The mind of man. . . . (10)

In this passage both God and man (in their different scales of being) experience "life's passions," and both "endure" these passages. God's perspective, however, opens out to the literal and figurative beauty of "red sunset-waves," while the human soul is an "animal-stinking ghost-ridden darkness" and it is an "ancient wound in the brain" (implicitly consciousness) that "lets in the stars."

To complete the poem, Bennett then added six lines that Jeffers developed from this handwritten sketch:

Slowly, perhaps, man may grow into it—
 Or do you think so? This villainous king of beasts, this deformed
 ape? ~~The Greeks made him beautiful~~
~~For a moment of time~~ —He has mind
 And imagination, he might go far,
~~I hope he will die decently. Does any philosopher hope~~
~~more? Hope is for the hopeless.~~
 And die in honor. The hawks are more heroic but man has a
 steeper mind,
 Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light.
 We ought to practice dying: we shall need it. (CP 5: 884-85)

The final version of this passage is the sixth and final page of the typescript and seems to have been typed later than the other five pages which conclude with the original ending. In all, Bennett's ending for "The Beginning and the End" reads:

This is man's mission:
 To find and feel; all animal experience
 Is a part of God's life. He would be balanced and neutral
 As a rock on the shore, but the red sunset-waves
 Of life's passions fling over him. He endures them
 We endure ours. That ancient wound in the brain
 Has never healed, it hangs wide, it lets in the stars
 Into the animal-stinking ghost-ridden darkness, the human soul.
 The mind of man. . . .
 Slowly, perhaps, man may grow into it—
 Do you think so? This villainous king of beasts, this deformed
 ape?—He has mind
 And imagination, he might go far
 And end in honor. The hawks are more heroic but man has a
 steeper mind,
 Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light,
 You may calculate a comet's orbit or the dive of a hawk, not a
 man's mind. (10)

A close reading of this passage, though, reveals two anomalies. The first is the phrase "The mind of man," which trails off into an ellipsis. It neither extends the previous line, which closes with the "soul" rather than the "brain" or "mind," nor leads on into the next line, which features "man." While the fragment could be seen as anticipating "He has mind" several lines later, it has no clear purpose in the argument, and its possible rhetorical purpose or function is vague at best. The other problem is that "mind" functions differently in the final six lines of Bennett's ending than it does in the lines that precede "The mind of man. . . ." Before this fragment, "mind" and "soul" are a contrasting pair: one (though a "wound") "lets in the stars," while the other is "ghost-ridden darkness." In the six lines that follow the fragment, "soul" is no longer a factor, and it is the "mind" itself (man's "steeper mind") that can be either positive ("high peaks of light") or negative ("Huge pits of darkness").

Because the phrasing and tone throughout Bennett's construction of the ending is so recognizably Jeffersian, the way the line "The mind of man" seems not quite integrated into the passage and the difference in logic in the lines preceding and following it are apt to pass unnoticed. But the manuscript evidence suggests that this is an instance of Bennett combining what are actually two alternate endings. As originally typed from the handwritten draft, the poem ends:

Of life's passions fling over him. He endures them.
 We endure ours: that ancient wound in the brain
 Has never healed nor closed. It lets in the stars. (CP 5: 883)

Jeffers then, through a series of revisions, modified and extended the last of these lines to include the "ghost-ridden soul." And for a time that seems to have been the poem's ending.

The curious fragment "The mind of man. . ." seems to belong to yet another stage of Jeffers' work with this material, when he considered using what he terms "Origin of the Moon" (Bennett used some of this material in her construction "The Great Wound") as Part I of a sequence, with "The Beginning and the End" as Part II, and an unspecified unit as Part III. The phrase "The mind of man. . ." seems to have been added specifically as the transition between Part II and whatever would have been Part III, which suggests Part III would have further explored and developed "mind" (CP 5: 884).

The exact sequence of Jeffers' revisions and recastings of the ending of what Bennett titles "The Beginning and the End" cannot be determined with absolute certainty, but the general pattern is clear enough, and it indicates that Jeffers considered using the line "The mind of man. . ." only when he was considering it as part of a sequence. The pattern also indicates that Jeffers intended the final six lines in Bennett's construction to replace, rather than extend, the earlier ending. The evidence, then, indicates that the poem should conclude:

This is man's mission:
 To find and feel; all animal experience
 Is a part of God's life. He would be balanced and neutral
 As a rock on the shore, but the red sunset-waves
 Of life's passions fling over him.
 Slowly, perhaps, man may grow into it—
 Do you think so? This villainous king of beasts, this deformed
 ape?—He has mind
 And imagination, he might go far
 And end in honor. The hawks are more heroic but man has a
 steeper mind,
 Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light,
 You may calculate a comet's orbit or the dive of a hawk, not a
 man's mind. (CP 3: 434)

Or rather, the evidence indicates that this is the ending Jeffers had constructed when he set aside what Bennett titles "The Beginning

and the End.” Because neither the original handwritten draft nor the typescript is titled (and since Jeffers seems to have typed the material in order to keep revising it rather than to record a finished piece), we cannot know whether he considered this material a finished poem or even whether he considered it a “poem” at all, since he may have thought of it only as a unit toward an uncompleted sequence. At best, what we can know is that Bennett’s composite ending obscures the way Jeffers developed two differently inflected conclusions to the material, opted for one over the other, and then set the material aside, expecting either to title it and type it up or to use it as a section in a sequence.

It should be noted, indeed emphasized, that a number of the poems in *The Beginning and the End* are ones that Jeffers clearly intended as poems in their own right, viewed as finished, and are largely free of textual questions or anomalies. It can also be argued that Bennett’s interventions (such as completing fragments and combining related but discrete workings to construct a poem) yield pieces that convey Jeffers’ voice and perspective. Readers of Jeffers have had, that is, good reasons to value this collection of his final work. That said, the collection misrepresents the authority of the texts by failing to provide either a description of Bennett’s role as editor or the principles and procedures that guided her work. And (as the above examples suggest), her constructions involve a number of errors and questionable decisions. At the very least, it is clear that *The Beginning and the End* should not be used for critical reading or analysis. For such work, the documenting of this material in *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* would be a better option. The third and fourth volumes present the completed units as transcribed from the manuscripts, while the fifth volume delineates the manuscript histories, gathers transcriptions of preliminary drafts and related material, and provides sketches of the various narratives and long poems Jeffers projected, in a number of cases initiated, but never developed in this period.

In a sense, the primary texts for this material in *The Collected Poetry* coupled with the supporting material from the fifth volume provide the raw material from which each individual reader can construct Jeffers’ production in the years following *Hungerfield*. Arguably, that is its value but also its limitation. For the general reader wanting to appreciate these poems as poems, *The Collected Poetry* provides too much information and, in effect, asks the reader

to consider textual histories and textual evidence as a preliminary to reading the poems or as follow up to reading the poems. For the general reader, *The Beginning and the End* is a flawed presentation of the material in the archive, while *The Collected Poetry*, though a more accurate presentation, risks overwhelming the reader with a welter of contexts, alternate passages, and variants. There is, then, arguably a need for a new edition of these late poems that would serve the more general reader and replace the now out of print *The Beginning and the End*.

The most obvious approach to replacing *The Beginning and the End* would be to preserve the collection Bennett assembled but correct her texts where they diverge from the manuscript sources. Replacing "Bear" with "Beak" in "Vulture" and deleting the lines from the ending of "The Beginning and the End" that Bennett mistakenly carried into print would, indeed, be a simple matter, as would placing the titles she invented for untitled units in brackets to signal that they have been supplied by the editor. Such corrections would improve the volume. They would not, though, address the more fundamental issues that stem from, and are inherent in, the nature of the material. These include what to do with the poems, such as "The Great Explosion," that Bennett constructed by mixing and matching material from different drafts and fragments and what to do with the thematic groupings that she fashioned and titled as sections. The manuscripts that document Jeffers' production for the final nine years of his career are a *mélange* of pieces in various stages of completion that seem to have been composed for different purposes. Some were intended as short poems. Some were composed as Jeffers worked on or toward undeveloped narratives and sequences, and it is unclear which of these passages he came to regard as independent, short poems and which of them he viewed as discarded or as awaiting further development if he might find a way to continue developing the long project they were written for.

One could argue that the most scrupulous approach to a final collection would be to restrict the contents to those poems that Jeffers clearly viewed as independent, completed lyrics. In such a collection, the authority for publishing the poems and for their textual details would be Jeffers' own. This, however, would yield a much slimmer volume, one that would include, for instance, "The Shears" but not the material Bennett titled "The Beginning and the End." The editorial dilemma, then, is this: for a collection of Jeffers'

late work to be fully authorial (in the sense of presenting the work we can reasonably determine Jeffers would have published in texts that embody only his decisions for the poem's details), the collection would necessarily omit much important work. Conversely, an edition that gathers this work in even a relatively comprehensive form and adequately conveys the status of the material (finished poem, fragment, a passage composed for an abandoned sequence, etc.) and documents the variant readings and alternate passages risks the limitation of *The Collected Poetry*—that of overwhelming the reader with the different configurations and developments of the material. At one extreme, there is the edition as a garden shaded with some carefully pruned trees. At the other extreme, there is the edition as a welter of trees. Neither conveys the forest.

There is, I would suggest, no fully right and adequate answer to the editorial questions posed by Jeffers' work in the years following *Hungerfield*. Instead, there are possible answers in response to different purposes. If the goal is to present the short poems Jeffers most likely viewed as finished, independent pieces, then an edition that would include many, but not all, of the poems Bennett used in *The Beginning and the End* with perhaps several that she set aside. This hypothetical edition would omit the poems she constructed by combining parts of various manuscripts (such as "The Great Wound") and pieces Jeffers may not have viewed as independent poems (such as the unit Bennett titled "The Beginning and the End"). If the goal were to present both clearly finished poems along with the units that seem finished (whether or not Jeffers understood them as separate poems in their own right), one would add in "The Beginning and the End" as well as the units from which Bennett constructed such pieces as "The Great Wound" and "The Great Explosion." Such units would, though, be presented as intact, separate pieces rather than used as sources for composites. The section Last Poems in Volume Three of *The Collected Poetry* illustrates this approach. One downside of this strategy is that it necessarily involves some redundancy, since there is no way to determine, for example, whether Jeffers would have chosen "Explosion" or "The Great Explosion" (or neither) had he himself selected and organized a final collection. This approach does, however, preserve the textual integrity of the manuscripts, and it more clearly documents the alternatives Jeffers considered as he worked at the various conceptions and occasions.

The problem with either of these approaches is that they fail (as does *The Beginning and the End*) to represent Jeffers' attempts to develop a final long poem. This obscures his hope that his final collection would feature a long poem as his prior collections had, and it obscures how some of the shorter pieces from this period are connected to the failed attempts to develop a long poem. Unfortunately, the manuscripts that document Jeffers' repeated attempts at a final long poem are primarily notes sketching various premises and possible lines of reflection for uncompleted meditative sequences, or they are sketches of possible scenes, situations, and characters in narratives. And these workings are too incomplete and too provisional to publish as finished poems or even relatively self-contained fragments.

In *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* these notes and workings, which can for the most part be dated and sequenced, are incorporated into the discussion of the chronology of the late poems (CP 5: 120-36) or included in the textual histories for the material grouped as Last Poems in Volume Three (5: 852-936). This approach allows documenting Jeffers' efforts to compose a final long poem while showing something of how these efforts interwove with his composing of the shorter poems, but its primary function is to support scholarly and critical study. It does not address the question of how one might construct an edition of the last poems that would more accurately represent the short poems and relatively finished pieces than *The Beginning and the End* does, while also presenting the very fragmentary, unfinished work toward a final long poem alongside the shorter pieces so that both would be fully available.

One option would be to present the completed short poems and passages as the body of the collection, followed by an essay that would selectively quote from the notes and sketches for the various long poems in order to characterize the nature and range of the projects and to document their importance to understanding Jeffers' ambition for his final collection. This strategy would allow for reading the completed short poems and completed shorter units (such as the material Bennett used for "The Beginning and the End"), while also providing a fuller sense of the context for the various shorter pieces and a basis for understanding that Jeffers may not have viewed some of the shorter pieces as units toward other projects rather than as poems in their own right.

At the moment there is little likelihood of a new edition of the poetry Jeffers wrote between submitting *Hungerfield* for publication and his death some nine years later. Readers have two choices: *The Beginning and the End* (now out of print but generally available as a used book) or Volume Three of *The Collected Poetry*, perhaps with Volume Five for the supplementary material. Perhaps for the moment all that can be hoped for is that readers of *The Beginning and the End* will consider that the poems in the collection are at times Jeffers' poems and at times Bennett's editorial constructions and that those who wish to study these poems and write about them will understand that the *Beginning and the End*, in spite of the clear presence of Jeffers' voice and the appeal of the poems, is an inadequate and inappropriate source.

NOTES

1. Bennett published two biographies of Jeffers, *Robinson Jeffers and the Sea* (Gelber, Lilienthal, 1936) and *The Stone Mason of Tor House: The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers* (Ward Ritchie Press, 1966).

2. The first printing of *The Beginning and the End* differs from subsequent printings in various details that should, plausibly, have been resolved in the galley and page proofs. It is likely that the proofs were sent to Donnan Jeffers at Tor House rather than to Bennett and that he (lacking Bennett's typescripts) had no basis for correcting what were plausible, but flawed readings. Random House, at Bennett's request, corrected these errors in later printings, and she included an inventory of them in the third issue of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* (December 1963), available online at <https://robinsonjeffersassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/RJN3.pdf>.

3. See "'The Great Wound' and the Problem of Reading *The Beginning and the End*" for a detailed account of how Bennett drew on these separate but related pieces to construct her text. The article appeared originally in the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* and is also available online: www.tahunt.com/robinson-jeffers/.

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COMPARISON CHART

The Beginning and the End
and
The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers

The left column lists the poems by their titles in *The Beginning and the End*. The right column lists the poems by their titles in *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. In *The Collected Poetry*, untitled poems and passages are listed by the opening phrase of the first line in quotation marks. It should also be noted that the section Last Poems in Volume Three of *The Collected Poetry* includes several poems that Bennett overlooked or decided not to include.

SERIES I. *The Root of All Things*

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| The Great Explosion | Explosion & The Great Explosion ¹ |
| The Beginning and the End | "The unformed volcanic earth" |
| The Great Wound | "At the near approach of a star" & "The mathematicians and physics men." ² |
| Passenger Pigeons | Passenger Pigeons |
| Ode to Hengist and Horsa | Ode to Hengist and Horsa |
| Star-Swirls | "The polar ice-caps are melting" |
| Unnatural Powers | "For fifty thousand years" |
| End of the World | End of the World |

SERIES II. *Do You Still Make War?*

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Do You Still Make War? | "I saw a regiment of soldiers" |
| The Epic Stars | The Epic Stars |
| Monument | Monument |
| Prophets | The Urchin ³ |
| To Kill in War Is Not Murder | To Kill in War Is Not Murder |
| How Beautiful It Is | "It flows out of mystery" |
| Birth and Death | Birth and Death |
| The Beautiful Captive | The Beautiful Captive |

SERIES III. *Memoranda*

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Let Them Alone | Let Them Alone |
| To the Story-Tellers | To the Story-Tellers |
| Eager to Be Praised | "Goethe, they say, was a great poet" |

On an Anthology of
Chinese Poems

Tear Life to Pieces
Believe History
Full Moon
The Dog in the Sky
The Monstrous Drought
Oysters
Savagely Individual
The Silent Shepherds
Storm Dance of the Sea Gulls
My Loved Subject
He Is All
Look, How Beautiful

On an Anthology of Chinese Poems

"Eagle and hawk with their great claws"
"I think we are the ape's children"⁴
"Our eyes by day are good enough"
The Dog in the Sky
[not included]⁵
Oysters
"Heavy and yellow with the clay wrack"
"What's the best life"
"The storm blowing up"
"Old age hath clawed me"
"There is no God but God"
"There is this infinite energy"

SERIES IV: *Autobiographical*

Patronymic
Fierce Music
Harder than Granite
Cremation
Granddaughter
Nightpiece
Vulture
Salvage
But I Am Growing Old
and Indolent
Hand
See the Human Figure
My Burial Place
Ghost

Patronymic
"All night long"
"It is a pity the shock-waves"
"It nearly cancels my fear of death"
Granddaughter
Nightpiece
Vulture
Salvage
"I have been warned"
Hand
"As the eye fails"
"I have told you in another poem"
Ghost

APPENDIX: *Three Uncollected Poems*

Animula
The Shears
Birds and Fishes

Animula
The Shears
Birds and Fishes

1. The material Bennett presents as "The Great Explosion" in *The Beginning and the End* combines units from two separate but related pieces: "Explosion" and "The Great Explosion."

2. The material Bennett presents as "The Great Wound" is an amalgam of two untitled pieces: "At the near approach of a star" and "The mathematicians and physics men."

3. Bennett drew the last eleven lines of what she titled "Prophets" from "The Urchin." She drew the first seven lines from this handwritten fragment:

Mantis eim' esthlwn Agonon. (Prophets)
 μαντις εμ' εσθλων χγωνου (from Eschylus and Shelley)

The dynamite craters at Fort Ord where they train soldiers;
 and the howling jet-planes
 Tearing the sky over this quiet countryside, shaking the mountain
 When one of them over-passes the speed of sound;
 The roaring factories these monsters come from; the snoring voice
 of huge Asia
 Waking from sleep; the hidden and deadly struggles for power in
 unholy Russia;
 The metal seeds of unearthly violence stored in neat rows on
 shelves, waiting the day:
 Our prophets forecast an unquiet future.

Jeffers' handwriting means that the phrase in Greek is somewhat conjectural. This rendering of it translates to "I am the prophet of noble struggles." (My thanks to Karen Diller, Washington State University Library for the transcription, transliteration, and translation.)

4. The passage that Bennett titles "Believe History" is an untitled fragment that breaks off mid-phrase. In *The Collected Poetry* it appears in the section Unpublished Poems and Fragments in Volume Four rather than in the section Last Poems in Volume Three.

5. The lines that Bennett titled "The Monstrous Drought" is a fragment and appears to be the opening passage for a narrative that Jeffers abandoned after these five lines:

Little green tree-frogs—they are less than half the size of my thumb—
 Pervade the place with their croaking prophecies.
 What they say is "Rain, rain! Here it is, just at hand,
 Come and make love." Little fools: this
 Is the monstrous drought; it has not rained since last winter and
 now's Christmas again

These lines are included in Volume Five of *The Collected Poetry* in Appendix B that reviews the contents of Jeffers' original collection.

JAMES KARMAN

BLANCHE MATTHIAS

I

Huntington Library Papers

Among the papers of Blanche Matthias at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, there are two documents of interest to Jeffers scholars: a memoir by Blanche that recounts experiences involving Robinson and Una, and a letter to Blanche from her friend Charles Roberts Aldrich.

Blanche's memoir contains ten entries. The first two are undated, but they were probably written in August 1933, when the next four entries were composed. Three entries from 1935 follow, and then one from 1941—and that is all. Why Blanche recorded her thoughts for just a few days out of the many she spent with the Jeffers family is not known, and why she shared these particular experiences is also a mystery. More often than not, Blanche catches Robinson or Una at an “off” moment, when one or the other is tired, sad, or distracted in some way. Since the years 1933 to 1941 span a time of turmoil in Robinson and Una's marriage—rising toward and ebbing from the 1938 breakdown in Taos, New Mexico—first-hand information adds valuable detail to the historical record. Most likely, however, Robinson and Una would have reacted to some of the vignettes as they did to an Ansel Adams photograph of Jeffers included in Jeffers' *Poems*, a book published in 1928 by the Book Club of California. Referring to the book in a letter to Mark Van Doren, Jeffers says, “My wife and I imagine that I don't look like the photograph in it: yet for one moment I must have” (CL 1: 757).

The letter from Charles Roberts Aldrich, written in March 1933, is noteworthy for the portrait it provides of Mabel Dodge Luhan—a dangerous person, in his opinion. Because Blanche was among those who urged Una to stay away from Mabel,¹ she would have appreciated Aldrich's frank description of Mabel's treacherous personality, while also fearing the specific threat that Aldrich so clearly foresaw. Here, too, the events of 1938 cast a long shadow. Both Blanche and Aldrich, it should be noted, saw Mabel from a perspective different from that of most people around her. In possession of fortunes themselves (larger than Mabel's, perhaps), Mabel's money would not have impressed them, and Mabel's behavior, often that of a spoiled rich girl, would have been seen by them as true to a familiar type. Aldrich's letter is also important for the news he provides about mutual friends, such as the artist John O'Shea, and for his passing critique of Carmel's social life, with its round of "senseless, though decorative, parties." Jeffers would have been pleased to know that others shared his opinion of these events, for at the time Aldrich's letter was written, he was becoming increasingly restive over the swelling number of visitors to Carmel, the increase in social activity, and his own diminishing solitude. "Carmel has been such a crossroads lately," Una tells Phoebe Barkan in a letter dated March 30, 1934, "so many people have made Robin difficult" (CL 2: 307).

Both documents are published here for the first time. In each instance, minor typographical errors have been silently corrected. When individuals are referred to by their first or last name, their full name is provided in a footnote. Limited identifying information is furnished for individuals not mentioned in the *Collected Letters*. Part II of this paper, a biographical essay about Blanche titled "A Portrait in Friendships," includes a profile of Aldrich.

Matthias Memoir

Mrs. Russell Matthias
1000 Mason Street
San Francisco, California 94108

Robinson Jeffers' poem, *Prelude*—I think in part the words are: "Imagination the traitor of the mind has taken my solitude and slain it." There is such an undercurrent and overcurrent in this poem—the divine and the devil are at war.

UNDATED

One day in 1921, I was taken to call on the Jefferses. It had been indirectly arranged through letters of introduction which Ralph Fletcher Seymour² had given me. The day was heavy with a misty fog. The eucalyptus trees shuddered restlessly in the sea wind while the cypress which grew closer to the house swayed slightly as though their protection was in no way threatened by sea or wind. We went silently through the gate. My watch said 4:15. The gate wore a sign "Not at home until four." Before we reached the door it opened and there stood Una in a simple gingham dress, greeting us with quick friendly words, her large blue-grey eyes appraising me and my city clothes with no trace of shyness but with a little girl's curiosity and a young woman's interest. My host was an old friend, a neighbor, so I was the exciting newcomer and Una loved excitement and people. At that time her husband's work was beginning to be known, although the callers at Tor House were few in comparison to the later years when the humble and the great came from all over the world. I remember one night in Chicago having A. E. (George Russell) tell me that he must go to California because he wanted more than anything to meet Robinson Jeffers. But on the day I first called the great were not really aware of the Jefferses.

As soon as we were settled beside the fire Una called, "Robin, Robin, they are here," and he came in—tall, handsome, and rather frightening because of his utter detachment. His voice was almost inaudible, which caused Una to say, "Speak up Robin, speak up." But when he spoke her name it was like the sound of a ship's bell drenched in centuries of sunshine.

Before our shy greetings to Robin were over, Una ran into the little kitchen and reappeared with a plate of warm gingerbread, which she had baked for us, and a pot of tea.

She was so beautiful—like a living Botticelli, her long braids wrapped around her little head, her skin as someone has said "like gardenia in texture, and as white," her feet almost too tiny for the work they must do. Whenever she was in the same room Robin's eyes never left her. She was like a magnet to which he willingly clove.

August 8, 1933

We stopped tonight to pick up Una. We were having a dinner party for Jean Charlot.³ Russell⁴ left me in the car and soon returned with Robin leading Haig the dog. Robin looked white and tired with heavy purple rings under his eyes. The dog amused us by putting his front paws on the running board of the car and suddenly seeing himself mirrored in the polished door he forgot everything else in his amazed contemplation. I said, "He is a strange dog, Robin. I never tire of watching him." Robin looked at me in gentle seriousness and said, "Haig sees things here that none of us see. He sees them only here. Sometimes he dashes out of doors, stops suddenly, bristles, barks, and then as though frightened he comes tearing back into the house. Sometimes he seems to be in the center of something, and all around him are the things he sees, the ones we don't see. He circles around as though trying to get through something that surrounds him on every side. He growls and threatens." Just then Haig caught sight of Una coming down the path. He made a run for her and tried to jump on her. Robin held him back. Una had on a black velvet dress trimmed in gold braid—Haig's white hairs would have ruined it. Una said quickly to Robin, "Your dinner is ready in the oven. The boys are back. Goodbye Haig—sweet—precious." Robin lifted Haig up in his arms. We left him standing there with the tall eucalyptus trees at his back.

August 11, 1933

Una came in about noon today, dressed in a blue and white gingham house dress. She looked less tired than she has looked ever since her return from Mabel's.⁵ We gossiped a bit about the Dougherty⁶ dinner party, about John and Mollie.⁷ "Last night," Una said, "I got home from Ellen O'Sullivan's about ten o'clock. Garth had gone to bed but Robin and Donnan were waiting for me. Donnan was making a list of the stones in our house—they are from so many different places and people. When I got home I played the organ for two hours. I knew I should go to bed, but I love playing." I didn't ask if Robin minded.

We spoke of Garth, his love of flowers and the beauty of his eyes. "He is such a dear," Una said, and her eyes filled with tears.

We said goodbye about one o'clock. Una left, only to return again. She said, "I must tell you, I had a letter today from Mabel telling me she had just remade her will. She had to look out for Tony⁸ in the event of her death, and she has left all her papers and unpublished manuscripts to me to do with them as I see fit. Oh dear, think what a task that will be if ever I have to do it. I have always been afraid I might have to do that with Robin's papers if he should die first. You should have heard Robin laugh when I read Mabel's letter. He said they would be much harder to go through than his. You'll have to help me Blanche, if ever I have to do it. In the meanwhile say a prayer each night that Mabel won't die." She turned away quickly, the gingham dress swishing against her really beautiful legs.

August 12, 1933

Russell and I were just getting out of the car in front of our garage when Robin came along, leading their white bulldog. "We're out for exercise," he said. Then he paused and looked at me intently. "I've got pink eye," I said. "Tell Una not to come over. She might catch it. I had the tear-duct opened up this morning and I fainted."⁹ I blurted all this out without in the least intending to do so. Robin's face was changing as I spoke. All the weariness vanished, and in its place was a warm humanness. "What a pity, what a pity," he said, and I knew he meant just that. "Una will want to come. She has just gone to market. It's such a pity." Almost ready to burst into tears I left him standing in the roadway with Haig pulling heavily on the chain.

August 15, 1933

Coming from town this morning we met the Jeffers family, back from a trip to the Big Sur.¹⁰ Haig was with them—such a strange dog. Una said Mrs. Ritschel¹¹ looked in the car yesterday and saw Haig asleep on the back seat. She gave a horrified gasp and asked Una, "Have you a pig for a pet?" Una was insulted. Robin, too, when she told him. It may become a historical fact if Mrs. Ritschel spreads the tale.

Tonight Una came for dinner and afterwards we went to the concert. She liked her drink of Scotch. She said they enjoyed their day. Robin loves the Big Sur country, and is always happy down there. At the concert everyone wanted to talk to Una.

She told me two interesting things tonight. The first was that fourteen years ago today they moved into Tor House. "Fourteen years of beautiful life," she said.

The second was, "When I first knew Robin we were in Los Angeles. The opera season was on. I thought of course everyone must go to the opera. So I made Robin take me. He stayed about 20 minutes, then—looking like a thundercloud—he got up and left."

Also, she said her twin sons didn't enter school until they were ready for the 8th grade. They were schooled at home by Robin and Una. They had no difficulty in being accepted as 8th graders, and were highly complimented by their instructors. Both boys had enough credits so they could graduate at the end of their 3rd year of high school.

Tuesday, September 3 [1935]

Last Saturday night Robin, Una, John and Mollie were here for dinner. Robin was very restless. For the first time he seemed unable to sit quietly. He was very silent and seemed not to wish to look at anyone. I asked, "Robin, are you tired?" He said, "No, not tired, but—" I knew something was wrong.

Today Una came in. She said Robin had been in a terrific mood for over a week. He wants to leave Carmel and go back into the hills where they can be alone. He can't work, and has burned two armsful of manuscripts. Una for once seemed unable to bear the strain. She wept and said, "Not even for Robin can I break up my home and start anew. I am not able to do it."¹²

Robin misses the boys. (The boys had just left for the University.) He seems unable to see ahead. He said to Una, "You are prepared. You have known what it would mean to have them go, but I am suffering because they are not here."¹³

I went home with Una and carried some wine to Robin. He came to the door and out to meet us. He looked more at ease. I think the cloud is lifting. He worked this morning. He looks almost ill though—heavy-eyed.

October 2, 1935

It is four o'clock in the morning.

Una and Robin left at 1:30. The others stayed on until after three. Henri Deering played much of the time. Robin seemed content to stay, but Una wanted to leave. She is worried about Haig who has been sick for several days. Noël's¹⁴ dog, Boniface, has distemper so Una worries about Haig.

We had a discussion at the supper table, Douglas,¹⁵ Robin and me, about whether or not an artist reveals himself in his work. "Do you think Robin reveals himself in his verse?" I asked. "Yes," said Douglas, "Don't you, Robin?" But Robin only laughed that unreal laugh. But he looked straight into my eyes, which was most unusual.

Later on we were upstairs. I passed Robin. He said something to me. I sat down beside him to hear—his voice is so muffled always. "Your dress is so beautiful," he said. "That color is wonderful." He never mentions clothes. But the dress is lovely—a warm, deep grey like Monel metal¹⁶ in its lustre, a heavy satin which clings to the body, sheathing it softly. Again the unusual look in his eyes, and when he left he turned at the top of the stairs to say good-night and there was the unafraid look in his eyes, almost they were free and almost they dared. Dared what I do not know.

October 6, 1935

Una came over to say good-bye about 5:30 this afternoon. We are leaving at daybreak for Los Angeles. Russell brought out a bottle of Bourbon and Una had two small glasses—straight. She's never outwardly affected by strongest, straightest liquor.

Russell was listening to a broadcast. Una and I were sitting on the couch. I told her of our reading some of Robin's new poems after they left us last Wednesday night. Douglas Short read aloud. He wanted to know to whom Robin was speaking when he wrote, "You."

Noël said, "He's writing to Una." I said, "No, not that place." Douglas said, "I think it was to Blanche." Again I said, "No." So I asked Una. She couldn't remember the verse and laughingly asked if I wondered that so often she seemed unfamiliar with Robin's work. She then explained that it wouldn't do for her to come too

close to it. "I must keep up the man and woman part of life for him. It is that he needs and loves. His passion for me is the same terrific thing it was 25 years ago. We have the same tension and strain that we knew then. If I were to treat him as a marvelous being all would be lost. In 24 hours he would begin to slump. I must keep out of his work. I continue to stir his passion as I used to do. It is this he needs. Without it he cannot write."

Later on we went into the library and I got out the copy of *Solstice* and turned to the verse in question.¹⁷ "I'll ask him sometime quite casually to whom it is addressed, and I'll tell you what he says. Sometimes he seems to think there is another one opposite him while he writes. Some people might call it his 'anti-self.'" I asked if she thought Yeats had suggested Robin's present use of swans.¹⁸ "No," she answered, he seldom reads Yeats. I read it and say how wonderful I think it is, and Robin answers, 'Yes.' But he does not read it."

She turned over the pages absently, reading a line here and there. "I am sure I'd be much more thrilled if I didn't have this close contact with Robin, if I didn't know him so well, if we didn't have the thrill and power of passion between us."

Then she kissed me—kissed me four or five times—and she went home, running between the little pine trees down to the path which connects their house with ours. It was very dark and a misty fog hid her from my eyes almost at once. "Wait," I called. "Take a light with you." "I don't need a light," she answered. "This is my land. I know every step of it, every step." I stood listening to her skirts rustling against the trees, and almost saw her open the gate and run into the living room where Robin and Haig would be waiting. I could see Robin's mica-colored eyes deepen as she went to him.

July 1, 1941

Conversation with Una as we drove to see afternoon rehearsal of *Tower Beyond Tragedy*:¹⁹

"I was so *furious* with Robin the other night! If I had had a knife, I'd have killed him. We were invited to have dinner at W's. We were about to start off, ten minutes late, Robin in his dinner coat, when out of a clear sky he said he *wouldn't* go. I was furious . . . furious. I *couldn't* do a thing. He *wouldn't* go and I had to go alone. I was so

mad I went to G's afterward, drank too much and danced a lot . . . didn't get home until four in the morning. I kept wondering all the time just when I had lost control of him? What had I neglected to do? I don't know as yet. Robin said the next day that I had taken his will away to such an extent that I wasn't prepared for his resistance about anything."

Aldrich Letter to Matthias

Charles Roberts Aldrich
Carmel-by-the-Sea
California

The First Day of Spring, 1933.

Dear Blanche:

You would have received numerous messages from me, and from Wilma²⁰ through me, if that attack of flu which hit me just as you were leaving Carmel had not hung on indefinitely and kept me, almost to today, feeling good for nothing. For Wilma and I have thought and spoken of you and Russell very often. We have truly missed you.

Now for the news. The first communication for months from Mima²¹ arrived a couple of days ago—just a brief note telling me that she did not know which of us owed the other a letter (she naturally being the one in arrears) and that, according to Marx, the United States was the country nearest to communism in that capitalism has been carried to its greatest perfection with us. This was postmarked Paris. . . . Olga Fish has had another operation on her breast. She is at home again, and has several Hollywood people staying at the ranch and, for all I know, some trained seals. . . . Mabel and Tony Luhan are occupying the big Stewart house on the Point. You doubtless have read her "Lorenzo in Taos"²² and remember how in it she tells that she used her sex-lure upon poor Lawrence not (as she says) because he meant anything to her in a bodily way, but because she knew that was the way to get inside a man's armor: she did not want him, she writes, as a woman wants a man—all she wanted was his genius. Long before Mabel had brought her lure to Carmel (a

lure perfectly imperceptible to me, I must observe) I had told Una Jeffers that I thought Mabel was the most objectionable of women, the most nearly hateful that it was possible for a woman to be. So of course Una saw to it that Wilma and I were invited there. You can imagine my astonishment at finding Brett with her, the Honorable Dorothy Brett, complete with her battered tin horn for hearing with, the same horn she used to hold between Mabel and Lawrence when Mabel was trying [to] pick Lawrence's mind to shreds and to get him to surrender his soul to her vampire lips, the Brett whose prehensile feet and silly look Mabel had described so ludicrously and viciously. I being a mere man, had somehow assumed that Brett would hate Mabel all her life long. But it seems that she took only one year out to hate her and not speak to her—totally incomprehensible to me. . . . The Lorenzo book is volume eight of Mabel's autobiography. Volume one has just appeared under the title of "Intimate Memories." Certainly Mabel is very much of an artist; and she has a splendid gift for disrobing in public—she surpasses even Casanova, far excels Cellini, and makes Pepys seem like a shy child in comparison. Writing herself completely naked, she achieves a certain dignity in her books; whereas she never lets her friends appear either completely nude or completely clothed, but catches them ridiculously half clad in the silliest postures of private chambers. She loves (to use lawyers' language) to hold people up to hatred, ridicule, and contempt. A totally selfish and heartless woman, the only reason I like her is because I like dangerous people; and she is that. . . . Tony, being an Indian, has a conscious pattern in his life; he fits into the pattern of his race as into a mosaic; his existence is justified, because it is related, is part of a fabric greater than any one man. Mabel, devoid of meaning or function, unrelated, having no inner life of her own (perhaps because she is part of no life greater than her own), has come to rest upon the rock of Tony's solidity. Some people would call it his stolidity. . . . Mabel is here in order to vamp Robinson Jeffers. She had marked him long ago, and the Lorenzo book was part of the stalking of her prey. It is after she gets a firm hold of a victim that she becomes a vampire, sucks out the mind and soul of the man and casts his shell aside; her approach makes one think of a boa constrictor, slow, stealthy, winding herself around coil upon coil until she is ready for the final crushing embrace. But this time she will fail again: Lawrence had to run away from her, for he was soft; but Jeffers is granite. Serpent-

ladies cannot crush him. . . . John O'Shea has a most remarkable exhibit of John O'Shea at the Denny-Watrous Gallery. One unfinished drawing has grace and beauty, and it depicts a dance in Tahiti. All that has to do with civilization is brutal to the point of being demonical. He hates civilization; and the only side of civilization that attracts him is the frankly bestial side of it. One woman's head looks like utter hopeless grief; another expresses enough horror to make one think of a return to consciousness in the tomb; a third is a nude—a lump of malformed soiled tallow. Then there are a dozen "abstractions" expressive (to me) of hatred for the slavery of sex-attraction, perhaps of hatred for woman herself, and of bottled up power without an outlet, and of inner confusion. . . . Either O'Shea will explode some day and depart for less conventional surroundings, or his gift of painting will leave the world of objects. His wife ought to drive him out of their home every now and then, telling him to go to Tahiti or Mexico or Bali for six months, and alone. . . . Wilma and I have been very quiet since you left, chiefly because I felt so useless and depressed, but partly because we both were fed up with senseless, though decorative, parties.

When you and Russell come back we shall emerge again from our shells. We shall be glad indeed to see you. We send you both our love and all good wishes.

As ever,
C. R. A.

P.S. Was I right in advocating Roosevelt?
C.

NOTES

1. See CL 2: 341, for example.
2. Ralph Fletcher Seymour (1876–1966) was a Chicago artist, book illustrator, publisher, and educator. In 1912, Harriet Monroe commissioned Seymour to design the original Pegasus logo for *Poetry* magazine.
3. Jean Charlot (1898–1979), born Louis Henri Jean Charlot in Paris, was a naturalized American artist known primarily for his work as a muralist in the tradition of Diego Rivera and others. Charlot's close association with Edward Weston is recounted in *Weston & Charlot: Art and Friendship* by Lew Andrews. When Charlot was in Carmel, Andrews says, drawing on information found in Charlot's diaries, "there were drives along the coast, afternoons at the beach, and evenings with Lincoln Steffens or with Robinson and Una Jeffers" (114).
4. Russell Matthias, Blanche's husband.
5. Mabel Dodge Luhan.
6. Paul and Paula Dougherty.
7. John and Mollie O'Shea.
8. Tony Luhan, Mabel's husband.
9. Una mentions Blanche's eye condition in an August 29, 1933 letter to Sara Bard Field and Charles Erskine Scott Wood (CL 2: 225–26).
10. The same August 29, 1933 letter includes a description of a family outing to the Big Sur (CL 2: 226).
11. Nora Ritschel, wife of artist William F. Ritschel.
12. Una discusses Jeffers' ongoing restiveness and her own exasperation in letters to Phoebe Barkan dated March 30, 1934 and May 27, 1934 (CL 2: 307, 319).
13. Una refers to the distress caused by the absence of Garth and Donnan in several letters, including ones dated August 26, 1935 to Mabel Dodge Luhan and September 11, 1935 to Melba Berry Bennett (CL 2: 477, 482).
14. Noël Sullivan.
15. Douglas Short.
16. Monel metal is a nickel alloy with a silver sheen, like brushed stainless steel.
17. *Solstice and Other Poems* was published October 1, 1935. The poem in question is probably "What Are Cities For?" which contains, as Una states, an address by Jeffers to his alter-ego: "You have seen through the trick to the beauty."
18. "Love the Wild Swan" appears in *Solstice and Other Poems*, along with "Flight of Swans."
19. Judith Anderson starred in a performance of *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* at the Forest Theater in Carmel, July 2–5, 1941.
20. Wilma Aldrich, Charles's wife.
21. Mima Porter. For biographical information, see Part II, "A Portrait in Friendships."
22. Jeffers' place in Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos* is mentioned in Una's January 13, 1932 letter to Sydney Alberts (CL 2: 55).



Blanche Matthias, Robinson, and Una
Carmel Highlands, California, 1935
Courtesy of Special Collections, Occidental College

II

A Portrait in Friendships

Blanche Hudson (Coates) Matthias was born in Chicago on July 16, 1887 to parents Frank J. Coates (1860–1921) and Victoria (Hudson) Coates (1864–1936). Her father was the president of Jones, Coates & Bailey Lumber Company, a manufacturer of crating stock, pattern lumber, and mill work. Blanche was educated privately and raised in a culture of refinement and affluence.

On July 18, 1906, at age nineteen, Blanche married Russell James Matthias (1883–1974), age twenty-three. A year later, Russell founded the Russell J. Matthias Lumber Company, a Chicago firm that dealt in softwoods and hardwoods coast to coast. According to an article in *Lumber World Review*, Matthias operated the business privately until 1917, when he incorporated and capitalized it for \$500,000—a valuation that would be worth over \$11 million today. This move enabled Matthias to retire from active work in his early thirties and, with Blanche as his lifelong companion, live as a world traveler and gentleman of leisure. The couple visited China, Japan, and the Philippines in 1917, then embarked on an even longer around-the-world adventure in 1919, with extended travels in India and Europe (R. Matthias 64). A year and a half later, in January 1922, Russell and Blanche departed again, this time on a journey through North Africa and the Mediterranean—from Spain and Morocco to Egypt and Turkey, and all the countries between. In the following years, in between regular trips abroad, they resided for lengths of time in luxury hotels—such as the Pierre in Manhattan—or in vacation homes in Carmel, Ojai, and other beautiful places.

As Blanche explored the world with her husband, she also lived an engaged, creative life. In addition to publishing poetry in *All's Well*, *Poetry*, *This Quarter*, *Transition*, and other literary journals (in company with many of the leading figures of the Modernist avant-garde), Blanche directed plays at the Arts Club in Chicago, hosted art gallery openings, and wrote as an art critic for the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* and the *Chicago Evening Post*, covering events not just in Chicago but New York as well. She also did freelance work for *Art & Decoration*, *Opportunity*, and other journals, including, when she was in Carmel for extended periods, the *Carmel Cymbal*. Although Blanche never needed to support herself as a writer, she was much more than an amateur. Her contributions were taken seriously enough to merit a profile in *Intimate Circles: American Women in the Arts* where, in a section about women of Chicago, she is given a place alongside Susan Glaspell, Harriet Monroe, Sara Teasdale, and other notables (Kuhl 126-67).

Blanche states in her memoir that she first met Robinson and Una on a visit to Carmel in 1921. She and Russell returned many times thereafter, staying in hotels or renting homes in the Carmel Highlands or on Carmel Point, near Tor House. One year they purchased a home in the Highlands, but they soon sold it. In a Spring 1928

letter to Hazel Pinkham, Una provides a glimpse of Blanche's lifestyle: "Blanche Matthias that lovely friend of mine has just been staying (husband too) at the Del Monte. They were on their way to Yucatan to inspect the Maya Temple Excavations—may then go to Ang-Kor in Indo-China. They stayed at the Biltmore in L. A. for a month, came out to spend Christmas with her mother there" (CL 1: 728).

During the months Blanche and Russell lived in Carmel, Robinson and Una saw them regularly, and the two women spent considerable time together. When Blanche was away from Carmel, Una stayed in touch, writing nearly two-hundred-fifty letters in the following decades. In Una's first letter to Blanche, written in September 1927, she speaks warmly of time spent together: "I think of you so often these golden autumn days—with love and happiness. Our associations are all happy ones! It is almost a year now since you left Carmel. It has been a busy one for me—and how many things you have seen. I wish I could hear you telling the boys about some of them!" (CL 1: 703). In subsequent letters, Una expresses gratitude for Blanche and Russell's many gifts (including a piece of the Great Wall of China and a stone from the Great Pyramid of Cheops), and offers words of affection and praise: "O Blanche how often I have thought of that exquisite portrait of you in the plaid dress—I agree with Russell that it lacks the *fire* & verve & mischief that so often shines in your face—but there is a lovely quality of yours in it—and the pose is so characteristic of you in a thoughtful or pensive mood" (2: 443); "You are a comfort—always the untiring loving friend wherever & whenever,—beautiful & sweet, and underneath the soft femininity, firm & wise!" (2: 765); "How glad we were to get even a glimpse of you two—loved so many years now. I never had a friend more loyal & firm than you—never a misunderstanding or doubt between us in all these years!" (3: 621).

Of all the presents Blanche gave Una, the one that mattered most was sandalwood perfume. "Dearest Blanche," Una writes March 6, 1930, "This morning the *essence* of all *sandalwood* came and I was between tears & laughter in my delight.—I cannot understand how you remember *everything*—its years since you said so casually you'd get me some next time you were at that perfumers! And whirling around the world you've been since then! Blanche I love you for all you are—and your beautiful poised soul" (CL 1: 920). "How sweet of you to send the Sandalwood," Una writes twenty years later, "I

have here in my drawer the wooden box & in it the bottle that contained the first sandalwood you ever sent me—from Cairo! You have always remembered the things I like!—All these years! Dear Blanche” (3: 657).

While we are accustomed to seeing Blanche as Una’s friend, it is important to turn this around and remember that Una was Blanche’s friend, one of many, in fact. A brief account of some of Blanche’s other relationships—with Georgia O’Keeffe, Margery Latimer, Ruth Fuller Sasaki, Rosalind Rajagopal, Mima Porter, and Charles Rogers Aldrich, for instance—reveals much about her character and personality. Furthermore, some of the peripheral interconnections between one person and another in Blanche’s world often touch Robinson and Una in surprising ways, and reveal aspects of a network of associations that formed the wider milieu in which they lived.

One of Blanche’s most influential newspaper reviews, “Georgia O’Keeffe and the Intimate Gallery: Stieglitz Showing Seven Americans,” published in March 1926, not only helped launch O’Keeffe’s career but cemented a friendship between the two women that began a few years prior to the appearance of the article and lasted for the rest of their lives. Defending O’Keeffe (1887–1986) against the chauvinistic and benighted responses to her work by male critics with “habit-stunted minds,” Blanche celebrates the “profoundly feminine” and “superb naturalness” of O’Keeffe’s art. “Without hesitation,” Blanche proclaims, rightly seeing her friend as a revolutionary figure, “I say that women like O’Keeffe are dangerous” to a world of affairs defined by male hegemony. *En garde*, she warns presciently, “the O’Keeffes are coming” (1, 14).

Because of the importance of this review for O’Keeffe personally, who regarded it as one of the best and most perceptive articles ever written about her, Blanche has a place in virtually every book about the artist. According to most biographers, Blanche initiated the friendship by arranging a meeting through photographer and gallery owner Alfred Stieglitz, O’Keeffe’s lover and future husband. O’Keeffe was aloof at first, put off by Blanche’s “confident worldliness, stylish appearance” and “dark romantic looks,” as Benita Eisler says in *O’Keeffe and Stieglitz: An American Romance* (342)—fearing, perhaps, that Stieglitz might find her attractive. Elsewhere, Blanche is described as a “beautiful, warm, perceptive woman,” radiant with sophistication and glamour. Responding to Blanche’s simplicity and

directness, and feeling her honest affection, O’Keeffe soon let down her guard and surrendered to an enduring heart-to-heart bond.

A capacity for deep friendship—love, actually—was a distinguishing feature of Blanche’s life. It was Blanche, for instance, who, around 1925, introduced O’Keeffe to Margery Latimer (1899–1932), a charismatic student enrolled in a playwriting class at Columbia University. Latimer, a resident of Wisconsin and friend of O’Keeffe’s sister Catherine, was the protégé of Zona Gale, the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for drama. As Latimer’s relationship with Gale grew complicated, she turned to Blanche, who became, according to James P. Roberts in *Famous Wisconsin Authors*, Latimer’s “lifelong friend and advisor” (96). Benita Eisler suggests that Blanche might have been something more: “confidante, patron, and probably lover” (341). While there may have been a physical dimension to their relationship, ardent but sisterly passion is just as likely. Even so, Eisler notes the psychological complexity of the three-sided relationship, arguing that O’Keeffe’s “friendship with Matthias and Latimer set the pattern for [her] intense involvement with women bound to each other” (342).

As a writer given to experimental techniques of storytelling, Latimer was interested in the everyday challenges faced by women as they struggled to find fulfillment in life, and as they sought to find, or perhaps to hold onto, a personal identity amidst the demands of love, marriage, and childcare. Her well-received first novel, *We Are Incredible* (1928), was followed by *Nellie Bloom and Other Stories* (1929), and *This Is My Body* (1930). Through her interest in the teachings of the Greco-Armenian mystic and philosopher George Gurdjieff (an interest shared to some extent by Blanche), Latimer met Jean Toomer, a leader of the Gurdjieff movement in America and the author of *Cane* (1923), an emblematic text of the Harlem Renaissance. The couple married in late October 1931, and made their way to Carmel in the spring of the following year for an extended honeymoon. On March 17, 1932, the *San Francisco Chronicle* published a front-page article with inflammatory headlines: “Negro Spouse of Novelist Stirs Carmel” and “Intelligentsia Divided Over Marriage of White Woman.” Other newspapers carried the story and *Time* magazine featured it in a sneering article titled “Just Americans,” published in its “National Affairs” section under “Races,” where the author questioned if the marriage was legal nationwide. In a June 1932 letter to Mabel Dodge Luhan, Una mentions the Toomers along

with the arrival of the Matthiases, who had leased a home in the Carmel Highlands for several months (CL 2: 103). This was the last time Blanche and Margery saw each other, for Margery died during childbirth three months later in Chicago, still caught in an anti-miscegenation cloud. "Woman Novelist Called By Death," proclaims a headline in the August 18, 1932 issue of the *Los Angeles Times*, followed by two sub-headlines: "Death Ends Romance of Two Races" and "White Wife of J. Toomer, Novelist of Negro Blood, Expires in Childbirth." Latimer's last book, *Guardian Angel and Other Stories*, which includes a story dedicated to Blanche, was published posthumously in 1932.

Another of Blanche's very close friends was Ruth Fuller Sasaki (1892–1967), a major figure in the history of Zen Buddhism in America. Ruth was born in Chicago, educated in private schools, and sent abroad for advanced studies in music, languages (French and German), and European culture. Following her 1917 marriage to Edward Warren Everett, a prominent Chicago attorney twenty years her senior, and the birth of their only child Eleanor a year later, Ruth could have remained content with a conventional life of privilege. A visit to a health spa, however, where instruction in yoga was offered, intensified a developing interest in Eastern philosophy and religion, and prompted Ruth to enroll in classes at the University of Chicago, where she studied Sanskrit and Pali.

A turning point in Ruth's life occurred in 1930 when, during a trip to Japan, D. T. Suzuki taught her the basics of zazen meditation. Drawn ever further along the Buddhist path of life, Ruth studied in Kyoto under Nanshinken Roshi and in New York under Sokei-an Sasaki (Ruth's second husband, following the death of Edward in 1940). Ruth purchased a brownstone in Manhattan that served as the headquarters of Sokei-an's First Zen Institute of America (formerly the Buddhist Society of America), and she built a zendo for Westerners on the grounds of the Daitoku-ji temple complex in Kyoto. Along the way, she became the first American to have a documented experience of *satori* (sudden enlightenment), the first American woman to be ordained a Zen priest, and the first to serve as an abbot of a Japanese temple. Always striving to share what she learned with others, Ruth wrote a number of pamphlets, such as *Zen: A Religion* (1958), *Zen: A Method of Religious Awakening* (1959), and *Rinzai Study for Foreigners in Japan* (1960). She also translated a German academic treatise, *The Development of Chinese Zen*

After the Sixth Patriarch in the Light of Mumonkan (1953) by Heinrich Dumoulin, and with the help of a team of scholars, two classics originally written in medieval Chinese, *The Recorded Sayings of Layman P'ang: A Ninth-Century Zen Classic* (1971) and *The Recorded Sayings of Ch'an Master Lin-Chi Hui-chao of Chen Prefecture* (1975). With Miura Isshu, Ruth published *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen* (1965), a book that was revised and expanded as *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai (Lin-Chi) Zen* (1966). Further illustrating Ruth's formidable language skills is the fact that she spoke fluent Japanese and served as an interpreter when Zen masters addressed Westerners. Her influence on an entire generation of American artists and intellectuals is incalculable, but cultural icons like Gary Snyder, Joseph Campbell, Huston Smith, and Alan Watts are among those who benefited directly from her friendship and patronage. Watts married Ruth's daughter Eleanor in 1937 and the couple's daughter Joan was born the following year. As a mark of her special place in Ruth's family, Blanche was asked to be Joan's godmother.

Ruth's life story is recounted in a number of books, including *Zen Pioneer: The Life & Works of Ruth Fuller Sasaki* by Isabel Stirling, with a foreword by Gary Snyder, and *Zen Odyssey: The Story of Sokei-an, Ruth Fuller Sasaki, and the Birth of Zen in America* by Janica Anderson and Steven Zahavi Schwartz. A poignant record of Ruth's and Blanche's affection for each other is found in the latter book, where the final entries of a chronological survey of Ruth's life refer to Blanche. "There are tears, rising from many different emotions, in my eyes," Ruth wrote to Blanche just before she died, "as I say a last thank you for everything, yes everything!" (337).

As a result of her close relationship with Jiddu Krishnamurti, Blanche also formed a lifelong friendship with Rosalind Rajagopal (1903–1996), the wife of Desikacharya Rajagopal (usually referred to as D. Rajagopal), Krishnamurti's most trusted adviser, editor, and spiritual brother-in-arms. As Rosalind's daughter Radha Rajagopal Sloss tells the story in *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti*, Blanche "had a very special place in our lives for over fifty years." Blanche, she adds, "was a fine poet, an art critic, and had a great talent for bringing together good combinations of people. She extended her warmth and generosity to three generations of our family." Sloss explains further that "Blanche had been introduced to Krinsh [Sloss's affectionate name for Krishnamurti] before I

was born by Mima Porter, the eldest de Manziarly sister, who was now the widow of an American” and that “it was Blanche who initiated a series of summers in Carmel,” where she introduced Krishnamurti and the Rajagopals to Robinson and Una and others (see CL 2 for multiple references). Blanche may not have known that Krishnamurti and Sloss’s mother were lovers at the time and that their idylls in Carmel were electric with romance. On one vacation, when Rosalind and Krishnamurti had adjacent rooms, “each with its own little balcony,” at the Peter Pan Lodge in the Carmel Highlands, Krishnamurti “would take the tremendous risk of jumping Errol Flynn style between the two to come into her room at night.” “Vivid memories of Carmel still linger,” Sloss concludes, “our world then seemed flooded with joy and gentleness—and love” (129–31).

Mima Porter (1897–1988), the person who introduced Blanche to Krishnamurti, was, like Ruth Sasaki, another friend from Chicago. Born Germaine de Manziarly in Russia, Mima was the daughter of Etienne Manziarly de Dellinestye (later shortened to de Manziarly), a French mine owner, engineer, and entrepreneur, and Irma Luther de Manziarly, a Russian writer, translator, and official with the Order of the Star of the East, the organization established by Annie Besant’s Theosophical Society to prepare the way for Krishnamurti’s apotheosis as World Teacher. Writing as Mme. I. de Manziarly, Irma was the translator (from Russian to French) of *La Théorie de la connaissance et la logique chez les Bouddhistes tardifs*, a major academic study by Fedor I. Shcherbatsky (1926), and the author of a memoir titled *Pérégrinations Asiatiques: Palestine, Syrie, Mesopotamie, Ceylan* (1935). Mima’s brother Alexandre was a World War I hero, a chevalier of the *Légion d’honneur*, and an influential French diplomat. Her sister Marcelle studied with Nadia Boulanger and became a noted musician and composer. Another sister, Yolande, was a music educator. When Krishnamurti lived in Paris after World War I, Irma was his host and tutor, while Marcelle and Yolande were two of his closest companions.

Mima was then living in Chicago, under the care and sponsorship of a society matron, and this is where she met Blanche and other members of the Chicago elite, including George F. Porter, whose father built the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad and Dearborn Station. When Mima traveled to India in 1925 to meet her family at a gathering of the Theosophy Society in honor of Krishnamurti, Porter followed her there and persuaded her to marry him. While

not first and foremost a follower of Theosophy, Porter understood the importance of spiritual quest and the need to find fulfillment in life. He himself was an ardent student and patron of Carl G. Jung—one of a circle of wealthy Chicagoans, in fact, who literally brought Jung to America. It was Porter who arranged, paid for, and accompanied Jung on his important 1925 visit to the southwest, where Jung visited Taos and spoke with Native American leaders. Traveling with Porter and also serving as a host on the trip was Fowler McCormick, a close friend, fellow Chicagoan, and Jung devotee. McCormick was the scion of one of the richest families in America—heir to the International Harvester fortune on his father's side, and grandson to John D. Rockefeller on his mother's. McCormick's mother Edith spent over eight years in therapy and study with Jung at a crucial moment in Jung's career—just after his 1913 break with Freud—and she became not only one of Jung's most generous supporters but a lay Jungian analyst as well.

For the southwest journey, Porter arranged to have Jaime de Angulo meet his party in Taos, where Jaime, a Big Sur resident and friend of Robinson and Una, acted as an interpreter and guide. Another person who joined the group was Chauncey Goodrich, also a friend of Robinson and Una, and a Jung devotee (*CL* 2: 157). For more information about the trip, see "Jung in America, 1924–1925" by William McGuire. Goodrich and Porter, it should be noted, were friends from Yale University, along with Charles Roberts Aldrich and two of Fowler McCormick's cousins—Medill McCormick, who served in the U. S. Senate, and Robert McCormick, who edited and published the *Chicago Tribune*. Porter returned to Chicago after the southwest trip and resumed his life with Mima, but a lingering case of depression coupled with a neck injury drove him to suicide in 1927. Mima inherited his fortune, moved to Ojai, California, and never remarried. It is likely that Mima was introduced to Robinson and Una in Carmel, as a member of the party that vacationed there with Krishnamurti and the Rajagopal family. When Blanche and Una planned a private reception in New York to follow Jeffers' 1941 reading at Columbia University, Mima was included on the guest list (*CL* 3: 72n2).

Blanche and Mima's friend Charles Roberts Aldrich (1877–1933), born Charles Henry Aldrich, Jr. in Fort Wayne, Indiana, was the son of Charles and Helen (Roberts) Aldrich. His father was appointed Solicitor General under President Benjamin Harrison (1889–1893)

before establishing an influential law practice in Chicago, where young Aldrich was raised. “Kid” Aldrich, as he was called, attended Philips Academy and graduated from Yale University in 1903, where he and George Porter were fraternity brothers. With Lucian Swift Kirtland, another Yale classmate, Aldrich co-edited *Thomas Deloney: His Thomas of Reading and Three Ballads on the Spanish Armada* (1903). Aldrich earned a law degree at George Washington University and practiced in Chicago, New York, and Constantinople—privately and with the U. S. Department of Justice. From 1922 to 1928, Aldrich was in Zurich, studying analytical psychology with Carl Jung; he was thus a member of the elite group of wealthy Chicagoans, led by George Porter and members of the McCormick family, who found personal value in Jung’s teachings and who sought to share his ideas with others.

When Jung returned to Zurich after his 1925 sojourn in the American Southwest, he initiated a series of teaching and discussion seminars. About twenty-five students participated, including Aldrich and Cary Baynes, Jaime de Angulo’s former wife. Transcripts of the lectures were eventually published in Jung’s *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1925*. In his introduction to the volume, McGuire describes Aldrich as “an intellectual of more than usual sophistication.” He says further that Aldrich “helped Jung revise the English text of lectures he delivered in London during the spring of 1924” and that “when Aldrich left Zurich to return home to California, he gave Jung his dog, Joggi, who was Jung’s familiar for years afterward and had his place in the consulting room” (ix).

Returning home to California meant returning to Carmel, where Aldrich had lived for a time in the days of George Sterling. In 1931, he and his wife Wilma (Filomena Baronin von Werdt Aldrich, 1880–1952), built a cabin they named “The Thunderbird” in Big Sur’s remote Palo Colorado Canyon. In the same year, Aldrich published a book titled *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization*. With an introduction by Bronislaw Malinowski and a foreword by C. G. Jung, the book enjoyed considerable success—enough so that it was reprinted several times in subsequent years, most recently by Routledge in 2014. In addition to acknowledging George Porter in his preface (along with Fowler McCormick and others), Aldrich dedicated his book to him.

Aldrich was working on a second book in 1933 when he began to experience premonitions of his own impending death. Alternately

depressed about his imminent demise and stoically resigned, he recorded his thoughts and sent them to Jung, who responded with a letter of encouragement, thinking Aldrich was collecting information for a series of articles he planned to write. Aldrich died March 31, 1933, just ten days after he wrote his letter to Blanche. The *Oakland Tribune* reported the story in an article titled "Aldrich, Psychologist, Knew, Predicted Day of Own Death." "Having concluded that he was about to die," according to the newspaper account, Aldrich "placed his business in order . . . , walked about Carmel saying good-bye to his friends, and went to bed early for what he was certain would be his last night on earth." He "succumbed to a heart attack" around midnight, "less than an hour after falling asleep." Additional information about Aldrich's death can be found in the April 7, 1933 issue of the *Carmel Pine Cone*.

If it is true that we are known by the company we keep, then Blanche Matthias was an extraordinary person. What else could be said about someone who was as close as she was to one of the greatest artists of the 20th century (O'Keeffe), one of the most important poets (Jeffers), two of its most penetrating spiritual teachers (Krishnamurti and Sasaki), and a host of influential artists and intellectuals (Latimer, Porter, Aldrich, and many more)? Some of Blanche's other friends are mentioned in Robinson's and Una's letters: Eugène Jolas, poet, critic, and editor of *Transition*; James J. Sweeney, art critic, curator, and director of the Guggenheim Museum; John Alden Carpenter, musician and composer. More are listed among her correspondents at Yale's Beinecke Library, where the bulk of Blanche's papers are held: Evelyn Ames, author and environmentalist; Andrey Avinoff, artist and director of the Carnegie Institute of Natural History; writer Caroline Singer Baldrige and her husband, artist Cyrus Leroy Baldrige. Still more appear in scattered publications and records. Blanche's friendship with artist Leon Kroll and his wife Viette, for instance, is documented in letters housed in the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art. "It is exciting to again see an exhibition of your work!" Blanche says, writing to Kroll in March 1967. "How is it possible to grow always into greater depths? Depths of perception, and feeling, of skill and conviction? There is still the feeling of Viette too. The delicacy and strength of her face and beauty. I loved your self-portrait. I wanted to go right up and kiss you." Blanche was eighty years old when this letter was written, but her words remain charged with youthful exuberance and unbridled affection.

Blanche and Russell eventually settled in San Francisco, where they lived in a luxury apartment on Nob Hill, across the park from Grace Cathedral. Cinema fans would recognize their building (Brocklebank Apartments at 1000 Mason Street) as the residence of Madeleine Elster, Kim Novak's character in *Vertigo*, Alfred Hitchcock's 1958 masterpiece, that co-starred James Stewart as an acrophobic detective. Russell died in 1974. At the urging of friends, Blanche self-published a book of her poems, *The Wish to Sing*, in 1978. In the same year, already blinded by glaucoma, she became the founding benefactor of the Glaucoma Research Foundation, an institution based in San Francisco that continues to sponsor clinical and laboratory studies of the disease. Blanche died in 1983. In honor of their "beloved financial founder" and her "legacy of hope," the foundation established The Blanche Matthias Society for its most faithful donors. Encouraging people to emulate Blanche's original act of generosity, the foundation praises her on its website, saying "there's a little of the indomitable spirit of Blanche Matthias in all of us." That may be the secret of the spell she cast on those who knew her best.

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ROBERT ZALLER

The Fountain and the Net: Archetypes in the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers

I

Metaphor is a building block of poetry. As it is commonly used in prose or everyday speech, a metaphor is the substitution of one word for another, typically a lesser description for a greater one, as “waves” or “foam” for sea or ocean, but also conversely, as “heavens” for skies. Such a metaphor may substitute a quality or attribute of a thing for the thing itself, as “waves” signify the motion of a body of water, or suggest a signification beyond customary usage, as “heavens” connotes a realm of being or value beyond the visible atmospheric environment. Because a metaphor is not technically an equivalent, as “half a dozen” is for the number “six,” it is a conveyer of meaning that complicates the term it simultaneously subsumes and replaces.

Used to excess, metaphor soon comes to seem affected in everyday speech, and loses its utility. One need not always call a spade a spade, but one should not too often call it something else. In poetry, however, metaphor has a wider range, because it is the essence of poetry that things are not merely what they apparently seem. A poetic metaphor may acquire its own substantiality, to the point of achieving an existence that transcends its origin, potentially generating its own series of metaphors or, in a hypothetically perfected

state, precluding further statement. In Plato, such a condition is the ground of philosophy, but it is just such a stasis that poets reject: hence Plato's own rejection of poetry itself. His affinity with it was too close for comfort: close enough, indeed, that his philosophy became the lodestar of Western poetry itself.

II

For the young Jeffers, these questions marked the crisis of poetry in his time. The choices for a new poet seemed to be aging Georgian verse, already played out in Swinburne, or the no less moribund Symbolism of Mallarmé and his imitators, assemblages without referents, word-tones that implied only silence. Without quite grasping his task, Jeffers sought to rediscover the source of metaphor in the natural world, trusting himself to the "honest rustics" of the senses ("Advice to Pilgrims," *CP* 3: 118), and to the radical empiricism, touched by intuition, that his early scientific training had given him. With that, and the stonecraft to which he apprenticed himself in building Tor House, he discovered the world afresh in such poems as "Salmon Fishing," "Gale in April," and "Birds." By 1928, in "Hooded Night," he could utter three of the most audacious words in modern poetry: "Here is reality" (2: 3).

In part because Jeffers wanted to describe the primary datum of experience—the sensory world, observed as scrupulously as possible—he was particularly chary of metaphor, utilizing instead action verbs that depicted process. Thus, in the opening lines of "Salmon Fishing,"

The days *shorten*, the south *blows wide* for showers now,
The south wind *shouts* to the rivers,
The rivers *open* their mouths and the salt salmon
Race up into the freshet. [Italics added] (*CP* 1: 6)

This isn't pathetic fallacy, the attribution of human feelings or propensities to objects or nonhuman creatures. It is a means, attuned to the receptors of human perception, to indicate activity in the natural world, and to quicken the reader's response to it. With rare exception, Jeffers puts nothing into the world that isn't

there, or stimulated to cognition directly by it. Of course, the human mind does project imaginary things or properties onto the external—ghosts and apparitions are a frequent theme in Jeffers—but it is a chief object of care to separate fantasy from reality, and, as he says tersely, “we dream too much” (“Animula,” *Beginning* 71; *CP* 3: 420). And metaphor, ill-used, takes one not into but away from the actual world.

Because Jeffers wishes to evoke particular objects in as direct a fashion as possible, situating them by position and function, he is often indicted for simplicity, and even as sympathetic an observer as Czesław Miłosz could see in his descriptions “too much . . . of the amateur painter who sets up his easel on a wild promontory” (90). Need I add that this is a fundamental misreading? Jeffers was never interested in landscape as such, a human domestication of nature; what he offered were the elements of a wider, trans-experiential whole, each element of which was an individual signifier both present in itself and pointing to a greater totality. This is particularly clear in “Boats in a Fog,” in which the sequencing is reversed and individuation emerges from an ungraspable whole:

A sudden fog-drift muffled the ocean,

 One by one moved shadows
 Out of the mystery, shadows, fishing-boats, trailing each other
 Following the cliff for guidance,
 Holding a difficult path between the peril of the sea-fog
 And the foam on the shore granite. (*CP* 1: 110)

The ocean here is stipulated as the primary signifier, the source of life and livelihood; but what is momentarily revealed is as abruptly covered by the sea vapor that conceals it and threatens the fleet with collision and death. The boats must revert to a singularity of their own, each seeking a difficult path out of what had previously seemed a passive yielder of sustenance. In “Gale in April,” Jeffers uses a similar image to create a more generalized image of the trauma of existence and the ineffable essence beyond it: “Intense and terrible beauty, how has our race with the frail naked nerves, / So little a craft swum down from its far launching?” (*CP* 1: 91).

In “Boats in a Fog,” the vessels sail to safety by clinging to a perilous cliffside, but in “Gale in April” even “The strong lean upon

death as a rock," for extinction is the only true harbor in the welter of being.

Jeffers thus alternates in his depiction of the natural world between specification and generalization, the narrow particular (this bird, that rock) and the wider prospect (the enormity of sea and sky). The *locus classicus* of this expression is the scene in "Apology for Bad Dreams," in which the sweep of the Big Sur coast pivots on the brutal scene of a woman beating a horse, only to be recuperated in a magisterial sunset that encompasses the spark of wickedness taken up in the greater glory (CP 1: 208-09). The latter does not extinguish the former or reconcile it to itself; what exists is simply present, moral evaluation notwithstanding, and every existent, large or small, is both actuality and sign.

Jeffers does not wish us to exculpate the woman in the scene; in a rare comment on one of his poems, he notes that it was based on a factual story and that the woman's fate, herself killed by a horse, had been a singular act of justice. What we humanly condemn, however, is not for us to judge in a final, existential sense, a point Jeffers makes in "Phenomena," a poem roughly contemporary with the "Apology": "the great frame takes all creatures; / From the greatness of their element they all take beauty" (CP 1: 118).

For Jeffers, then, the objects and circumstances of the world—"phenomena"—both require specification and transcend it: each must be sifted for its value and integrated into the plenum that contains it. This explains for us Jeffers' recurrent resort to them as the collectivity he calls "things." This term denotes for Jeffers an intermediate signification between the particular designation and the unity of the whole. The distinction is most clearly expounded in "Return," in which the poet imagines himself renewing his contact with the physical reality outside himself:

I will touch things and things and no more thoughts,
That breed like mouthless May-flies darkening the sky,
The insect clouds that blind our passionate hawks
So that they cannot strike, hardly can fly.
Things are the hawk's food and noble is the mountain, Oh noble
Pico Blanco, steep sea-wave of marble. (CP 2: 409)

Considered individually, the "things" of Jeffers appear innumerable (and of course from one perspective contain the "thoughts"

with which he contrasts them), but as a category external to the human they represent a grounding in natural order that provides relief and renewal from mental phantasm—even the phantasm of creativity by which the poet seeks to hold fast the world itself. It is this very fact that lends them to observation and gives them their beauty, a value both particular and unifying. In contrast, “thoughts” breed limitlessly, but as a distraction, attached to no permanence that keeps them distinct and separate. Projected on the world, they obscure its order and frustrate its processes. They cannot be refused in their entirety because they are what the mind produces, but they must be periodically checked, as Jeffers indicates in the poem’s opening lines: “A little too abstract, a little too wise, / It is time for us to kiss the earth again.”

The “things” that Jeffers evokes in the text are, in descending order of amplitude, earth and skies, roots, rivers, and, finally specified to a single point, “the alder leaf [that] quivers” in the wind. It is only after the poem has made its argument that Jeffers brings it back to its initially posited grandeur, fixed in the indelible image of Pico Blanco, the “steep sea-wave of marble” that must be given its own name and metaphoric signature.

Jeffers deploys a similar effect in “Red Mountain,” only working it in reverse. Here, the particular thing—a solitary peak above the mountain town of Silverton, Colorado—is admired as it rises “up the wild gorge, up the wild sky, / Incredibly blood-color around the snow-spot [on] / The violent peak.” It is, if anything, too “theatrical” for Jeffers’ liking (“We like dark skies and lead-color heights”), but it confounds taste to show exorbitance, because, as he concludes, “the excellence of things is really unscrupulous, it will dare anything” (*CP* 2: 486). This is a theme that will be repeated in the later “De Rerum Virtute,” in which Jeffers offers an inventory of “the beauty of things” that includes not only his own familiar palette, “the gulls on the cliff-wind, / And the soaring hawk under the cloud-stream,” but the “sun-stricken” desert, “the reeking tropical rain-forest,” and “the intolerant north,” places that do not normally invite aesthetic contemplation (3: 403). To appreciate is, ordinarily, to discriminate, and Jeffers singles out the Red Mountain as a cynosure that all but imposes itself on the spectator; yet his instinct is always to seek the wholeness in the distinct, the sum in the particulars.

In contrast, ugliness appears as that which separates the part from the whole; indeed, it is the fact of isolation that creates the appearance, or

more precisely the experience, of ugliness. As Jeffers says strikingly in "The Answer," "A severed hand / Is an ugly thing, and man dissevered from the earth and stars and his history . . . for contemplation or in fact . . . / Often appears atrociously ugly" (CP 2: 536). The "ugliness" is not in the thing itself but in its absence—or rejection—of appropriate relation. Only man, Jeffers suggests, can create such a condition by rejection; for the world, considered as the ordered relation of things, is beautiful as such both in its parts and as a whole.

What appears to us in the object world is, then, the diversity of things, which we extract by perception from the all but undifferentiated world of earliest infancy, by which we learn to negotiate. Our error, in Jeffers' view, is to mistake discovery for invention. In "Credo," written a decade before "The Answer," Jeffers conjures up a "friend from Asia"—presumably a Buddhist, although his name might easily be Wallace Stevens—who strives to create "an ocean more real than the ocean," and "believes that nothing is real except as we make it." Contrariwise, Jeffers affirms what he calls "a harder mysticism":

The water is the water, the cliff is the rock . . . The mind
 Passes, the eye closes, the spirit is a passage;
 The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to
 itself; the heart-breaking beauty
 Will remain when there is no heart to break for it. (CP 1: 239)

"Things" not only precede the eyes that perceive them; their existence is coeval, and, as Jeffers will have it, consubstantial with the cosmos itself, whether conceived as an act of divine creation or the primal broadcast of matter ("The Great Explosion," *Beginning* 3-4; "Explosion," CP 3: 413-14). Its priority signifies its value, and therefore its higher accord with reality:

Civilized, crying how to be human again: this will tell you how.
 Turn outward, love things, not men, turn right away from
 humanity,
 Let that doll lie.

 Things are so beautiful, your love will follow your eyes;
 Things are the God, you will love God, and not in vain,
 For what we love, we grow to it, we share its nature.
("Sign-Post," CP 2: 418)

Jeffers explicates this further in “Nova”: “. . . we know that the enormous invulnerable beauty of things / Is the face of God” (CP 2: 531). What things reveal is beauty, the signifier of value as such. That value, beheld through the beautiful, is divine actuality, which in its turn reflects the strict monism demanded by Jeffers’ conception of existence as inseparable from divinity. Beauty might appear variously, through the senses or through the intellect alone. It was, however, a universal attribute, and even if unapprehended was always to be sought. To be sure, it was not an ontological quality as such, but merely, as Jeffers had put it in “De Rerum Virtute,” “the human mind’s translation of the transhuman / Intrinsic glory” (3: 403). That glory was most immediately accessible through the aesthetic faculty, as primed by sensation and whetted by instinct; it could be further mediated by reflection and religious intuition; and it finally presented itself to reasoned thought. At such a point, it needed renewal by engagement with what had stimulated it to begin with, namely fresh encounter with the natural world: hence the need expressed in “Return” to periodically “touch things and things” and forbear thought. The beauty—the “glory,” a term more clearly denoting value as such—was omnipresent, but, as Jeffers lamented, “mostly we are too tired to hear and too dull to see” (“Fierce Music,” *Beginning* 57; CP 3: 481; cf. “Salvage,” *Beginning* 63; CP 3: 421). Nonetheless, in the last poem in which he substantially addressed the subject, he declared the celebration of beauty to be not only an acknowledgment of value but an ultimate form of prayer:

To feel and speak the astonishing beauty of things—earth, stone
 and water,
 Beast, man and woman, sun, moon and stars—
 The blood-shot beauty of human nature, its thoughts, frenzies
 and passions,
 And unhuman nature its towering reality—
 For man’s half dream; man, you might say, is nature dreaming,
 but rock
 And water and sky are constant—to feel
 Greatly, and understand greatly, and express greatly, the natural
 Beauty, is the sole business of poetry.
 The rest’s diversion: those holy or noble sentiments, the
 intricate ideas,
 The love, lust, longing: reasons, but not the reason.
 (“The Beauty of Things,” CP 3: 369)

It will be noted that Jeffers includes human thought in his catalogue of beauty, the very activity that he declares in "Return" must be set aside to renew the sense of the beautiful, and which, furthermore, he sets beside even more unstable events, "frenzies" and "passions." These are not "things" in the restricted sense of objects, but they are phenomena in a more extended one that includes process; nor is their beauty unmixed, but, in a figure that goes back to Jeffers' early cycle, "The Truce and the Peace," "blood-shot,"¹ i.e., imperfect both as to appearance and function. That humanity must partake of beauty is implicit in Jeffers' assertion that the world as such is an expression of divine value, the "face of God"; that this beauty is flawed is a consequence of the aesthetic faculty itself. All other phenomena participate directly in the cosmos; they *are* the beauty, not the observers of it. If man's most essential function, his specific mode of being, is to experience and celebrate beauty, then it is a second-order one which conditions it. Man's singular capacity is thus his singular deformation as well. From it—from the level of consciousness that makes aesthetic perception possible and necessary—derives all human imperfection. It makes the world's value available to creaturely cognition, but at the cost of a self-alienation that divides humanity both from itself and from that world.

We may thus also appreciate the significance of Jeffers' use of "things" as a universal ideogram. A "thing" may be an object, a phenomenon, a process, an act or event, a concept; it is that which can be specified and named, but needs no specification or name to exist. It is the wealth of the world and the sum of possibility. Its beauty may be exhibited by something as immaterial as a theorem or as gross and garish (to Jeffers' taste) as the Red Mountain. It has no stable census but reflects perpetual creation and transformation, while at the same time symbolizing permanence, whether by long endurance or cyclical recurrence ("Point Joe," CP 1: 90-91). The beauty it reveals is various; the value it embodies is constant.

The very amplitude of this ideogram as Jeffers employs it suggests not only the fullness of the world but, more importantly, that which both contains and lies beyond it. Thus, in "The Place for No Story," he gives us a succession of denotative images, each a "thing," collectively a picture, but neither singly nor together ontologically complete:

The coast hills at Sovranes Creek;
No trees, but dark scant pasture drawn thin

Over rock shaped like flame;
 The old ocean at the land's foot, the vast
 Gray extension beyond the long white violence;
 A herd of cows and the bull
 Far distant, hardly apparent up the dark slope;
 And the gray air haunted with hawks:
 This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen. No imaginable
 Human presence here could do anything
 But dilute the lonely self-watchful passion. (CP 2: 157)

Jeffers does give us a single specification that anchors the scene (Sovranes Creek), but only to continue with a series of erasures: there are no trees; the pasture is scant and thin, barely existent; the rock no sooner appears when, like Pico Blanco in "Return," it is converted into another element; the ocean dissolves into extension and violence. The ceaseless interaction of object and process both affirms and denies presence, returning the reader to the noncertifiability of "things," that which is simultaneously evoked and withdrawn. The vision is compelling, but ungrounded.

The second part of the poem introduces more specific objects, a herd of cows and a bull, which in turn imply a human hand; but these figures, too, are "distant" and "hardly apparent," and the hawks which are its final presence "haunt" rather than inhabit the gray skies they shift through. Nothing in this catalogue is without its effacement as well, and yet, as boldly as Jeffers' assertion of that "reality" in "Credo," he then declares: "This place is the noblest thing I have ever seen." This defining statement is modified by two others: that humanity is absent and unwelcome in the scene, and that a "lonely self-watchful passion" presides over it.

We may note that humanity has already been suggested here in the cowherd; this scene is at least partly pastoral, not simply wild. The implication is that the "lonely self-watchful passion" is in fact diluted, or has at least admitted human possibility: the "place for no story" (i.e., the one sufficient to itself without it) may in fact be home to one. This compels us to interrogate the poem's only unambiguous affirmation, that the scene is "noble." A "lonely" entity is one that is incomplete; a "self-watchful" one is one that takes itself for its object; a "passion" is a striving for or towards something, but doubled back on itself by the very nature of its exertion. If, at the same time, such an entity is already perfect as such, needing no

further extension yet bound by its own will to alter itself, it can only be characterized as divine.

The subject of "The Place for No Story," is, then, divinity as such, disclosing itself in a creation containing all possibility, including the seeds of tragedy. Nonetheless, certain objects recur so frequently and strategically in Jeffers as to constitute a vocabulary. Prime examples of this, which occur in "The Place for No Story" as well, are rocks and hawks. So freighted are these objects in Jeffers that Robert Hass would simply call his centennial anthology of Jeffers' shorter poems *Rock and Hawk*, after the poem so titled by Jeffers himself. That Jeffers himself considered it of particular import is indicated by the fact that he described its twin subject as a "symbol," a term he uses nowhere else. It is also virtually unique in having, but for one passage, no anchor in a natural setting:

Here is a symbol in which
Many high tragic thoughts
Watch their own eyes.

This gray rock, standing tall
On the headland, where the sea-wind
Lets no tree grow,

Earthquake-proved, and signed
By ages of storms: on its peak
A falcon has perched.

I think, here is your emblem
To hang in the future sky;
Not the cross, not the hive,

But this; bright power, dark peace;
Fierce consciousness joined with final
Disinterestedness;

Life with calm death; the falcon's
Realist eyes and act
Married to the massive

Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down
Nor success make proud. (CP 2: 416)

Both rock and hawk occur insistently as images in Jeffers; both, as in "Hurt Hawks" and "Oh Lovely Rock" can be primary subjects in themselves (*CP* 1: 377-78; 2: 546-47). But it is their combination alone that makes for more than a phenomenon or even, individually, an emblem, and lends them symbolic weight. What, then, is being symbolized? The rock and the hawk—falcon, here, a member of the *Accipiter* family that includes both²—exhibit highly contrasting features; the former, stationary solitude, endurance of all weather, and, more generally, "dark peace," "final / Disinterestedness," and "calm death"; and the latter, "bright power," "Fierce consciousness," and "Life" as such. These qualities clearly contrast with each other, but join in the falcon's act of perching on the rock that the seawind has cleared of all else, and the final "marriage" of "Realist eyes and act" with the "massive / Mysticism of stone."

Such a conjunction can only occur on a transcendental level, in a condition that embraces contradiction. What that level may be is suggested in the first stanza's evocation of the "high tragic thoughts" that "Watch their own eyes." This image recalls the "lonely self-watchful passion" of "The Place for No Story," but with an even stronger sense of paradox, for "eyes" that can watch themselves abolish by definition the distinction between subject and object, while "high tragic thoughts" imply the self-sufficient entity whose only object can be itself. Equally, however, the symbol of such an entity, while pointing to its unity, cannot express it; to the contrary, it can only indicate it by the most extreme opposition, as a "final / Disinterestedness" that is simultaneously a "Fierce consciousness," a "calm death" that is also an undifferentiated "Life." The rock and the hawk can be tangent, as when the falcon perches on the rock, but such proximity, even contact, only emphasizes contrast. That which is both identical and other, a symbolization whose duality is the verge of the sublime, necessarily points to the divine.

III

If metaphor be considered the primary recognition of otherness, and symbol of the unity beyond it, how then may divine praxis itself be spoken of? Jeffers resorts here to a further level of signification: the archetype. As we will use the term here, it refers, broadly, to

the two presupposed properties of creation: process and limit. These terms themselves imply boundary, the first temporal and the other physical. In Jeffers' conception, however, divinity—God, to give it an ancillary name—is coterminous with itself, and thus any otherness stipulated of it a second-order mode of description. Divinity can have no origin and therefore no character; it is a totality without individuation, and any experience imputed to it is an aspect of self-activity, a presenting of essence to itself. Nothing can comprehend this, perhaps not even God himself: as Jeffers says in his most lapidary formulation of the matter, "He being sufficient might be still" ("Apology for Bad Dreams," CP 1: 211). The suggestion is that essence begets existence, though not in sequential order; the two conditions might be construed as phases of each other, neither being primary and neither decisive, a rhythm of exchange in which there is nothing final either to give or to take. God is *sufficient* to be still, but neither stillness nor motion is to be predicated of him in isolation: he is both at once.

The universe expands and contracts like a great heart.
 It is expanding, the farthest nebulae
 Rush with the speed of light into empty space.
 It will contract, the immense navies of stars and galaxies, dust-
 clouds and nebulae
 Are recalled home, they crush against each other in one harbor,
 they stick in one lump
 And then explode it, nothing can hold them down; there is no
 way to express that explosion; all that exists
 Roars into flame, the tortured fragments rush away from each
 other into all the sky, new universes
 Jewel the black breast of night; and far off the outer nebulae like
 charging spearmen again
 Invade emptiness. ("The Great Explosion," *Beginning 3*; CP 3: 471)

Expansion and contraction, the systole and diastole of a beating heart, is Jeffers' image of perpetual process, a universe that is eternally alive as the creative aspect of divinity itself, coexistent with and inseparable from it. Such a universe—or cycle of universes—is simply God in the form of activity, a manifestation that has neither beginning nor end, but which appears as a profusion, now extended and now withdrawn. This leads Jeffers to his panentheism, and the Heraclitean assertion in "De Rerum Virtute," derived from

Fragment 36, that "All things are full of God." Jeffers' full paraphrase of the Fragment continues, "Winter and summer, day and night, war and peace are God." The Fragment itself is somewhat more expansive: "God is winter and summer, day and night, war and peace, satiety and hunger; but he assumes different forms, just as when incense is mingled with incense; everyone gives him the name he pleases" (Nahm 91).

Heraclitus appears to mean what Jeffers summarizes in saying, "All things are full of God" ("he assumes different forms"). The reference to incense being mingled with incense suggests the theory attributed to Heraclitus by Diogenes Laertius that change proceeds by way of "exhalation," which in turn evokes the Milesian philosopher Thales' notion that soul is diffused throughout the universe, modified by his follower Anaximenes in his depiction of the macrocosm as a living organism that takes and expels breath from the primary substance of air (Nahm 59, 96-97). Drawing on modern cosmology, Jeffers offers his own vision of the cosmos in "The Great Explosion" as resembling a "great heart" that beats both continually and cyclically in a process both perpetually transformative and alternating at cataclysmic intervals between annihilation and rebirth ("Shiva," CP 2: 605).

Jeffers' invocation of "day and night" in "De Rerum Virtute" recalls us to his first important construction of cosmic process in "Night." "God" does not appear in this earlier poem; rather, a sourceless recurrence of origin and process asserts itself in the description of a "splendor without rays, the shining of shadow, / Peace-bringer, the matrix of all shining and the quieter of shining" (CP 1: 114). The diurnal experience of this ultimate force is, paradoxically, the stellar "torches" that illuminate a sky which contains them as barely a "flicker" in its ontological immensity, and which await only their recession:

Truly the spouting fountains of light, Antares, Arcturus,
Tire of their flow, they sing one song but they think silence.
The striding winter giant Orion shines, and dreams darkness.
And life, the flicker of men and moths and the wolf on the hill,
Though furious for continuance, passionately feeding,
passionately
Remaking itself upon its mates, remembers deep inward
The calm mother, the quietness of the womb and the egg,
The primal and the latter silences . . . (CP 1: 115)

Jeffers here introduces, as also in "The Torchbearer's Race" that is contemporary with it, one of the two master archetypes by which he will define divine process, the poles within which creation operates both as the source of a seemingly limitless energy and its self-imposed constraint. The "fountain," as Jeffers denotes it in the passage above, both is and is not an image derived from natural experience. In everyday usage, a fountain is a persistent jet of liquid, generated by forces of a steady rhythm and extended duration. What is visible to the eye is a continually shaped flow whose content is in a state of perpetual flux; it is thus an activity in which the observer participates, constructing as form that which presents itself as motion. It is for this reason that the image of it, signifying both extension and containment, surge and shape, conveys so forcibly a sense of inexhaustibly renewed energy. Generically, then, the fountain suggests itself as a prime metaphor for manifestations of force, whether geologic eruptions or stellar emissions, that do not readily lend themselves readily to visualization. Thus it is that Jeffers speaks of Antares and Arcturus as "spouting fountains of light," sources of energy that have no stable form and whose effects, at a distance, are scarcely palpable.

The great stars have their cycles and fluctuations, visible to us only through our instruments, and the energies they emit are various. Nonetheless, as Jeffers suggests, they "sing one song"; they exist to expend themselves, and as part of the great cosmic consciousness that informs all things, they "think silence" and "dream darkness," the foreknowledge of and longing for term. Thus, in the scheme of things, existence and nonexistence frame and accompany each other, the one as profusion and the other, instated as the former lapses, as potentiation. Being and non-Being are, accordingly, not for Jeffers perfectly opposed conditions, but part of the grand cycle whose ultimate unity is beyond them.

"Night" is Jeffers' figuration for the cycle of repose in which the fountain—the shape and substance of Being's activity—takes pause. It is by no means, however, a lesser form in any regard, for it equally expresses the divinity that constitutes it, and is rather to be construed as the obverse than the antithesis of that with which it contrasts. Jeffers uses our own daily experience of earth's axial turning—that which we locally call "night"—to express the point:

Over the dark mountain, over the dark pinewood,
 Down the long dark valley along the shrunken river,
 Returns the splendor without rays, the shining of shadow,
 Peace-bringer, the matrix of all shining and the quieter of shining.
 Where the shore widens on the bay she opens dark wings
 And the ocean accepts her glory. (*CP* 1: 114)

"Darkness," here, is not the absence of light, but a different condition of it. As the day is quieted, the splendor that requires no rays subsumes it, the shadow that paradoxically shines without light. This, in its deepest signification, brings peace, as that from which all shining emerges and to which it returns, a matrix and a quieter, source and suspension, the wider containment of Being as such. This is the condition to which Jeffers alludes when he remarks of God that "He being sufficient might be still": it is the peace that gathers all and promises "glory."

When Being "fountains," for Jeffers, it exists in profusion, reproducing as externalization that which already is, the excess of that which might be "still." The stars exhibit this in greatest intensity, but so does the phenomenon of life, a self-consuming form that is "furious for continuance, passionately feeding, passionately / Remaking itself upon its mates." The less complex forms of life—Jeffers chooses the moth as this symbol—exist almost solely to reproduce, and barely for as long as that requires. The human function, dimly perceived, needs longer duration, but is willingly endured: "And I and my people, we are willing to love the four-score years / Heartily; but as a sailor loves the sea, when the helm is for the harbor" (*CP* 1: 115, 116). The function humanity performs—imperfectly, in the nature of the case—is, as Jeffers says in "Margrave," to bring "the world to focus in a feeling brain, / In a net of nerves [to catch] the splendor of things," although more often "to dream, and dream badly, a moment of its night": a "night," of course, not the Night toward which all Being strives, but of its own partial and twisted consciousness (2: 160, 167; cf. "Theory of Truth," 2: 608-10).

The image of the fountain plays an archetypal role as well in "The Torch-Bearers' Race," whose focal point is light rather than darkness. This "light" represents the fulfillment of human destiny, which is to escape "the four walls of humanity" that constrain the quest for an (inferentially) divine reality in which one may "drink of the fountain" of beatific cosmic vision, and thus to gaze finally

upon a face “not a father’s / And motherless and terrible and here” (CP 1: 100, 101). This is the quest the Reverend Barclay undertakes in *The Women at Point Sur*, but which, having never escaped his own constraining walls, brings him at last only to a face that reflects his own.³ In “The Torch-Bearers’ Race,” the notional consummation of human destiny raises the question of what lies beyond it. Direct knowledge of divinity implies a subsumption or at least a coregency with its powers—precisely the condition that Tamar claims to have achieved in asserting that “I am the fountain” in the poem whose protagonist she is (“Tamar,” 1: 63). Jeffers raises this question at the end of “The Torch-Bearers’ Race” in imagining for humanity as a whole that which Tamar claims for herself: “What unimaginable opponent to end you?” The query is ironically restated four decades later in one of Jeffers’ last poems, “Passenger Pigeons,” in which Death, having listened to man’s recital of his powers and science, answers with cupped mouth, “Oh, . . . surely / You’ll live forever . . . What could exterminate you?” (*Beginning* 16; CP 3: 437).

In “The Torch-Bearers’ Race,” Jeffers’ reply is succinct: “There is one fountain / Of power, yours and that last opponent’s, and of long peace” (CP 1: 101). Humanity, having “seen” the final truth that creator and creation are indis severably one, creates thereby its own opponent, presumably to be absorbed into the “long peace” of Night’s oblivion until the next cycle of generation creates its own questing intelligence.

Jeffers establishes the fountain as an archetype of divine activity and cyclical recurrence most fundamentally in “The Torch-Bearers’ Race” and “Night,” but the image persists and develops throughout his career, retaining its critical character as his widest description of cosmic process. In these early poems of his maturity, the fountain also serves as a general reference to divinity that forbears direct mention of deity as such, as if to avoid a personification too tainted by traditional usage. The desire for such avoidance may partially account for Jeffers’ turn from the contemporary, California-based settings of his earliest verse narratives through “Tamar” to that of ancient Greece in *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*, the reworking of Sophocles’ *Oresteia* in which he sets out for the first time through his eponymous protagonist a vision of the “spherical eternity” of cosmic process without the denotation of “God.” The reason for this becomes clearer when we turn to *The Women at Point Sur*, where Barclay, in the throes of his own deranged vision, identifies himself

with God only to usurp him and, as he puts it to himself, “To draw from your own fountain the soul of the world.” The parallel of this statement with Tamar’s “I am the fountain” is obvious, but, unlike Tamar, whose quest for power has no wider object beyond herself and her immediate circle, Barclay forges a cult following based on the universal “Power” he will claim as his own but present to his followers in familiar if illusory terms: “You may call it God to the vulgar” (CP 1: 310). For Jeffers at this point, “God” is still a term associated with an exhausted Christianity and its creed of personal salvation.

“God” will affirmatively enter Jeffers’ mature poetry only in “Apology for Bad Dreams,” a poem composed while he was still at work on *The Women at Point Sur*. The first section sets a scene in which a woman mercilessly beats a tethered horse against a background of natural sublimity in which the ocean is lit by “the fountain / And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk sun” (CP 1: 208). As dusk closes on the scene, Jeffers again invokes sublimity, only to conclude on a startling note:

The enormous light beats up out of the west across the cloud-bars
of the trade-wind. The ocean
Darkens, the high clouds brighten, the hills darken together.
Unbridled and unbelievable beauty
Covers the evening world . . . not covers, grows apparent out of it,
as Venus down there grows out
From the lit sky. What said the prophet? “I create good: and I
create evil: I am the Lord.” (CP 1: 208-09)

Jeffers’ quotation from Isaiah 45:7 comes without preparation, unless one considers how his entire verse project has led up to it. Despite such meaningful signifiers as “fountain” earlier in the stanza, the scene as depicted to this point would seem to be an ironic commentary on the coexistence of human cruelty and natural beauty, juxtaposed but unrelated. It is only with the final sentence—the prophet’s word by way of query, still not unreservedly the poet’s own—that an overarching and essential relationship is suggested between scene and act. Even here, it is Isaiah rather than the poet who speaks of a “Lord,” the persona of commandment, rather than the He-that-is, the directly unnamable God of universal creation. It is only in the next section of the poem, in which “This coast,” presumably the setting of the previous section, “cries” out

for “tragedy,” “suffering,” and victimization, that the woman and the horse are implicated in the surrounding landscape. “God” only appears when the long stanza of the section repeats its initial passage, suddenly and without apparent context:

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and like
the passionate spirit of humanity
Pain for its bread: God’s, many victims’, the painful deaths, the
horrible disfigurements . . . (CP 1: 209)

The coastal scene is now connected to “all beautiful places,” and that to the passionate (i.e., responsive) spirit of humanity, with pain as both its root and cost. It is here that Jeffers abruptly makes his elliptically revealed “God” the participant as well as the agent of “tragedy,” and in its starkest forms. The subject of the section then turns to Jeffers’ own constructions of tragedy as verse, and “God” returns only briefly—though again with his archetypal signifier—in the poem’s third section, where, discussing the destruction of California’s indigenous tribes, he remarks that “God’s / Envy is not a likely fountain of ruin” (CP 1: 210) although divine retribution may not be dismissed. It is only in the final section of the poem that its divine subject directly emerges, alternately addressed as a pronominal “He” and “I” until the poet makes a final reference to “God” as a confession of his own ignorance: “I have seen these ways of God: I know of no reason / For fire and change and torture and the old returnings.” We are left at the end only with phenomenal signifiers: “The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland, the ever-returning roses of dawn” (1: 211).⁴

It is finally in “Birth-Dues,” first published in *Poetry* in 1928, where “God” is unambiguously named both as the subject of Jeffers’ various evocations of divinity and unabashedly as the source of violence and violation in the created world:

The world’s God is treacherous and full of unreason; a torturer,
but also
The only foundation and the only fountain.
Who fights him eats his own flesh and perishes of hunger; who
hides in the grave
To escape him is dead; who enters the Indian

Recession to escape him is dead; who falls in love with the God is
 washed clean
 Of death desired and of death dreaded. (CP 1: 371)

As the only foundation God is the sole source of himself; as the only fountain he is the source and act of creation. In these six lines Jeffers makes his own confession, that love and benevolence are not to be expected of the God who is all that is, but rather that from a human perspective he exhibits treachery, imposes torture, and cannot be reconciled with any notion of human reason. This is the God who must nonetheless be loved—that is, ontologically accepted—because no alternative exists, and only thereby can one escape the cycle “of death desired and of death dreaded” and a measure of peace be won. Here is the core of what, twenty years later, Jeffers would expound as “Inhumanism,” the effort that must be made to live humanly by transcending the human. It was here only that Jeffers could affix the face to divinity that he called “God,” and address him both familiarly as both the tissue of his own flesh and as the mystery of the most unapproachable distance: in short, in the form of prayer unique to him.⁵

Jeffers largely put by the fountain image when he began to refer directly to “God,” and its valence changed. In “At the Birth of an Age,” the verse epic in which he most directly dramatized a vision of divinity, this God undergoes successive epiphanic presentations, centering around the Hanged God of Norse and Christian mythology but taking various other forms, including that of an “eagle / Forever circling”:

His eyes are put out, he has fountains of blood for eyes,
 He endures the anguish.
 But if he had eyes there is nothing for him to see
 But his own blood falling,
 He is all that exists . . . (CP 2: 474)

The speaker of these lines is a “Young Man” who is in turn a vision of the Son, and Jeffers further introduces overlapping “singers” and “voices” who represent various aspects of the created world including a “sun” which declares, “I writhe from myself in fountains of fire” (CP 2: 480). The images encompass progressively larger forms that approach a final source, culminating in an unmediated “power” that pushes “so close against the fountain that I can

hardly / Distinguish myself from him" (2: 481). The image can bear no more, subsuming itself into a divine process that is simultaneously creator and creation. But Jeffers refers to it again in a late poem, "Local Legend," in which two cowhands find a naked babe in the brush that suddenly spouts "a fountain of fire" from which they flee. Jeffers wryly comments that the story is "Senseless as other supernaturalisms" are, although it "Might even be true" (3: 398). One could not ask for a more lapidary description of the event we call poetry.

IV

If the image of the fountain expresses divinity for Jeffers as simultaneously the source and process of existence, the net is the necessary term of its limit, the essential structure and boundary of the cosmos and the final barrier that constitutes it. It is as such the central and, certainly, the widest image in Jeffers, encompassing the full range of phenomena from the most primal to the most elaborated, from the tiniest ripple of matter to the furthest end of the final universe. At one level, it is what humans find in themselves through power-seeking, passion, or incestuous self-regard. This is the net that Jeffers insistently urges us to break free of to see the beauty of things and the divinity it manifests. The world is thus double-aspected, a net that conceals if seen only in part but which reveals if grasped as a whole, as in the Buddhist image of a universal web whose knots are self-refracting jewels. The world then, in Jeffers' uttermost signification of the net, is a means of transcending the world through the world, since the God-in-matter can be known only through matter itself.

The image of the net is suggested but not yet fully articulated in "The Torch-Bearers' Race," in which Jeffers essays what might be regarded as a first draft of what will be a more elaborate and celebrated passage in *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*:

you have loved
 Inside the four walls of humanity, passions turned inward,
 incestuous desires and a fighting against ghosts, but the clarions
 Of light have called morning. (CP 1: 100)

In the next stanza of the poem, Jeffers more closely approaches the image of the net, suggesting that one might no longer be “tangled” in the “Rays of reflected desire, the man with the woman, the woman with the child, the daughter with the father, but freed / Of the web self-woven” The net is finally specified directly in Orestes’ monologue in *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*:

. . . I saw a vision of us move in the dark: all that we did
or dreamed of
Regarded each other, the man pursued the woman, the woman
clung to the man, warriors and kings
Strained at each other in the darkness, all loved or fought inward,
each one of the lost people
Sought the eyes of another that another should praise him;
sought never his own but another’s; the net of desire
Had every nerve drawn to the centre, so that they writhed like a
full draught of fishes, all matted
In the one mesh . . . (CP 1: 176)

Orestes speaks here not as a mere observer but as a matricide who has already slain his mother, “dip[ping] my wand into my fountain” as he puts it, and is now offered an incestuous union with his sister Electra that will seal his rule over Mycenae. The authorial speaker of “The Torch-Bearers’ Race” suggests a flight upward that will at last disclose the divine face, but Orestes, declaring himself at last freed both of his act and his temptation (“I have cut the meshes”), experiences not a single locus of divinity but the one which is simultaneously present in each of its aspects: “they have not made words for it, to go behind things, beyond hours and ages, / And be all things in all time . . .” (CP 1: 176, 177).

What Orestes suggests here is a passionate identification with a panentheistic divinity—the world as God—in which he is both observer and participant. This, as Jeffers suggests in “The Double Axe,” is the furthest stretch of human experience, a condition without “walls” that can perhaps be experienced “two or three times” in a lifetime (CP 3: 289), but must inevitably collapse. Jeffers suggests that Orestes retains at least some of his vision, and that, having “cast humanity,” he has “entered the earlier fountain” (1: 176). But these words, which conclude *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*, remain unamplified, and Jeffers’ suggestion that Orestes is killed finally by a serpent—the symbol of Ouroboros, the eternal return,

but also of the sin of overweening aspiration—implies for us that he, too, has paid the price of knowledge.

What man cannot share with divinity, even in the ultimate vision of being, is the power of creation. The world is God's to make. This is the final trespass of Jeffers' greatest protagonist, the Reverend Barclay, who wishes not merely to unite with God but to become him:

He did not feel he had been received into communion,
 But that he had realized his own his own members and functions
 . . . "All the life, all the power.
 All. All the orbits and times." (CP 1: 315)

The final net that strangles is disclosed here, and Barclay will lapse into madness. But Jeffers has not done with his archetype, or with its uses. In *Dear Judas*, the Noh drama in which he depicts the Passion as a form of eternal recurrence, his focus is not on the fictive charlatan who for a time deceives the few, but on the historical personage whose self-identification with divinity founds a world civilization. The story here is reduced to a play of four persons, unable to enter time and hence unable to quit it. The figure of Mary, identified simply as "The Woman," sets the theme of the poem near the beginning:

I bid you fishermen mending brown nets
 On the white sand,
 I bid you beware of the net, fishermen.
 You never can see it,
 It flies through the white air and we are all snapped in it.
 No, but look round you.
 You see men walking and they seem to be free,
 But look at the faces, they're caught.
 There was never a man cut himself loose. (CP 2: 8)

By definition, the poem itself is a net in which each character is trapped by the fact that its action must be repeated each nightfall. But it is equally the case that each of its characters is a net specific to him or herself, so that the world of the poem presents not only a common hell but a different one for each. Mary is trapped in the act by which she gives birth to her fated son; Judas in the net of his pity, which sacrifices Jesus to spare those who will pay for his rebellion

against authority; Lazarus in the unasked-for life he cannot even momentarily escape. It is Jesus, however, who tragically wavers between the conviction of his divine sonship and the doubt that freezes him in horror: "I am in the net, and this deliberately sought / Torture on the cross is the only real thing" (CP 2: 34).

Without the doubt of Jesus there is no poem to be had in "Dear Judas," but without the grain of truth in his conviction no point in its recital, for mere delusion would not have made for a great age of faith that, even in waning, leaves its residue: "Being dead . . . you still strive, nearly two thousand years / You have wrestled for us against God" ("Point Pinos and Point Lobos," CP 1: 92). The "truth" Jesus unwittingly attests is that God is all and in all, and that, as the English mystic Gerrard Winstanley declared, his sonship is therefore every man's inheritance. The Jesus of "Dear Judas" imputes this only to himself, but the salvation he offers his followers is implicitly a participation in and hence a beckoning toward it. Lazarus understands this as Jesus cannot: "the power that makes the future . . . consumes the present," and that future is, in turn, the aspiration toward the Godhead that will, as he continues, "praise God after the monstrous manner of mankind" (2: 43-44).

Man's praise of God is "monstrous" because unachievable in any final sense, its limitation apparent in Jesus' own quest for union with divinity. Religion can go no further, at least in its monotheistic form, and Vladimir Soloviev's vision of all human souls taken finally into the divine one may be its ultimate expression.⁶ That leaves, however, the question of why the Creator should wish to extend himself as creation. Jeffers essays an answer in "At the Birth of an Age," where divinity unfolds its purpose in the form of a self-experimentation:

I have chosen
Being; therefore wounds, bonds, limits and pain; the crowded
mind and the anguished nerves, experience and ecstasy.
Whatever electron or atom or flesh or star or universe cries to me,
Or endures in shut silence: it is my cry, my silence; I am the nerve, I
am the agony,
I am the endurance. I torture myself
To discover myself; trying with a little or extreme experiment
each nerve and fibril, all forms
Of being, of life, of cold substance; all motions and netted
complications . . . (CP 2: 482)

Jeffers attempts here, too, to answer the question posed in "Apology for Bad Dreams," namely why deity, being "sufficient," might not be "still." In "Night," the greatest of stars is not a flicker against the plenitude of divinity's repose, and Jeffers affirms that "you Night will resume / The stars in your time" (CP 1: 115). But being's retrenchment brings only repotentialization, welcome for a time but itself ultimately a torment: as the Hanged God of "At the Birth of an Age" says, "Without pressure, without conditions, without pain, / Is peace; that's nothing, not-being, the pure night, the perfect freedom, the black crystal" (2: 482). Jeffers' final image, that of the black crystal, is not one of infinite, all-encompassing plenitude, but of terribly structured pressure contained in the most inconceivably confined space—a structure that demands issuance and release. Trapped in the net of his own condition, the Creator cannot avoid creation and the consequent recoil of decreation, until "After enormous ages the mother cloud [appears]; self-regenerating universes all but eternally / Shine, tire, and die . . . / Flesh for the same flame" (2: 482-83). God's own self-knowledge requires this cyclical alteration: "Without the pain, no knowledge of peace, nothing. Without the peace, / No value in the pain" (2: 484).

Alteration itself, for Jeffers, is a form of divine consciousness, which exists above it and is experienced as simultaneity. This is expressed in the image of the Hanged God, the form of representation divinity takes in "At the Birth of an Age": "I am this mountain that I am hanged on, and I am the flesh / That suffers on it, I am tortured against the summit of my own peace and hanged on the face of quietness" (CP 2: 483). In this sense, "night" and the cosmos are coextensive, each refracting the other, and God his own plenitude in every moment, however the facets of it alternate. These aspects are experienced together, but not simply as oneness, for if they were, the cycle would be a mere stasis. Jeffers takes this point—and the idea of divine self-circumscription—up in the last major poem that deals with these issues, "The Inhumanist." The poem's otherwise unnamed protagonist is introduced as pondering natural passage:

"Winter and summer," the old man says,
 "rain and the drought;
 Peace creeps out of war, war out of peace; the stars rise and
 they set; the clouds go north

And again they go south. —Why does God hunt in circles? Has he
lost something? Is it possible—himself?
In the darkness between the stars did he lose himself and become
godless, and seeks—himself?" (CP 3: 256)

These recurrent cycles explain themselves in their own context, but they pose an ontological problem, namely the significance of their recursions. If, as the Inhumanist will soon declare, the cosmos is a divine totality—"one energy, / One existence, one music, one organism, one life, one God" (CP 3: 256-57)—what can recurrence add to it? The answer is suggested in the image of God as a hunter, an image developed on many levels throughout the poem from "the hawk-swoop / Fall of the hundred-folded ridges" on its coastal setting to that of a galactic collision "where two black stars / Hunted each other in the high blue" like eagles attacking each other (3: 259, 264). The stars do not merely collide but battle; that is, they not only respond to the gravitational forces that bring them together or even to their "combat" as warring predators, but to something more primeval and essential: "they struck and passed, / Wheeled and attacked again, they had great hate of each other . . ." (3: 264). The "hate" posited here also references the preceding narrative, "The Love and the Hate," that is coupled with "The Inhumanist" to constitute in full the poem called "The Double Axe." It also reflects the distinction made by the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles between the primary physical forces of attraction and repulsion in the universe that he called Love and Hate (Strife). Given Jeffers' vitalism, his reinstatement of such terms should not be very surprising. His God is self-divided, willing both activity and repose, Being and (relative) Not-Being, so that contestation runs through the world as a necessary principle, and thus it is that:

" . . . great and small, the atoms of a grain of sand and the suns
with planets, and all the galactic universes
Are organized on one pattern, the eternal roundabout, the heavy
nucleus and whirling electrons, the leashed
And panting runners going nowhere: frustrated flight, unrelieved
strain, endless return—all—all—
The eternal firewheel." (CP 3: 269-70)

This rumination—it is the Inhumanist's—is immediately followed by a "hush" in heaven, from which comes

... a great virile cry, a voice hoarser than thunder,
 [which] heavily reverberated
 Among the star-whorls and cliffs of darkness: "I am caught. I am in
 the net." And then, intolerably patient:
 "I see my doom." (CP 3: 270)

This is not Jeffers' God speaking directly or even, as in "At the Birth of an Age," epiphanically, but, as the Inhumanist speculates, perhaps a great tragic voice or "a cry of nature" itself. If the former, he wonders, might it not be that man's own passion was indicative of a "Much greater torment," a fundamental striving toward variance that did not permit even divinity to rest "still." There, perhaps, lay only mystery; but, the Inhumanist permits himself to say, "the great voice was in earnest" (CP 3: 270).

If the fountain was then Jeffers' first descriptor of the divine, or at any rate divine process, the net came increasingly to serve him as the great symbolic form of the divine condition. This coincided with his use of the term "God," with its clear implication of personality. A fountain does not, to be sure, suggest a face, but rather the continual state of erasure that accompanies perpetual renewal. The image of the net brings us no closer to this, but it does imply construction and therefore intention. No more than his predecessors John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards does Jeffers intend us to find features in his deity; we can only intuit an ineffable glory that lies beyond the beauty we are vouchsafed in the material world: Jeffers' guiding principle is an aesthetic one. His great overreacher, Barclay, does seek a divine face, and, inevitably, perceives only his own.

The net, then, is a fact, and a commonly perceived one in the fishing fleets along Jeffers' coast; but it is also a sign. In "The Purse-Seine," a poem constructed around the image of a net, the caught fish thrash and glitter together, and Jeffers is led from this to contemplate the wider parallels of glitter and confinement, both human and cosmic:

Lately I was looking from a night
 mountain-top
 On a wide city, the colored splendor, galaxies of light: how could I
 help but recall the seine-net
 Gathering the luminous fish? I cannot tell you how beautiful the
 city appeared, and a little terrible. (CP 2: 517)

It is the entrapment of the fish that seals their doom, but also releases a beauty they could not otherwise possess. Likewise, the busy city, which entraps its people, yields the glow that—at a suitable distance—makes a beauty of its own. In turn, this suggests the brilliance of the galaxies that play themselves out in splendor, end beyond end, cycle beyond cycle. This is the “doom” of which the great cry heard by the Inhumanist speaks, and also that of the divine voice in “At the Birth of an Age”: “I am the nerve, I am the agony, I am the endurance.”

(With thanks and appreciation to James Karman for stimulating discussion of the points raised in this essay.)

NOTES

1. “The essential Me cannot be given away, / The single Eye, God cased in blood-shot clay” (“The Truce and the Peace,” Section X, CP 4: 298).
2. Of the many species of bird raptors in this class, Jeffers specifies only two, the genus hawk (itself consisting of fifty-one known species) and the falcon, consisting of forty (including the species hierofalcon or “hawk-falcon”). Jeffers uses them interchangeably; thus, the “hawk” in “Rock and Hawk” (CP 2: 416) is cited as such in the title but identified as a falcon in the text of the poem. In an earlier draft, “hawk” is used twice in the text and “falcon” once (5: 555-56), but in the final one only “falcon” is used (twice). Perhaps Jeffers kept the title “Rock and Hawk” for alliterative purposes, as suggesting the core of relationship between his contrasting symbols.
3. See Zaller, *RJAS* 228-41, for a further discussion of Barclay’s quest for divinity.
4. Cf. the discussion of “Apology for Bad Dreams” in Zaller, *RJAS* 189-99 and *passim*.
5. Cf. “Contemplation of the Sword” (CP 2: 544), where Jeffers makes a direct authorial address to “God”—unique in his poetry—as a new world war approaches.
6. On Soloviev, see Peter Zouboff, *Godmanhood as the Main Idea of the Philosophy of Vladimir Solovyev* (New York, 1944); cf. Marina Kostalevsky, *Dostoevsky and Soloviev: The Art of Integral Vision* (Yale UP, 1997).

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KATHRYN CHEW

Myth, Mother, Monster: Jeffers' *Medea* as a Teaching Text

Jeffers' *Medea* has withstood the test of time. The play, when first published as a book, received a negative review in the *New York Times Book Review* in 1946, but won accolades from the same publication in 1947 when it was performed in Sir John Gielgud's Broadway production, notably for the actresses Judith Anderson and Florence Reed who played Medea and the Nurse. A revival in 1982, with Zoe Caldwell as Medea and Judith Anderson now playing the Nurse, opened to positive reviews and was later filmed for television. Jeffers' adaptation has proved to be one of the most durable reworkings of ancient Greek myth for modern audiences and can serve as an especially effective introduction to the worlds of Greek tragedy and myth for contemporary students.

As a Classicist I read and teach original texts or translations, rather than adaptations. Until my institution, California State University, Long Beach, hosted the annual Robinson Jeffers Association conference in 2011, I was unaware of how many of my colleagues in English classrooms across the country use Jeffers' adaptation of Euripides' *Medea* to introduce the myth to their students, an accessible modernization deeply rooted in the original, which creates a dialogue between differing conceptions and uses of this foundational Greek myth.

The contribution of this article will be first to explore the cultural and political contexts that inform Euripides' play, which enrich the significance of the original play and can be useful for those teaching Jeffers' version. I will discuss six ways in which Jeffers' adaptation differs from his Euripidean model, all of which contribute to articulating Jeffers' unique take on the story, including (1) Medea's character arc, (2) references to barbarity and animal imagery,

(3) stone/bone imagery, (4) the critical tone taken towards the leading men, (5) the construction of Medea's motivation, and (6) the ending. Last, I will provide and discuss seven passages that are useful for drawing out Jeffers' vision and style. I hope, even if teachers of Jeffers' *Medea* do not refer to its Euripidean context, that the comments here enhance awareness of Jeffers' distinctive stylistic and thematic innovations.¹

Cultural and political contexts of Euripides' *Medea*

Euripides' story about Medea and Jason had topical political and cultural relevance for its own time, including a whiff of scandal. A real-life Medea and Jason were at the forefront of Athenian politics, under whose helm Athens entered into a brutal, nearly thirty-year-long civil war that began during the same month Euripides first produced his play *Medea*. Athens' leading politician, Pericles, maintained a passionate, public relationship with a foreign woman, Aspasia, to whom posterity would credit both his successes and his losses. Pericles was Athens' foremost statesman during its "golden age," rebuilding the city after the glorious but devastating Persian wars that spanned the first half of the fifth century. At the time of the play's production, Pericles had just survived a political attack attempting to unseat him by prosecuting his closest associates: Aspasia and also Phidias, his sculptor/architect friend, who designed many of the great works of art for which Athens is remembered, including the Parthenon. Many believed Pericles dragged Athens into the war at this time to distract its citizens from his personal political woes (Plutarch, *de Herodoti malignitate* 856A2; *Pericles* 32.1).

There are three salient aspects of Pericles and Aspasia's relationship that intersect with Medea and Jason's: Aspasia's foreignness, her influence over and assistance to Pericles, and her destructiveness for Athens. First, Aspasia's classification as "foreign" was a function of a law enacted by Pericles, before he had met her, that promoted Athenian nationalism by defining as foreigners all those not of Athenian parentage.² Pericles' law also strictly forbade marriage with foreigners. Aspasia hailed from a Greek colony on the coast of Asia Minor, and after their meeting, Pericles divorced his wife and took up residence with Aspasia, with whom he had a son. The couple could not marry. There were few existential categories for

women at that time. A surviving legal document proposes that Athenian men could have three women (Demosthenes 59.122): a wife for legitimate children, a concubine for care of the body and regular sex, and a *hetaira* (courtesan) for pleasure.³ Aspasia fit into none of them. Nevertheless, Pericles' political enemies charged that Aspasia was a *hetaira* who ran a school for courtesans, modeling herself upon Thargelia, the notorious and traitorous courtesan, who had used her charms to make Greek men sympathetic to Persia (Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.3-4).⁴ Greeks thought of foreign women as inherently dangerous. Medea, similarly, though from the Greek-speaking world,⁵ was from outside of Greece on the Black Sea coast. Jason's marriage to Creon's daughter implies that he does not view his relationship with Medea as a legal one; Jeffers' Nurse comments that Jason "is willing to cast Medea like a harlot" (CP 3: 140).

Aspasia's assistance to and influence over Pericles alarmed many Athenians. Her intelligence won her the reputation of being a teacher of rhetoric, sought out and celebrated by the likes of Socrates and Plato.⁶ This is not female behavior Pericles would later extol in his famous Funeral Oration, as reported by Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian War* (2.34-46), delivered a year into the civil war honoring the fallen, in which he urges women "not to be talked about among men for evil or least of all for good" (2.45.2).⁷ In Euripides' *Medea* we never learn the name of Creon's unfortunate daughter because she is a decent woman, fulfilling the Periclean ideal by having no reputation.⁸ Aspasia was thought to have used her rhetorical talents for Pericles' gain. Plato even credits Aspasia with writing Pericles' best speeches, including his Funeral Oration (Plato, *Menexenus* 236B).⁹ Pericles' biographer, Plutarch, declares that Aspasia guided Pericles' political decisions (Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.2). In much the same way, Medea used her special occult powers to assist Jason in achieving his amazing feats. Pericles' contemporaries saw Aspasia's hold over him as both emotional and intellectual. In an age where spousal displays of affection were far from typical, Pericles was known to kiss Aspasia twice a day, upon leaving and returning home, scandalously uxorious by Athenian standards (24.8).¹⁰ Moreover, when Aspasia was indicted for impiety, on the grounds of running an establishment for courtesans, Pericles moved the jurors by weeping openly in court and won her acquittal (32.1). Since self-control was seen as the quintessential characteristic of the Greek man,¹¹ and Aspasia was suspected of corrupting and weakening Pericles,

Euripides transfers this “foreign” and emasculating lack of restraint to Medea.

Contemporary critics saw Aspasia as the ruin of both Pericles and Athens. Their great statesman had compromised his political image by public displays of devotion to Aspasia, by his known reliance on her intellectual skills, and by allowing her influence to embroil Athens in two wars: on Samos (Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.2) and the civil war with Sparta. Medea, too, can be seen as the destroyer of both Jason and Corinth, through her personal crime, the murder of her children, and the civil crime of royal assassination and regicide, the murder of the Corinthian princess and king.

The issue of Pericles and Aspasia would have been at the forefront of Athenians’ minds heading into the war, not the least for its salacious aspect. For a modern comparison, imagine a Meghan Markle hating British royalist constructing a similar narrative about Meghan’s disastrous effect on Harry. Euripides is capitalizing on similar associations by having his play concern a good Greek boy who is led astray by a nasty foreign woman. Euripides, however, proceeds to dismantle what the audience expects by evoking sympathy for the foreign outsider up to her final act.

Jeffers brings a very different politics to his *Medea*. His Jason and Medea represent not only opposed persons but conflicting forces: male versus female, national versus foreign, civilization versus barbarism, patriarchal tradition versus feminism, culture versus nature. Jeffers, like Euripides, invites his audience to question the binaries out of which the play is constructed, although viewers might shrink from the final solution Medea imposes. Knowing Euripidean politics can enrich reading Jeffers’ adaptation, as can scrutinizing the six main differences between the two plays, mentioned earlier. These differences highlight Jeffers’ unique vision of Medea’s story and his own particular contribution to its narrative. Jeffers adaptation of the original Greek play recovers some of the potency of the originating myth from the topical political references that were central to Euripides’ version.

Differences between Jeffers' and Euripides' *Medeas*:
Medea's character arc

Euripides designed his Medea to light up the stage with the fire of her anger and her passion for revenge. Her character has very little developmental arc. She enters the stage already furious, and maintains her raging intensity until the play's conclusion. This is one aspect of the play that makes the role of Euripides' Medea especially daunting for modern actresses, requiring them to seethe with unrelieved passion for an hour and a half. Euripides wanted the audience caught up in Medea's frenetic state, in much the same way modern action movies are borne along by their own adrenalized momentum; their plots would defy logic if the audience had any time to ponder the connections between scenes. Euripides makes Medea's murderous plot against Jason's new bride and father-in-law explicit almost immediately (lines 374-85), after her scene with Creon). He reveals her stunning intention to kill her children at mid-play (790-93), after her scene with Aegeus) and compels his audience to watch the rest of the drama in anxious anticipation.

Before considering what Jeffers does with the story, let us note Euripides' own innovations: Medea's execution of her children and Aegeus' visit. The first is a plot twist that becomes canonical for the myth (see Seneca Minor, *Medea*). Earlier versions featured the killing of her children as an accident on her part, or as vengeance by the Corinthians for her royal murders.¹² Aegeus' visit functions as both foil to Medea's actions and as a set up for her ultimate escape. In other versions of her story, Medea eventually makes her way to Athens, where she marries Aegeus. In Euripides' *Medea*, Aegeus stops by Corinth on his way home from Delphi, and Medea promises to help him with his infertility. The position of this scene immediately before Medea's revelation of her plan to kill her children serves not as motivation but as contrast; Aegeus' reminder to the audience of the importance of progeny heightens the horror of Medea's willingness to destroy her own children in order to exact satisfaction from a scornful partner. Euripides has to introduce his new conception of Medea early on to establish her character, hence her famous opening monologue (214-66), where she unfavorably compares giving birth to battle in war (250-51). This speech defines Medea's positionality, as an outsider, as a woman. It elucidates her

point of view and is programmatic for her behavior for the rest of the play.

Jeffers could not have relied upon his audience to know the myth as well as Euripides' Athenians, so he builds up Medea's mental state and intentions, all the while foreshadowing dark outcomes, both through imagery and subtle references.¹³ Medea's first long speech to the Chorus is an outpouring of sorrow (CP 3: 146). Jeffers' treatment of this speech serves his own narrative needs: to make Medea's mindset, at least at the play's beginning, understandable to his modern audience. She connects emotionally with the Corinthian Chorus through the universal theme of a woman abandoned. Her speech after her scene with Creon shows her anger starting to hone her thoughts towards violence, as she considers retaliation and revenge (3: 154-55). Jeffers delays Medea's famous line about birth and war to this place (3: 154). After her scene with Jason, she ponders specific means of violence against her enemies (3: 164). During her encounter with Aegeus, she explicitly latches onto the idea that offspring are their parents' emotional core: Aegeus: "When death comes, Medea, / It is, for a childless man, utter despair, darkness, extinction. One's children / Are the life after death," to which Medea excitedly responds, "—you'd kill / The man's children first. *Unchild* him, ha? / And then *unlife* him" (3: 166). After Aegeus' visit, just before the close of the First Act, Medea announces her idea to give a gift to Jason's new bride (3: 172) amidst foreshadowing of doom (3: 174), and reveals her scheme, as well as hints at her plans for her children after the gift has been sent (3: 181). Jeffers, unlike Euripides, allows his Medea to *develop* in feeling and intent through her interactions with others.

Differences between Jeffers' and Euripides' Medeas: references to barbarity and animal imagery

Key to understanding Euripides' Medea is her barbarity; as Jason will say, no Greek woman would have done what she did. In Greek, barbarity is intrinsically linked to foreignness; as a foreigner, and thus one untutored in Greek culture, Medea's actions are unpredictable and thus dangerous and likely barbaric. Pericles' Athenians were so xenophobic that they considered Greeks from other city-states foreigners. Euripides' Athenian audience would have come

to the performance with certain preconceptions about Medea's foreignness so deeply ingrained that it would be superfluous to represent them on stage. Jeffers uses the terms "barbarian" and "foreigner" more than twice as often as Euripides, as his audience might need reminding of Medea's immigration status.¹⁴ The word *barbaros* ("foreign") is more than a label in Euripides; it is a judgment, a word that divides *us* from *them*. Jason uses it twice to emphasize his mercy for Medea, saving her from her barbarous land (536, 1330).¹⁵ The other word for foreign, *xenos*, Medea uses once self-referentially (222), and the chorus uses it once to emphasize Medea's isolation in a foreign land (435).¹⁶ This last use is not without irony; the word for hospitality, *xenia*, is very similar to *xenos*, and its use by the chorus subtly points out that Medea is bereft of that *xenia* originally shown her by Jason.¹⁷ Jeffers' Nurse hits both notes in her prologue: "[Jason] calls the old bond a barbarian mating, not a Greek marriage; . . . [Medea] is learning what it is to be a foreigner, cast out, alone and despised " (CP 3: 140).

Jeffers nevertheless resists giving his audience a first impression of Medea as a murderess. He omits Euripides' initial reference (13) to Medea's killing of Pelias for Jason, leaving it as part of Medea's later rebuke of Jason (CP 3: 159). He also moves Euripides' Medea's private lament for murdering her brother (3: 166-67) to her first address to the Corinthian women (3: 146). Euripides' Medea is initially more aware of her isolation from family (255-58), Jeffers' of her abandonment by Jason.

Jeffers makes the threat of Medea's foreign character explicit from the start by his use of animal imagery to characterize her, as a lioness, a tigress, a viper, a wolf, a she-bear, a caged animal. This imagery extends throughout the play, more than a dozen instances, from the very first lines,¹⁸ and is almost entirely missing from Euripides' version. Jeffers also expands his use of animal imagery as description to establish a threatening tone or lurking wildness in the action, dozens of times throughout the play.¹⁹ For instance, the Chorus of women makes numerous animal references: "Never pray for death . . . / He strikes from the clear sky like a hawk . . ." (CP 3: 144), "And now I see the black end, / The end of great love . . . / The vultures tearing a corpse: / God keep me clean of those evil beaks" (3: 162), and are compared to scared cattle as they watch Medea's final frenzy grow (stage directions, 3: 183). This imagery aptly hints at prejudices, in that the Greeks see Medea as less than human due

to her foreign origin. The animals to which Medea is compared are almost always predatory, which points at her vicious nature, and she echoes a similar vision of herself, "I shall not die perhaps / As a pigeon dies. Nor like an innocent lamb, that feels a hand on its head and looks up from the knife / . . . No: like some yellow-eyed beast that has killed its hunters let me lie down / On the hounds' bodies and the broken spears" (3: 155). The Chorus even declares that Medea surpasses wild beasts with her actions, for no wild beast slays its own young (3: 181-82). Both Medeas appeal to the notion of the particular viciousness of an injured woman. Euripides' Medea: "for woman with respect to other things is full of fear and unskilled at battle, but whenever she finds herself wronged in love, no mind is more bloodthirsty" (263-66), and Jeffers' Medea: "And a woman, they say, can do no good but in childbirth. It may be so. She can do evil, *she can do evil*" (CP 3: 154). Jeffers' Medea maintains a careful comparison of herself to Greeks (e.g., 3: 144, 146, 147). She also slings animal metaphors back at Jason and Creon, repeatedly calling them dogs (3: 150, 154 four times; 155, 157, 160 twice; 164, 166 twice), but these insults are pejorative and do not lend power to the men.

Jeffers' consistent use of animal imagery produces a denouement that is effectively different from Euripides' version, and perhaps one that modern audiences can identify with more easily. A comparison with Euripides makes this clear. In all of his conversations with Medea, Jason never once accuses her of the "f" word (foreigner) or labels her an animal until the horror of the situation so overcomes him that he pulls out all the stops: not only does he say, "no Greek woman would ever have done this" (1339-40) but he also calls her a she-lion more savage than the Scylla, a mythical monster he faced down (1342-43).²⁰ Euripides saves the animal-calling and ethnic slights for the climax of the story. Unlike other characters, who catch on to Medea's type more quickly, Jeffers' Jason withholds his animalian comparisons of Medea until her murder of his new wife, as if now for the first time he is realizing her true nature. At this point, his labelling her "a caught beast . . . a crawling viper" echoes what all the other characters have long been saying. When Jason learns of Medea's murder of their children, his exclamation, "No wild beast could have done it" (CP 3: 195) essentially combines both insults of his Euripidean counterpart, the ethnic and the animal, into one. Whereas Euripides' Jason has been provoked into a state of sheer frenzy at the sight of his dead children, Jeffers' Jason is all

played out; he has nothing more to use against Medea. In the stage directions, he drops his sword and flings his hands to his temples (3: 195), then he speaks his lines “exhausted” (3: 196). Medea has triumphed; all he can do now is wait to die.

Differences between Jeffers’ and Euripides’ *Medeas*:
stone / bone imagery

Jeffers expands on another set of imagery in Euripides to construct mood: stone imagery. Euripides’ Nurse initially likens Medea to a stone, when it comes to listening to the advice of friends (28); the chorus echoes this image again at the end of the play, as Medea slays her children (1280).²¹ In Jeffers, however, this imagery represents mythological inevitability rather than individual character. Stones embody the weight of the past and tradition, as well as the weight of emotion, and, as will be discussed below, nature. They connote immutability, and their coldness is harshness, the harshness of Jason and Creon towards Medea, and Medea’s harsh response. In her opening monologue the Nurse says of Medea, “. . . she only stares at me, great eyes like stones. She is like a stone on the shore . . . and I think she hates / Even her children” (CP 3: 140). Here the stone imagery not only represents Medea’s emotional state, but foreshadows her future actions. Medea echoes this sentiment a few pages later: “What I need: all dead, all dead, all dead, / Under the great cold stones. For a year and a thousand years and another thousand: cold as the stones . . .” (3: 143). With each new stony image, the crushing weight of Medea’s suffering becomes clearer.²² Medea’s reference to “a thousand years,” which she repeats (3: 156), emphasizes the irrevocability of her will.²³ Medea again echoes the Nurse’s reference to her being like a stone on the shore (3: 140) when she conjures up the image of bones on the shore to express her own momentary incapacity (3: 162), as well as her desire to protect her children (3: 163). Stone also symbolizes implacability; when Medea attempts to change Creon’s mind about exiling her and her children, she likens his resolve to stone: “I know that your will is granite” and “Your face, my lord, is like flint” (3: 152). The stone imagery also represents the weight of potential action, as opposed to action taken.²⁴ Once Medea has embarked upon her plan of revenge, the imagery of fire replaces that of stone.²⁵ This imagery

does not occur in Euripides; the only mentions of fire after her plan is initiated are in the description of the princess' death: (1187, 1190, 1193, 1199). The fire is thematically significant; it symbolizes death and destruction but also alludes to a source of Medea's power, as the granddaughter (or great-granddaughter in Jeffers) of the sun god. At the end of Euripides' play Medea flies away triumphantly from Jason in the chariot of the sun god.

Differences between Jeffers' and Euripides' *Medeas*:
the critical tone towards the leading men

Euripides' audience would have entered the theatre prepared to sympathize with Jason and Creon, as civilized Greek men who stand up to the crazy foreign woman. Both playwrights challenge that perspective. Jeffers signposts negative characterization of Jason and Creon throughout the play, not only with animal imagery but also through the explicit criticism of both the Nurse who says, "*He is not wise, I think*" (CP 3: 140) and the Chorus.²⁶ Euripides, on the other hand, treats Creon and Jason differently. Creon displays a typical regal arrogance, mitigated by his fear of a foreign woman. Medea has overstepped many boundaries from a Greek perspective, making her dangerous; exiling her is the only viable option for Creon. His lack of mercy for Medea coupled with his untimely leniency leads to his and his family's undoing. The chorus is not as explicitly critical of him as it is of men in power (413-14) and supportive of Medea's right for vengeance (267-68). Euripides' Jason is a narcissist who cannot fathom what lies beyond his own self-interest. In this, he is typical of his class. Euripides subtly undermines Jason's self-righteousness by making him an agent of sophism. Sophists, so named from the root of the word for wisdom, *sophia*, were professional teachers of rhetoric who acquired a bad reputation because of their ability to argue both sides of any argument successfully and their tendency, as Plato described it, "to make the worse appear the better cause." Euripides' Jason presents sophistic justifications (548-50), with references to his being *sophos* ("wise") and *sophron* ("sensible"), for his actions and against her complaints of his betrayal: that he has given her a better life (534-40), that he intends his new marriage to benefit her and their children (547-67), and that he owes her nothing, for it was Aphrodite or Eros who made her act on his

behalf (527-31). It is difficult to see Jason's words as anything but self-serving and heartless, as does the chorus (576-78). It is clear why the Greeks came to distrust and hate sophists. Jeffers' Jason emphasizes the same sophistic points as Euripides', but his speech is condensed into fourteen lines (CP 3: 160-61). Sophism may still be contemptible in the twentieth century, but it was not as sensational to Jeffers' audience as it would have been to Athenians. There is another salient difference between the two Jasons: Euripides' Jason mentions "friends" to whom he can introduce Medea and who can provide her with "benefits" (612-15). This is an insinuation that Medea can survive as a *hetaira*, which in practical terms would have been the only option available to a non-citizen. This too, of course, is a dig at Aspasia and Pericles, albeit indirect.²⁷ Jeffers' Nurse comments that Jason has treated Medea "like a harlot" in abandoning her for "a Greek marriage" (CP 3: 140), which smoothly elides the need for any cultural context. Both playwrights cultivate sympathy for Medea, as Jason has traded his life with her for "worldly advantage, fine friends, and a high place in Corinth" (3: 140; Euripides 9-23). This sympathy is held in tension with the fear associated with Medea for her dangerous unpredictability.

Differences between Jeffers' and Euripides' Medeas: the construction of Medea's motivation

In Euripides' play, Medea mentions several motives for killing her children: to hurt Jason the most (817), to prevent her enemies' satisfaction (797), as in other versions of her myth the Corinthians kill her children, and to compensate for the shame she feels due to his new marriage and abandonment of her (1355). Euripides' Medea is a hot mess, full of conflicting impulses and drives.

Jeffers hones Medea's motivation to kill her children and uses the Chorus to facilitate this, expanding its role. Unlike Euripides' chorus, which begins and ends with the fraught idea of justice (see below), Jeffers' Chorus provides more interaction with Medea, enhances the background of her story (e.g., CP 3: 147), and foreshadows her dark deeds. Euripides' Medea's relationship with the chorus starts out with Medea anticipating their criticism of her, for being a foreigner, though they are in fact sympathetic (214-24); Jeffers' Medea initially treats the Chorus as a nosey neighbor:

“You’ve come—let me suppose / With love and sympathy—to peer at my sorrow” (CP 3: 146). This Chorus is not only sympathetic to Medea—they love her (3: 145). After the scene with Creon, Jeffers’ Chorus loyally stands by Medea and criticizes the king (3: 154) and seems not to notice when she mutters dark, vaguely violent thoughts (3: 155). After the scene with Jason when Medea’s words are filled with images of death, the Chorus laments the destructiveness of love (3: 162-63). The first glimmer of her idea to kill her children comes during her conversation with Aegeus (3: 166). After that scene, the Chorus likens Medea to “some distracted city / Sharpening its weapons” (3: 170), hinting at doom. At the end of their conversation, Medea reveals her idea to send a gift to the princess (3: 172).²⁸ The First Act ends with the Nurse anticipating evil, and the Second Act starts with the Nurse and the Chorus mulling over various omens of disaster (3: 174). After Jason has left with the children and gift, Medea reveals to the Chorus the horrible trap she has set into motion and hints at a dark fate for her children (3: 181). At this point, Medea and the Chorus discuss the difference between justice and vengeance, with the Chorus arguing that vengeance cannot be justice (3: 182). Once the Chorus realizes that they are one and the same for Medea, they become agitated with panicked anticipation. There is a brief reprieve for the Chorus when the children return safely (3: 184), but that soon turns to alarm, after the reports of the Slave and the Nurse, when Medea rebukes them for doubting her will (3: 190). Here, Medea struggles the most between her maternal feelings (“look, women, the little mouths: I frightened them”) and her vengeful anger (“Would you say that this child / Has Jason’s eyes?”), but in the end what determines her deadly actions is her abiding desire to sever every last link between Jason and herself: “They are his cubs. They have his blood. / As long as they live I shall be mixed with him” (3: 190-91). The Chorus pleads with her to flee with her children and beg her to stop her slaughter, but once the deed is done, they shift their focus from Medea—First Woman: “I do not know / Whether *Medea* lives or is dead” (3: 194)—to Jason, and his part of the blame for pushing Medea to such limits (3: 193). Jeffers’ Medea offers a straightforward explanation to Jason: “I have done it: because I loathed you more / Than I loved *them*” (3: 196). The Chorus helps to build up Medea’s motivation as well as her awareness of her own endgame, while at the same time highlighting Medea’s unpredictability in tension with her destructive will.

Differences between Jeffers' and Euripides' *Medeas*:
the ending of the play

The conclusions of the plays differ in form but achieve similar ends. In Jeffers' version, Medea exults in her triumph over Jason, and this bookends her story arc. Euripides' play has an ending that is more difficult to read because it connects the material in the play with the larger sense of justice in the Greek world, referring to a communal understanding that goes beyond the context of the play. Here the chorus has the last words, answering Jason's final lines in which he begs Zeus to witness what he is suffering (1405-14). The chorus replies that Zeus accomplishes many things contrary to human expectation (1415-19). What is unstated here is that Zeus is the god of justice, and this justice is defined tautologically: whatever Zeus does is justice. When Medea reveals her murderous plans, she invokes the justice of Zeus (764). Euripides gradually constructs the play's attitude towards justice. Medea first mentions that "there is no justice in mortals' eyes" (219).²⁹ Ironically, Jason appeals to justice when he boasts that he rescued Medea from a barbarous country and gave her the opportunity to know justice and the use of laws (537). Both Jason (1298, 1316) and Medea (261, 767, 802) use the word "justice" idiomatically to describe the vengeance they desire on each other. At the play's end Jason wishes for Justice to destroy Medea (1390), and Medea retorts that because he broke his oaths to her and deceived her, he has no claims to justice (1391-92). The chorus validates Medea's assertion, essentially laying the events of the play at the feet of Zeus in its closing speech (1415-19). This final reference to justice challenges Euripides' audience to see the outcome of the story as a sort of justice, a judgment against Jason. The Nurse anticipates this interpretation early in the play, commenting that "excess wealth does not bring advantage for mortals, but whenever a god is angry at a house, it makes the ruin greater" (127-30). Medea can be seen as an instrument of the gods to exact retribution. It is for outcomes like this that Euripides has been called subversive and proto-feminist.³⁰

Though Jeffers echoes the idea that Jason's suffering comes from the gods—First Woman (of Jason): "I am more afraid of the clinging contagion of his misfortunes. / A man the Gods are destroying" (CP 3: 193)—his play imparts in its conclusion a subtle and powerful thought. Medea's final words are full of contrasts:

But I, a woman, a foreigner, alone
 Against you and the might of Corinth,—have met you throat for
 throat, blood for blood, betrayal for betrayal,
 And for a shameful evil an unendurable punishment.—Now I
 go forth
 Under the cold eyes of the weakness-despising stars:—not
 me they scorn. (CP 3: 197)

These opposing ideas—female versus male, foreign versus national, individual versus collective—point at another opposition that is at the foundation of both *Medeas*: nature versus culture. Culture is associated with Greek civilization, and nature with Medea and her barbarous land. Unlike Euripides' play, Jeffers' *Medea* abounds in references to nature: the animal and stone imagery, as well as the celestial imagery of Medea's closing speech. Jeffers is known for extolling nature above humanity, and his use of nature in this play connects disturbingly with that theme. Nature here can be dangerous, as Medea's nature is dangerous. Her reference to the judgment of the stars is a rejection of the traditional means of judgment provided by Greek culture; Medea refuses to be, and cannot be, judged by Greek standards. This reading of the conclusion both honors Euripides and is faithful to Jeffers' own worldview.

Passages for classroom use

Lastly, here are seven passages that are useful for exploring Jeffers' innovations with Medea's story. I endeavored to choose passages that could be seen synoptically on the page in *Collected Poetry*, volume 3.

1. **The Nurse's prologue (140-41)**

In this passage the Nurse sets up the action of the play. There are several instances of Greek-barbarian contrast. There is mention of the youth and beauty of Medea's rival, as well as likening Medea to a harlot. Both of these features are not in Euripides, and are added by Jeffers to bring out Medea's perspective in a way that is understandable to modern audiences. There is also stone and animal imagery, which fits into the nature theme, as does the Nurse's reference to "the earth and sky" which Jeffers changes from gods to natural elements.

2. **Medea's opening speech (146-47)**

This is Medea's opening address to the Chorus of Corinthian women. She contrasts Greek and barbarian culture, and makes two mentions of her rival's youth and beauty. There is stone imagery, and foreshadowing of violence and her rival's demise.

3. **After Creon's scene (154-55)**

Here Medea and the Chorus react to Creon's decree of exile. The Chorus speaks in direct criticism of the king, which is not in Euripides, but useful for a modern audience. There is Greek-barbarian contrast, and complex animal imagery. Medea uses "dog" pejoratively to refer to Creon, and then refers to herself as a dangerous animal, and hints at violence. This passage also contains her famous statement that giving birth is harder than standing three times in battle.

4. **After Jason's scene (162-63)**

Here Medea and the Chorus react to Jason's demeaning words. More stone-bone imagery and animal imagery is used to illustrate the destructiveness of love. The Chorus speaks of God in the singular, in contrast with Medea's gods (e.g., 154), which appeals to modern, western Abrahamic religions.

5. **Aegeus' scene (166-69)**

Here Medea conceives of her idea to kill her children (166). There is more animal imagery and stone imagery. Aegeus parries Medea's question about justice; he is willing to condemn Jason's action but will not decree his suffering. Medea makes two more references to her rival's youth (167). Medea also compels Aegeus to swear by earth and heaven to protect her in Athens, turning Euripidean divinities (Earth, Heaven) into emblems of nature. There is also other nature imagery.

6. **After the gift is sent (181-83)**

Here Medea reveals her plot to kill the bride and implies that she will then do violence to her children. There is animal imagery, both comparing Medea to beasts of prey and contrasting them with her. The Chorus and Medea discuss the difference between justice and vengeance. There is also nature imagery, and Greek-barbarian contrast.

7. **After the report of the princess' death (189-91)**

Medea is gearing up to murdering her children. There is stone-bone imagery, and animal imagery. Here Medea displays the greatest inner conflict over killing her children. The sword

she takes up on her initial impulse to protect her children from the soldiers who will be coming is the same one that will deliver them to their fate. Medea also speaks the word “mother” for the last time.

Conclusion

What made Euripides’ *Medea* so powerful for its Athenian audience was that, in his typical way, Euripides took an unsympathetic character and made her believable and sympathetic, not to the point that by the end of the play people would be urging Medea to do her deadly deeds, but to the point that the audience would feel uncomfortable with Jason’s behavior and find Medea’s complaints disturbingly understandable. In sum, the political background of Euripides’ play—the real-life Jason and Medea of Pericles and his mistress Aspasia, and the issue of sophism, as well as the cultural restrictions on women and the pernicious attitude toward foreigners—all contribute to making *Medea* about more than just a relationship gone wrong, but also a lesson about foreign policy.

Jeffers instead sees the story primarily through the lens of clashing nature and culture. His Medea’s variance from Greek culture is translated into the metaphor of nature: animal imagery, stone imagery, references to the deified elements. She can be seen as a force of nature used by the gods to punish Jason, but that is the reading of the Greek women in the play. Medea’s final lines introduce a different frame of judgment, one that invokes different celestial gods, questions the authority of (Greek) culture, and affirms the sway of nature, which may be closer to the essential conceptions of the originating myth that is the ground of both plays.

NOTES

1. For an analysis of Jeffers' *Medea* that discusses its engagement with contemporary post-Second World War literature, see Richardson.

2. Greece at this time was composed of independent city-states that often united in times of external conflict.

3. For an analysis of the terms for prostitute, see Miner.

4. Plutarch specifies that the charges included accusing Aspasia of keeping freeborn women in her house for the use of Pericles (*Pericles* 32.1). After Pericles' death a couple of years into the war, the comic playwright Aristophanes blamed the Peloponnesian War on Aspasia, alleging that the kidnapping of some prostitutes from her brothel-initiated hostilities between Athens and Sparta (*Acharnians* 523-34). Though Aristophanes is generally known for his outlandish plots, some six hundred years later the rhetorician Athenaeus unironically repeats that Pericles started the war because of Aspasia and the rape of two of her girls (*Deipnosophistae* 13.25), treating Aristophanes' joke as truth. Greek posterity favors the tabloid version of history: that Pericles started the war as a distraction from the trials against Phidias and Aspasia, and Aspasia was a concubine or courtesan, adulterous and avaricious (Plutarch, *de Herodoti Malignitate* 856A2; Ps-Lucian, *Amores* 30; Lucian, *Gallus* 19; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12.1; Gorgias, *Testimonia* 35.5; Philostratus, *Epistulae* 73.24; Alciphron, *Epistulae* 4.7).

5. Most commonly her grandfather is the sun god Helios, her father is Aeëtes, and her aunts Pasiphaë and Circe.

6. Socrates took his students to converse with her, and his close friends took their wives to hear her speak (Plutarch, *Pericles* 24.5). Socrates is reported to have said that he learned from her and Diotima (Maximus Tyrius, *Dissertationes* 38.4). Plato was said to respect her and might have modeled his character Diotima the love philosopher in the *Symposium* on her (Athenaeus 5.219B-E). Xenophon's Socrates quotes Aspasia on the proper running of a house (*Economicus* 3.14).

7. Author's translation, as are the other translations.

8. She is known as Glaucé in the Greek authors Apollodorus and Diodorus Siculus, and as Creusa in the Latin authors Seneca, Propertius, and Hyginus. Jeffers follows the Latin convention. Jeffers' *Medea*'s mention to Creon of Creüsa's reputation for beauty (CP 3: 151, 153) has no Euripidean counterpart.

9. This is as much a slight to Pericles as it is a compliment to Aspasia, and the tension between the two could indicate that these philosophers resent Aspasia as much as they admire her.

10. Plutarch uses every kind of word for "love" to describe their relationship (*Pericles* 32.1).

11. See, for instance, North and Rademaker.

12. For the accidental killing, see Pausanias 2.3.10-11 (in Spiro). For the Corinthians killing the children, see the *Scholia* to Euripides' *Medea* 273 (in Dindorf).

13. E.g., MEDEA: "Or let the wreaths be bright blinding fire, and the songs a high wailing, / And the wine blood . . . Let them watch my enemies go down in blood" (CP 3: 147); "It is . . . likely that . . . something might happen / To the bride and the marriage" (158); "It may be I shall . . . rejoice / Before the sun sets" (165). Her gift to the princess is framed by several terrible omens not present in Euripides (174): "Watch this man, women: he is going to weep. I think / He is going to weep blood, and quite soon, and much more / Than I have wept" (178). Medea warns the children not to touch the garment (180); after the children leave Medea hints at dark deeds which the Chorus misinterprets: "I wish the deep earth would open and swallow us— / Before I do what comes next. / I wish all life would perish, and the holy Gods in high heaven die, before my little ones / Come home to my hands" (181). Medea sums this up: "No one has ever injured me but suffered more / Than I had suffered" (189). Medea says, "Death. Death is my wish. For myself, my enemies, my children. Destruction" (142). This potent expression is more of an indication of her state of mind than her intent of mind, given that both she and Jason survive the end of the play.

14. In Jeffers, other expressions of foreignness include: the THIRD WOMAN: "a barbarian woman from savage Colchis" (CP 3: 144) and "All the people of her country are witches . . . They are savages, but they have a wild wisdom" (145); MEDEA: "I too was a child of power, but not in this country" and "I made my own land to hate me forever" (146); "I do not know how much a Greek woman / Will endure. The people of my race are somewhat rash and intemperate" (147); CREON: "a wolf from Asia" (150); MEDEA: "though I was born in far-off Asia . . . / The races of Asia are human too" (151); "You came to see / How the barbarian woman endures betrayal" (183); "I, a woman, a foreigner" (197).

15. Medea uses it twice, both times expressing herself from either Jason's (591) or the chorus' point of view (256).

16. The other occurrences of *xenos* refer to its related meaning "friend" (388, 613, 616, and 730).

17. Medea also calls Jason a *xeinapatou*, "deceiver of a foreigner / guest" (1392).

18. E.g., the NURSE: "Jason would have been wiser to tempt a lioness, or naked-handed steal the whelps of a tiger" and "You do not see her. This evil . . . I dread the lion-eyed / Glare of its noon" (CP 3: 141); "like a fierce hound at fault" (142); stage directions for Medea: ". . . she is prowling back and forth beyond the doorway, like a caged animal" (144); CREON: "I see whom I deal with. Serpent and wolf: a wolf from Asia" (150); "you can make honey in your mouth like a brown bee / When it serves your turn" (151); "We shall watch you: as a hawk does a viper" (153); the NURSE: ". . . to keep / Evil birds from our hearts!" (173); MEDEA: "Do you think / I am a cow lowing after the calf? Or a bitch with pups . . ." (178); ". . . brave little falcons . . . while far your mother / Flies the dark storm . . ." (179); FIRST WOMAN: "no blood-lapping / Beast of the field, she-bear nor lioness, / Nor the lean wolf-bitch, / Hurts her own tender whelps; nor the yellow-eyed, / Scythe-beaked and storm-shouldered / Eagle that tears the lambs, has ever made prey / Of the fruit of her

own tree—" (181-82); "In a blood-storm she flew up from Thessaly, / Now here and dark over Corinth she widens / Wings to ride up the twisted whirlwind / And talons to hold with . . ." (183); SECOND WOMAN: "I hear the man-wolf on the snow hill / Howl to the soaring moon—" (183); FIRST WOMAN: "Like an erect serpent, its tail tears the earth" (184); ELDER CHILD: "She is hunting me . . ." (192).

19. In addition to the other instances cited, the animal imagery not in Euripides: the NURSE: "the gray fishhawk" (CP 3: 139); MEDEA: "I wish . . . the white wolf of lightning / Would leap" (145); "I will endure a dog's pity or a wart-grown toad's" (150); "No wolf, my lord" (151); JASON: ". . . you women / Clustered like buzzing bees at the hive-door?" (157); MEDEA: "*me* driven by the hairy snouts from the quadruped marriage-bed" (160); FIRST WOMAN: "A great love is a lion in the cattle-pen, / The herd goes mad, the heifers run bawling / And the claws are in their flanks" (162), "The eagle and the wild swan fly up from the earth" (163); MEDEA: "Ancient Goddess to whom I and my people / Make the sacrifice of black lambs and black female hounds" (164); "The yoke's / On the necks of the horses" (170); the NURSE: "a young mare . . . tore with her teeth a stallion" and MEDEA: "a mare attacked a stallion?" (174); FIRST WOMAN: "one of the fish took fire" and THIRD WOMAN: "a black leopard was seen / Gliding though the market-place . . ." (174); JASON: "How would you like a horn-tipped bow to hunt rabbits with? Wolves, I mean" and MEDEA: "Do you think / I am a cow lowing after the calf? Or a bitch with pups, licking / The hand that struck her?" (178); ". . . brave little falcons . . . little pawns of my agony . . ." (179); "on the snow hill / Howl" (183); FIRST WOMAN: "Like an erect serpent, its tail tears the earth" (184); MEDEA: "My little falcons!" and "Our enemies . . . Crying like dogs . . . this final sacrifice I intended glares in my eyes / Like a lion on a ridge" (189); "Not if every war-hound and spear-slave in headless Corinth / Were on the track" and "My eaglets, my golden ones!" (190); "They are his cubs. They have his blood" and "Evening . . . brings the bird to the bough and the lamb to the fold" (191); JASON: "I came to kill you, Medea, / Like a caught beast, like a crawling viper" and MEDEA: "Do you see the two fire-snakes / That guard this door?" (195); "Beware my door-holders, Jason! these eager serpents" (196).

20. Before that, the only animalian reference to Medea is when the Nurse calls Medea a lioness at 187. Jason repeats this reference at 1407.

21. Aside from two references to the clashing Symplegades rocks near Medea's home of Colchis (435, 1264), these are the only references to stone in the play.

22. E.g., MEDEA: "I will not allow . . . pity . . . to snivel over the stones of my tomb" (CP 3: 144); FIRST WOMAN: "She is terrible. Stone with stone eyes" (147); CREON: "Medea, woman of the stone forehead" (148); MEDEA: "I know that your will is granite. But even on the harsh face of a granite mountain some flowers of mercy / May grow . . ." (152); THIRD WOMAN: "What is she doing, that woman, / Staring like stone, staring?" (163).

23. There is no reference to the weight of years in Euripides. This addition by Jeffers also calls attention in a metatheatrical way to the millennia separating his audience from Euripides'.

24. Jeffers transforms the tutor's gossip about overhearing talk about Medea's exile from old men playing with backgammon stones (Euripides 68), to "Where the old men sit in the sun on the stone benches" (CP 3: 142). Sitting on stone benches conjures up the weighty image of old men, sitting in judgment. Medea promises that her departure will be as quiet "as dew / That drops on the stones at dawn and is dry at sunrise" (153). Here the ephemerality of the dew contrasts with the eternity of the stones, and the weight of Medea's stony character belies her easy words. Aegeus describes the protection he is offering Medea in Athens as "huge stones" (169), which represent the august weight of Athens' reputation. The last stone imagery comes from Medea as she looks upon the treacherous gift she is about to send the princess Creüsa, which will seal her fate and the fates of those close to her: "The old stones in the walls / Have watched and laughed." These lines follow Medea's ironic musing about "being generous / To one's friends, and . . . merciless to one's enemies . . . you know what a friend [Creüsa] has been to me" (173).

25. Fire imagery in Jeffers, not present in Euripides: FIRST WOMAN: "one of the fish took fire" (CP 3: 174); JASON: "It looks like fire . . ." (180); MEDEA: "The golden wreath binds her bright head with light" and FIRST WOMAN: "your mind in a fire-haze" (181); MEDEA: "you could easily fall / In the same fire" (182); FIRST WOMAN: "Fire and death have done your bidding" (190); MEDEA: "Their eyes are burning coals and their tongues are fire" (195).

26. E.g., SECOND WOMAN: "I hate Jason, who made this sorrow" (CP 3: 144); FIRST WOMAN: "I have seen this man's arrogance . . . I say that Corinth / Is not well ruled" and SECOND WOMAN: "The city where even a woman, even a foreigner, / Suffers unjustly the rods of power / Is not well ruled" (154); and FIRST WOMAN: "A man the Gods are destroying" and "You caused these things. She was faithful to you and you broke faith" (193). Medea also compares both Jason and Creon to dogs, which undermines their status and power; see above.

27. Plutarch criticizes Aspasia for taking up with a low-class man after Pericles dies (*Pericles* 24.7), according to Aeschines' report that Lusikles the sheepseller was the first person to "get together" with Aspasia after Pericles' death. Aspasia was obviously forced to seek what male protection she could secure after Pericles' sudden demise.

28. Jeffers' Medea is also fixated on the "yellow hair" and youthful attributes of Creüsa (CP 3: 146, 147, 153, 172, 195), whereas Euripides' Medea is not concerned by her rival's appearance; the princess' main attraction for Jason is that she is Greek. This detail make Medea's resentment relatable for a modern audience.

29. Jeffers' Medea expresses a similar thought: ". . . justice, at least on earth, / Is a name, not a fact" (CP 3: 146).

30. E.g., van Zyl Smit and Barlow, but also Durham.

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BOOK REVIEW

Geneva M. Gano. *The Little Art Colony and US Modernism: Carmel, Provincetown, Taos*. Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

REVIEWED BY WHITNEY HOTH

The central thesis of Geneva Gano's carefully-argued book is arresting and original: we have persistently misidentified modernism as a by-product of urban environments despite substantial evidence (marshalled skillfully by Gano) that much modernist innovation and achievement derives from remote regions far removed from major urban centres. Gano argues that our ready conflation of modernism with the city has limited our recognition of the distribution and diversity of modernist activity and distorted our view of the modernist project, which is best understood as a congeries of site-specific practices rather than an abstract universal of uniform definition. Modernism is *modernisms* of multiform variety involved in a complex system of global exchange between dominant urban centers and their institutions, small art communities in rural America, and emerging non-Western communities and regions. As test cases of her thesis, Gano examines the development and dynamics of three notable modernist enclaves: the small art colonies of Carmel, Provincetown, and Taos, each associated with prominent modernist artists and intellectuals, most importantly, Robinson Jeffers, Eugene O'Neill, and D. H. Lawrence.

The importance of Gano's book for Jeffers scholars is obvious. Jeffers is closely associated with two of Gano's art colonies: Carmel and Taos. Even more importantly, Jeffers' status as a modernist is a recurring issue in Jeffers criticism, and Gano's novel redefinition of modernism opens new perspectives on what it means to be a modernist and how Jeffers may relate to modernism. The assumption, fairly common in Jeffers criticism, that Jeffers is not a modernist may require reconsideration in light of Gano's thesis that modernism is a

multivalent system of diverse development and practice. Accepting Gano's claim for the plurality of modernisms, it is possible to consider Jeffers' poetic practice modernist, despite his retention of traditional narrative techniques and relatively transparent diction. To cede the definition of modernism primarily to Mallarmé, Joyce, Eliot, and Pound as many critics do—and perhaps Jeffers himself did—reproduces the same confusion of modernism with urbanism Gano identifies. Gano's book provides an opportunity to reopen the debate about regionalism and its relation to literary status by recovering the significance of place as an essential element in the modification of modernism and a principal source of its energies and influence. If there is, as Gano acknowledges, "a more properly recognisable (and legitimate) urban-based modernism" (22) which excludes Jeffers, O'Neill, and Lawrence from serious consideration as exemplars of modernism, then this legitimated version represents impoverishment of our possibilities of understanding a complex phenomenon. In this respect, Jeffers, O'Neill, and Lawrence are not failed modernists but *modernists of another kind*, and their shared preference for extra-urban environments represents an important variant in the total system of modernist development and exchange which we can now recognize and recover. Gano's book is a significant step toward re-establishing a modernist Jeffers.¹

The scope of Gano's investigations exceeds the career of Jeffers and the other artists she considers. Her concern is to demonstrate a worldwide system of artistic and intellectual production and exchange, the material conditions and geographical positioning of artistic development, distribution, and consumption. She writes as a "materialist humanist" (19) and gives primacy to economic and social particulars conditioning artistic production and reception. In a word, her criticism is sociological, which is presently the dominant form of institutionalized academic criticism of the arts. Strongly influenced by Fredric Jameson's studies of late-phase capitalism, Gano's analysis of material and immaterial production networks reflects a political orientation grounded in the tradition of Western Marxism, which is now normative in university English and cultural studies departments. In this tradition, art and artists are positioned as laborers (art workers) in an economic system of material/ideological production requiring critique to facilitate, ultimately, liberation and social reform. A reasonable description of this methodology might be "social justice sociology," in which

analysis of cultural production proceeds in accordance with political presuppositions of the repressive structure of western culture and the need to expose its contradictions in its artistic representations, which function simultaneously as sites of opposition and complicity relative to prevailing economic imperatives and power relations.

In Gano's examination of Carmel, we learn a great deal about turn-of-the-century real estate and tourism interests and their promotion of Monterey Bay and Carmel as vacation and recreation destinations centred around an emerging bohemian artist community, commercially branded as "the Carmel idea" in contemporary popular journalism, underwritten largely by the developing tourist industry. According to Gano, the artists of the region, including Jeffers, were participants in land values promotion, necessarily implicated in the construction of an idealized rural retreat for wealthy white tourists and prospective year-round residents seeking bucolic escape from urban racial and class tensions. The art community of Carmel functioned as a colony of "neonatives"² displacing the original native inhabitants and other racialized groups such as Chinese and Portuguese fishermen who were considered picturesque provided they were marginalized and managed. Gano's research into the economic and social development of the region is thorough, and her brief history of the various railroad and land development interests involved represents this criticism at its best. She is also incisive and persuasive in charting the influence of socioeconomic forces in artistic production, notably Jack London's novel *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), which Gano reads as a celebration of Carmel as a white enclave of masculine athleticism and appropriative primitivism, complete with beach party pseudo-primitive rituals and back-to-nature festivals and fantasies, a lightly fictionalized *roman à clef* of "the Carmel idea." In the complex system of artistic production and circulation Gano examines, London's novel reflects and promotes regional economic interests by advertising Carmel as a privileged white playground, which becomes a national and international commodity for a wide audience through London's representations, which in turn serves to glamorize and reinforce regional interests. The tendency of Gano's criticism here is familiar and conventional in its emphasis on economic inequity, race and gender privilege, colonial domination, displacement of indigenous peoples, and cultural appropriation. These are common tropes of current academic criticism. Her management of these is confident

and convincing, bolstered by careful research and reinforced by evidence. It is difficult not to accept her representation of Carmel as a more or less deliberate creation of real estate speculators motivated by racism for whom artists-in-residence were (relatively) unwitting accomplices. In his old age, Jeffers lamented Carmel's "obscene future" of suburban houses and conspicuous consumption. In Gano's telling, Carmel's origins appear similarly obscene. Behind the picturesque views and bohemian idylls is a record of colonial and neocolonial violence.

Readers of Jeffers will be chiefly interested in how this materialist/humanist criticism applies to the poet and his work. Gano provides an extended reading of "Tamar" informed by her sociological perspective. Her reading is a brilliant and complex *tour de force*. We have only a few sustained readings of "Tamar" in the critical record, and Gano's represents the most important in several decades. For Jeffers readers, Gano's analysis of "Tamar" will perhaps be the most significant component of her book, and although it covers only a few chapters in an otherwise ambitious and far-reaching theoretical study, it will have to be considered henceforward by anyone who wants to understand Jeffers' great inaugural poem. If we have Zaller's comprehensive reading of "Tamar" in the psychological register in *The Cliffs of Solitude*, we now have Gano's counterbalancing sociological reading. Both are indispensable.

For Gano, Jeffers is, relative to the Carmel community, "a conflicted artist," whom she describes as "a particularly recalcitrant arts worker" (58). In her view, Jeffers, unlike London, does not celebrate the "Carmel idea" of leisured white privilege but inverts it, "repositioning it instead as its virtual opposite: a concentrated site of national and racial reckoning for the violent Western legacy of imperialism and colonialism" (59). "Tamar," in Gano's reading, is an allegory of colonial ultraviolence culminating in the imperial disaster of World War I and the ruinous involvement of the United States. The microcosm of Carmel and the Cauldwell family in "Tamar" links the macrocosmic catastrophe of a world at war to the local and immediate; the international crisis comes to regional focus in a settler family living at the extremity of western colonial expansion and domination. Far from being an idyllic refuge of white privilege, Carmel becomes a focal point of the nightmare of history.

In Gano's allegorical schema, the house of Cauldwell stands in for the United States on the eve of the Great War. Lee Cauldwell's precipitous plunge from the cliff at the start of the poem mirrors America's approaching surrender to patriotic war fever. The febrile desperation of both young Cauldwells, Tamar and Lee, their sense of aimlessness and frustration, reflects a *fin de siècle* generation inheriting the accumulated failures and crimes of a bankrupt civilization. The disorder of the Cauldwells' domestic world, with its long history of perverse introversion, answers to the calamitous violence unleashed in Europe. Except for her insistence on limiting interpretation to the immediate historical horizon, Gano's reading of the poem to this point does not differ significantly from earlier critics, notably Robert Brophy who observed in his enduringly relevant study *Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, "Tamar's tragedy is clearly not a private one; it reflects, affects, and is affected by the larger and larger dimensions or levels of physical reality. Her firebrand militancy to purge the corruptions of her house parallels the 'war-to-end-all-wars' of 1914–1918" (48).

In identifying World War I as the social background of "Tamar," Gano's reading remains firmly within the confines of a strongly established critical consensus, but her interpretation of the central crisis of the poem, Tamar's orgiastic dance and subjection to spectral rape in her encounter with the spirits of Carmel's dead indigenous inhabitants, represents a provocative and challenging departure from critical precedent. For some, her reading of this sensational episode may appear a deliberate misreading, an effort to assimilate Jeffers to current imperatives of historical revisionism and the aspirations of social justice reform. Gano definitely presents a Jeffers far more aligned with radical social justice critique than anyone has yet attempted, a Jeffers related to "an influx of art workers affiliated with the leftist cultural front [who] made Carmel their home base" (85). We are familiar in the critical record with a Jeffers of the right, even the extreme right, a view dismissed by most critics as distortion; now, in Gano, we have a Jeffers of the left, even the extreme left, which is unprecedented. Even if Gano's Jeffers, whose "political views sometimes chafed against the lines drawn by the Communist Party [!]" (86), is arguably a distortion, and her interpretation of "Tamar" a misreading, both nonetheless provide profoundly valuable and stimulating challenges to the prevailing view of Jeffers' essential conservatism. Arguments and evidence for

Gano's view are developed in three short subchapters of her book, "'To Leave his House in Order': Scaling the Domestic in 'Tamar'" (67-71), "Native Repossession on the Point Lobos Picnic Grounds" (71-79), and "Violence on the Home Front: World War and Cosmic Retribution" (80-83). All three should be recognized as essential texts in the record of Jeffers criticism.

For most of Jeffers' critics, Tamar's incestuous relationship with her brother Lee is an act of transgression initiating a series of violations culminating in the violent destruction of the family in a final holocaust. For Gano, Tamar's incest is not transgressive but conformist, functionally conservative, symbolic of caste preoccupation with race purity, the interbreeding characteristic of colonial settlers in a land of occupation. Gano's interpretation suits the poem's emphasis on incest as repetition, and Tamar's rage at learning her belatedness as yet another link in a generational chain reflects her sense of imprisonment within her restrictive colonial inheritance. For Gano, the significant transgressive act, the act that drives the action and expresses its thematic intent, is not incest but miscegenation, the spectral rape by disembodied spirits of displaced aboriginal inhabitants, which occurs during the séance on the beach at Point Lobos. In her search for ancestral origins, Tamar encounters and uncovers the foundational violence of the region, the repressed geography of genocide and dispossession haunting colonial settler culture with its defensive need to forget and deny its origins. Tamar's trauma is transformative. She becomes, through the medium of her enforced orgiastic dance, both the victim and the agent of aboriginal vengeance, "aligned with the Native American women she channels" (76), and her "single-minded desire to burn the family home to its foundations is driven, at least in part, by her act of confronting and acknowledging the nation's own faulty foundations" (73). Tamar becomes the indigenous "other" through a "supreme act of cultural and racial crossing" (78) that brings her settler family to destruction, enacting in microcosm the internecine slaughter of imperial European nations inheriting and internalizing their own colonial violence. Tamar, in her transformation, is an avatar of the dispossessed and displaced, the aboriginal peoples of America and the world wreaking vengeance upon "the white people who imagine themselves to be God's chosen people" (76). Gano's Tamar incarnates and realizes "the fire next time."

Gano is especially insightful in her discussion of the significance of dance in "Tamar," which is informed by her larger concern with the issue of modernism, both its global influence and regional modifications. Gano establishes Jeffers' familiarity with early modernist ideas of dance as a privileged medium for accessing the primitive, in part through his personal relationship with family friend (and Una's biographer) Edith Greenan, a student of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, "founders of 'exotic' dance in America," (77) whose most famous student was Martha Graham. Gano quotes Graham's own description of somatic access to the primitive through dance: "[t]here are always ancestral footsteps behind me, pushing me, when I am creating a new dance, and gestures flowing through me . . . You get to the point where your body is something else and it takes on a world of cultures from the past" (77). This extraordinarily apposite quotation is reinforced by the biographical information that Greenan remembered dancing for the Jefferses on the very beach at Point Lobos where "Tamar" dances her out-of-body, culture-crossing dance. Gano's integration of textual, historical, and biographical sources in her interpretation of the meaning of dance in "Tamar," which also establishes Jeffers' clear association with specifically modernist ideas of the primitive, constitutes incontrovertible evidence for her reading of this dramatic episode and for Jeffers' indebtedness to modernism. This densely constructed analysis is characteristic of Gano's sociological method throughout, and sometimes arrives as close to establishing matters of fact as is possible in literary criticism. Whatever else it may be, Tamar's dance is unquestionably an instance of modernist obsession with the primitive and exemplifies its enduring faith in the privileged capacity of dance to somatically recover and express it.

Jeffers has not generally attracted critics interested in a careful analysis of his poems as works of art, as self-sufficient constructions of language. Gano resembles other Jeffers scholars in this respect. She is comfortable pursuing ideas across the boundaries of individual poems, and her criticism is principally inter-poetic, much like that of her predecessors Squires, Brophy, Nolte, and Zaller. For Gano, all Jeffers' poems in which the character "Tamar" is mentioned (including "Come Little Birds," and "Apology for Bad Dreams") form an interconnected triad together with the eponymous narrative, and each interprets and complicates the others. Accordingly, Gano sees in the procession of dead Great

War soldiers, invoked by a medium during a nighttime séance in “Come Little Birds,” a repetition of the procession of Indian ghosts in “Tamar,” and the lament of these spectral soldiers, wronged and destroyed by their governments, retroactively strengthens the link between colonial and imperial violence in “Tamar” since both are “victims of the nation’s imperial bloodlust” (81). This connection is again reinforced in “Apology for Bad Dreams,” in which Tamar is mentioned after the poet-speaker contemplates the shell-middens of vanished Indian tribes whose “old griefs” must be remembered since “to forget evils calls down sudden reminders,” which Gano glosses as “The present horrors of modernity that Jeffers perceives—the world war being the most terrific example of these—are absolutely inseparable from the horrors of the past” (82). Gano presents Jeffers as concerned to maintain remembrance of “conquest, genocide, and attempted extermination” (82) as part of his “scathing rebuke of American capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism” (86). Gano’s Jeffers here conforms closely to the imperatives and preferences of postcolonial social justice criticism with its emphasis on imperialist victimization of indigenous peoples by white colonialists and the disastrous global depredations of repressive capitalism. This is an intensely political Jeffers. As a rejoinder to those critics who branded Jeffers a “fascist” during the 30s and 40s, we now have a Jeffers who is very nearly a Marxist, albeit a neo-Marxist more in line with Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson. Is this Jeffers possible?

The short answer is, “yes.” In 1987, a previously sealed collection of Jeffers manuscripts at Occidental College was opened to scholars. With the publication of Tim Hunt’s fourth volume of *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* in 2000, this material became widely available, and in the following fifth volume of textual evidence and commentary published in 2001, Hunt began the long process of clarifying Jeffers’ development prior to the publication of “Tamar,” particularly the crucial war years of 1916 to 1918. What Hunt discovered was a young poet³ initially inspired by the Russian Revolution who celebrated in several poems the promise of revolutionary liberty and “righteous treason” (CP 4: 464). Hunt also noted that the hypostatized figure of Liberty in one of these early poems, “The Daughter of God in Russia,” recalls the “amoral, redemptively destructive energy later projected in such figures as Tamar” (5: 41). The Tamar we encounter in 1925 still trails clouds of this revolutionary glory, some suggestion of anarchic enthusiasm

for Red Revolution shared by so many western intellectuals after the failure of Versailles and before the traumas of the Stalinist purges. On the evidence of these early poems, Jeffers entertained, at least briefly, political hopes of revolutionary transformation, and "Tamar," developed during this period of artistic and political ferment, retains elements of anarchic faith in revolutionary creative destruction. Gano is right that Jeffers was a friend of notable Reds such as Lincoln Steffens, Ella Winter, and Langston Hughes and was comfortable associating with radicals in Carmel's branch of the John Reed Club. The Jeffers of the 1920s, whom Leonard and Virginia Woolf actively published through their Hogarth Press, was understood as a modernist on the right side of history, the side of Bloomsbury and the enlightened Left. Gano's confident recruitment of Jeffers to the cause of her radical social justice criticism, with its neo-Marxist emphasis on victimization, racism, and social hierarchy, helps us recognize and recover an earlier Jeffers of the Left who later proved such a disappointment to both New Dealers and unrepentant Stalinists.

If he quickly lost his brief enthusiasm for utopian revolution, Jeffers nonetheless remained a lifelong anti-imperialist critical of America's colonial violence. Much later than "Tamar," he wrote, "America / Has robbed and exterminated the helpless tribes of a continent, / And all our golden southwest is war-spoils" (CP 4: 527). Jeffers would agree with Gano that America was founded and sustained in racism, and that our violent history would beget renewed violence on a greater scale, but there is a crucial distinction between Gano's social justice perspective and Jeffers' fundamental fatalism. Gano's reading of "Tamar" and her representation of Jeffers are persuasive only by exclusion, by a sustainedly selective orientation. Gano is aware of this. In a note referring to Jeffers' description of incest as symbolic of "immoderate racial introversion," she is quick to acknowledge that "Jeffers uses the term 'racial' in a broad sense (meaning human race rather than white race)" (257). This is correct. Although Jeffers acknowledges the specific historical crimes of white colonialists, he is far from suggesting that violence and criminality are peculiar to white westerners, or if so, in scale and scope only, not in kind. A crucial line in "Apology for Bad Dreams" points up this difference between Jeffers and Gano:

“ . . . Pain and terror, the insanities of desire;
not accidents but essential,
And crowd up from the core.” (*CP* 1: 209)

Jeffers does not mean by this that the white race has a special monopoly on savagery and violence; he means core evil is an irremediable element of human nature as such, a taint of the creature “man” in all its manifestations, from our anthropoid ancestors to civilized citizens in every city on earth, and also peasants, the indigenous, the poor and the oppressed. For Jeffers, essential evil, understood as violence or strain, is also present in nature itself, but the dimension of nature is largely missing from Gano’s criticism. Her horizon stops at the limits of the social, historical, and human, whereas Jeffers’ horizon extends beyond the social and human to the inhuman order of natural process. For Gano, “Tamar” is a brilliant allegory of a national tragedy, and it is that, but for Jeffers it is also a human and inhuman tragedy. It is the tragedy of human nature trapped in its essential limits within superordinate natural process. Gano brilliantly explicates Tamar’s final mocking line in the poem, “Did you think you would go / Laughing through France?” as the summation of the national tragedy, but that is not the poem’s final line. The poem’s final line is a statement, “The old trees, some of them scarred with fire, endure the sea-wind” (*CP* 1: 89); this “torturer wind,” present throughout the poem, continues after the human tragedy is ended because the tragedy of existence itself is understood as interminable and natural. Gano’s strictly delimited historical and social horizon excludes the one dimension that is arguably most distinctly Jeffersian, the radically transhistorical primacy of natural process. Brophy, in acknowledging, just as Gano does, the national and international dimensions of Tamar’s domestic tragedy, goes on to observe, pointedly, that “these in turn merely manifest and give microcosmic demonstration of the larger geophysical processes, which in turn manifest and mimic the cosmic process” (48).

Jeffers never sees the tragedy of human existence in terms of victims and perpetrators, the evil and the good. There *are* victims and perpetrators, but they are often interchangeable, and no individual person and no people escapes implication in the primal sin of being, which involves an impossible aspiration to be unlimited, a condition of matter itself, constantly created and destroyed. Gano

never approaches this Jeffersian metaphysics. It is not part of her methodology. The lens she uses brings a political Jeffers into sharp focus, but this Jeffers is a subset of the poet, and similarly “Tamar” is much more than an allegory of colonial brutality and retribution. If it were only that, it could end, but the tragedy of “Tamar” cannot end because perfected social justice is an impossible chimera and the human condition is *essentially* tragic. Gano does not misunderstand Jeffers. She simply ignores what does not correspond to her critical interest, which is characteristic of much critical practice, and especially so of critical orientations that determinedly preclude certain considerations *a priori*. In this respect Gano closely follows Jameson, who insists on adhering narrowly to the immediate historical horizon. What Gano sees in Jeffers, she sees very clearly, but for many Jeffersians, her Jeffers may appear reductive.

Perhaps scholars of Eugene O’Neill and D. H. Lawrence may have similar reservations about Gano’s sociological interpretations of their art and ambitions, but there will be no question that scholars of either will benefit from reading her extraordinarily trenchant and well-researched analyses of the intersection of creative aspiration with economic circumstances and historical/geographical determinants. Jeffers, O’Neill, and Lawrence all lived and worked in specific places, in real material conditions, at particular times, and Gano presents these particulars with authority and skill. One might object to a certain monochrome quality in Gano’s repeated discovery of racism and economic exploitation as motivating the development of these art colonies, but racism and economic exploitation are real and pervasive determinants, as Gano persuasively demonstrates. Within the constraints of her method, Gano is thorough, authoritative, and accurate. As to her central thesis of the circulation of modernist ideas and practises from remote regions to major urban centers and back again, Gano provides frequent concrete demonstration of this, which goes a long way toward supporting her new definition of modernism as a network of global exchanges and modifications rather than a monolithic movement centered in cities.

In the neo-Marxist critical framework exemplified by Fredric Jameson, there is no independent aesthetic realm; works of art are historically conditioned by-products of their cultural and social situation. Accordingly, in her study, Gano introduces art and artists as examples of “a world-system of letters” (2), which is

both an analog and adjunct of the world-system of capitalism, a totalizing and homogenizing network of production and exchange. In Gano's view, artists are understood as laborers working within and responding to their immediate historical circumstances. In her readings, Jeffers' "'Tamar' [is] an early shot across the bow aimed at Carmel's boosters and real estate developers by a recalcitrant arts worker" (85); O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* is "a stunning 'racial spectacle' that affirm[s] a culture of segregation and foster[s] a sense of white unity" (146), designed for the "entrepreneurial cultural labor market" (131); and D. H. Lawrence's rapturous descriptions of New Mexico in *St. Mawr* affirm "a vision being aggressively circulated by the region's tourism and real estate industry" (231). These artists, Gano believes, are inescapably implicated ("imbricated" is her preferred term) in the system of capitalist production and exchange; they may resist, as Gano seemingly believes Jeffers and Lawrence did, or they may conform, as Gano appears to suggest of O'Neill⁴, but they cannot escape their immediate historical entanglement in the ongoing expansion of a global commodity capitalism in which any attempt to secure a privileged position or place is inevitably "solidly subsumed within it" (236). Criticism of the kind Gano is practicing here may sometimes appear diminishing. In her identification of important indices of modernism, she includes "home-cooked meals of spaghetti" and "boozy all-night parties" along with "artmaking" (5). Emphasizing the material conditions of artists and their artistic production may sometimes involve a lack of discrimination suggesting interchangeability with less accomplished and demanding social practices and products. Gano does not always avoid this reductive tendency, and some readers will find her relentless historicizing an obstacle to appreciating her often acute and sensitive reading of important texts. Certainly, Jeffers had greater claims for his art than resistance to Carmel real estate developers, or even criticism of American imperialism, but these are aspects of his art, and Gano clearly identifies them. By doing so, she helps to demonstrate Jeffers' ongoing relevance to major concerns of contemporary criticism and establishes a modernist Jeffers who had more to say than we knew about the burdens of colonialism and the corrosions of imperialism.

Gano's insightful and rigorous reading of "Tamar" helps to recover this great poem for contemporary attention and firmly positions Jeffers as a major figure in the burgeoning field of modernist studies.

This alone would make Gano's book a welcome addition to the field of Jeffers studies, but its persistent intelligence, and above all, its rigorous research, make it indispensable. Gano's Jeffers differs profoundly from that of earlier Jeffers critics. Some may find her representation limited, even distorted, but it remains an important and stimulating challenge to rethink and redefine Jeffers in terms of new critical concerns for another generation of Jeffers readers.

NOTES

1. See Hart for a discussion of the importance of reestablishing Jeffers as a "modernist-generation figure," both for an accurate understanding of Jeffers' career and for the literary history of the West Coast generally.
2. Gano adopts the term "neonative" from Hal K. Rothman's *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (UP of Kansas, 2000).
3. Relatively young at 29. Jeffers' poetic, even personal, maturation was notably delayed, as he frequently acknowledged.
4. Gano's assessment of the careers of Jeffers, Lawrence, and O'Neill is never censorious, but a reader may feel that her view of O'Neill is the least sympathetic, emphasizing his entrepreneurial opportunism.

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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*, ninth edition, with parenthetical citations, notes, and works cited. Final revisions of accepted articles should be submitted as email attachments.

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