



# Robinson Jeffers

## NEWSLETTER

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**ON THE COVER:**

*A study of Jeffers and stone: Cannel granite boulders and a Taos millstone. Herbert Cerwin, 1940. Daisy Bartley Photo Collection, California State University Long Beach: Library Archives.*

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# *NEWS & NOTES*

■ The Henry Miller Library hosted a conference, "Robinson Jeffers's Big Sur," September 17. The program included Burt Kessenick and John Courtney commenting on the biographical background and worldview of the poet, Big Sur historian Jeff Norman relating many Jeffers lyrics and narratives to actual families and historical events of Sur, Robert Brophy speaking of Jeffers's poems celebrating Big Sur, Jean Grace rendering a dramatic monologue from Una Jeffers's letter excerpts by Isabel Hall (redolent of Julie Harris's Emily Dickinson in "Bell of Amherst"), Toby Rowland-Jones reading his "ode to a true poet," and Emmett Chidress presenting a personal selection of Jeffers's poems. The library building housed an exhibit of photographs by Morley Baer, Cole Weston, Peter McArthur, and Maureen Curtis.

■ Carmel's 1994 October Fest was celebrated by two conferences allied in their interest in Jeffers. The Tor House Foundation seminars focused on Melba Bennett, Jeffers's biographer, with panelists Tyrus Harmsen, Robert Brophy, and Ward Ritchie (Jim Holliday read Ward's reflections). These talks emphasized Melba the person. An afternoon session, "In Search of RJ," featured Rita Bottoms, U.C. Santa Cruz special collections librarian, and Michael Sutherland of the Occidental College archives. Arlene Hess and Margaret Pelikan of the Harrison Library, Carmel, remarked on Jeffers exhibits and holdings. The evening banquet's speaker was poet Sherod Santos, reflecting "On the Memory of Stone—A Tor House Legacy," Jeffers's impact on him as a poet maturing in Carmel. His talk is excerpted in the Winter Tor House *Newsletter*. John Courtney, Bert Kessenick, and Jeff Norman led the traditional poetry walk, following the theme "Jeffers, Ecology, & the Monterey Coast Range."

■ The Annual Jeffers Festival, October 6-8, 1995, will have as major theme "The Life and Work of Una Jeffers."

■ The Robinson Jeffers Association constituted the second conference in Carmel, meeting in Carpenter Hall on Sunday and Monday, October 10-11. The topics ranged widely.

On Sunday morning the presenters were Peter Quigley (U. of Tromso, Norway) on "Jeffers' Use of Nature as a Ground for Cultural Critique"; David Morris (U. of Washington, Tacoma) on "RJ's Influence on Edward Abbey"; David Rothman (Crested Butte Academy, Colorado) on "'The Incredible Beauty of Joy': RJ and the Legacy of Romanticism"; Steve Adkison (U. of Nevada, Reno) on "William Blake and RJ: Poets of Apocalypse"; David Sullivan (U.C. Irvine) on "'Both These Nothings': RJ, Robert Hass"; Nicolas Witschi (U. of Oregon) on "Helen Thurso's 'Image-Making Mind': Consciousness & Gender in 'Thurso's Landing'"; Kevin Hearle on "Jeffers, Archetype, and Indians"; Robb Kafka (U.C.L.A. Extension) on "Some Unpublished Jeffers Poems with Early Biographical References"; Robert Zaller (Drexel U.) on "RJ and the California Sublime"; Kirk Glaser on "A Threshold of Stone and Words"; and Robert Brophy (C.S.U. Long Beach) on "Human Habitation/Desecration and the Building of Tor House."

Monday papers included Fred White (Santa Clara U.) on "The Sun Proceeds Unmoved: Dickinson's Circumference and J's Inhumanism"; ShaunAnne Tangney (U. of Nevada, Reno) on "RJ as Postapocalyptic Thoreau: A New Way of Seeing Inhumanism"; Rodney Aitchey on "RJ's Two Isms: Inhumanism & Transhumanism"; Alex Vardamis (U. of Vermont) on "J's Critical Reputation with the Environmentalists"; James Baird (U. of North Texas) on "RJ and the Deep Ecologists"; E. J. Shoben on "Nature and Human Nature in RJ: The Question of Validity"; and Tim Hunt (Washington State U., Vancouver) and Albert Gelpi (Stanford U.) on "The Lost Years, RJ, 1917-1926." Abstracts of the papers by Rothman, Tangney, Shoben, Aitchey, Zaller, Hearle, and Glaser will be found in the *RJA Bulletin* for December 1994.

■ The next Robinson Jeffers Association Conference is scheduled for February 17-19 (Presidents' Weekend), 1996, at Occidental College. Michael Sutherland, special collections librarian, is in charge of arrangements. Send suggestions for papers, themes, and panels to James Karman or Terry Beers. Suggestions may also be made by email to <rjeffers@unr.edu>.

■ An "email server" for an ongoing informal Internet exchange of ideas in Jeffers studies has been established at the University of Nevada, Reno, by Steve Adkison. It is variously called a "newslit" (but not "newsgroup"), "bulletin board," and "mail reflector." Whatever is sent to <rjeffers@unr.edu> is automatically posted. Email <adkinson@unr.edu> for inclusion. No charge.

■ The American Literature Association will meet in Baltimore at the Stauffer Harborplace Hotel, May 26-28, 1995. Tim Hunt has arranged for two panels. Panel I, "Teaching Jeffers: Issues & Practice," will hear Betty Adcock (Meredith College): "'Into the Stone-eyed Honor of Tragedy': Reasons for Reading Jeffers in an Age of Software"; James Baird (U. of North Texas): "'This will tell you how': RJ's Poetry Taught from an Environmental Perspective"; Terry Beers (Santa Clara U.): "'... speaking directly to me': Jeffers in the Modern Poetry Classroom"; Janis Haswell (Washington State U.): "Reading Ritual in a 'Desert of Stones': How to Teach 'Cawdor' in a Post-Modern Age." Panel II, "Fateful Recurrence: American Poets & The Crisis of Two World Wars," will hear: Jacqueline Vaught Brogan (U. of Notre Dame): "Crisis, Cubism, 'Quiet-Normal Life': Stevens's Response to War"; Tim Hunt: "The Redemptive Daughter, The Avenging Son: Jeffers and the Fall of History"; and Susan Edmunds (Syracuse U.): "Swinging Between the Wars: The Suspension of History in H. DA War Writings."

■ Membership in the Robinson Jeffers Association is \$5 yearly. For information, write Prof. Terry Beers, English Department, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95053. Email: <tbeers@scuacc.scu.edu>.

■ The Modern Language Association (MLA) will meet in San Diego after Christmas. Two sessions will feature Jeffers: December 27, "Romantic Transformations: R] and the British Tradition" with Tim Hunt (WS.U. Vancouver), Don Bialostosky (Penn. State U.), Suzanne Clark (U. of Oregon), and Willard Spiegelman (So. Methodist U.); and December 28, "Poetries of the Isle of California" under Robert von Hallberg (U. of Chicago) with Edward Dorn (U. of Colorado) presenting "Robinson Jeffers, Charles Olson: The Rise and Fall of Nature in California."

■ California Teachers of English has announced their conference for September 21-23, 1995, at Asilomar by Pacific Grove. The theme

will be California writers; five discussion sessions, under the title "Wined Rock: The Poetry and Place of Robinson Jeffers," will be devoted to Jeffers's work in its relation to the region. Contact Kirk Glaser at <kirkgl@aol.com>.

- The Tor House Foundation has announced its annual Garden Party for May 7, 1995, 2 pm till 6 pm. It held a garden reception for its trustees 1978-1994 at Tor House on June 12.
- The Foundation sponsors tours of Tor House Fridays and Saturdays hourly from 10 till 3. For reservations call 408-624-1813. On Friday and weekends the number is 624-1840. Docents do a fabulous job. Foundation membership, which includes a quarterly newsletter, is \$30 for individuals, \$15 for students and senior citizens. Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921.
- The Docent Office offers paperbacks of Donnan Jeffers's *The Building of Tor House* (\$10) and *The Stones of Tor House* (\$6) and Garth Jeffers's *Memories of Tor House* (\$10). Also Talbot ties with an emblem of Hawk Tower and gift certificates for tours of Tor House (\$5). The Foundation has received from the estate of Donald C. Clark, founding librarian at U.C. Santa Cruz, letters, first editions, works, and books about Robinson Jeffers. He is the author of *Monterey County Place Names: A Geographical Dictionary*.
- A Humanities West symposium titled "The Classical Idea: The Enduring Light of Ancient Greece" will be held at San Francisco Herbst Theatre, June 3-4. On May 25 Harrison Smith, moderator, will offer a pre-program lecture with slides and audience discussion, "Aeschylus and Robinson Jeffers: The Influence of Ancient Athens on San Francisco and Northern California."
- "LONGTIMERS: Senior Artists of the Monterey Peninsula: Part I" is a richly illustrated videotape celebrating cultural life and history in Carmel. The life and work, friends and times of Robinson Jeffers are highlighted. \$25. Marie Wainscoat, PO. Box 5991, Carmel, CA 92921.
- A radio program for Sweden and Finland, "Robinson Jeffers, Inhumanismens Profet," was broadcast February 7, 1994, featuring

Jeffers poems translated into Swedish by Laro Nystrom and read by a famous actor, Erland Josephson. Anna Vilen was script writer and narrator. The program included interviews with Jeffers's son Gath, grandson Lindsay, and James Karman. Mr. Josephson had portrayed Robinson Jeffers in Botho Strauss's play "The Jeffers Case," adapted for the Swedish Broadcasting System in 1989. A TV-radio magazine featured Jeffers on two pages.

■ "Hawk Tower and Tor House" is a 16.5-minute film/video prepared by the Monterey County Office of Education for educational cable TV.

■ *Quarry West*, a literary magazine begun at U.C. Santa Cruz's Porter College by Raymond Carver and Paul Skenazy and now edited by Ken Weisner (which carried a symposium on RJ in 1990 guest-edited by Alan Soldofsky), is dedicating Number 32, Spring 1995, to an exploration of William Everson's work as poet and printer. This will look to "the artists' book" as seen over the twenty years since Everson's multidimensional printing of Jeffers's Tor House poems, *Granite and Cypress*. Felicia Rice will be guest editor.

■ *Nagazeta* magazine of experimental and modernist literature, edited by Sergei Solovyev from Kiev, Ukraine, for October 1994 features "Eba Xecce" ("Post-Mortem") by Robinson Jeffers.

■ ISLE: *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (Indiana U. of Pennsylvania), Fall 1993 (pp. 25-44, 163-64), carries an article, "A Hawk in the Margin's Cage: Robinson Jeffers and the Norton Anthologies," by Christopher Cokinos (Kansas State U.) assessing the politics of Jeffers poem inclusions (exclusions?) and text introductions in poetry gatherings aimed at the college population.

■ Terry Beers (Santa Clara U.) has a book scheduled for release in Spring 1995: *A Thousand Graceful Subtleties: Rhetoric in the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* from Peter Lang Publishing. A promotion flyer states: "Robinson Jeffers's poetry has always taught that men and women 'shine' through their endurance, through their acts of courage, and through their appreciation for the transcendent beauty of the natural world. This study uses Aristotle's descriptions of ethos, logos, and pathos to launch an inquiry into the rhetorical means by which Jeffers teaches

these lessons, and finally argues that Jeffers's literary and rhetorical artistry made him into a twentieth-century American epic poet." Hard cover, 128 pp., \$37.95. 1-800-770-LANG. 62 West 45th St., New York, NY 10036.

■ James Karman's *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California* in a revised, updated, and enlarged edition will shortly be available from Story Line Press, Three Oaks Farm, Brownsville, OR 97327. Paper, 8-1/2 x 5-1/2 in., 165 pp., \$12.00. Cover photo by Edward Weston. New photos, 18-column index, four-page current bibliography.

■ *Books in Print* advertises Pebble Beach Press as offering Point Lobos by Robinson Jeffers for \$39.50. This seems to be a trade edition of the \$2000 1987 portfolio by Peter and the Wolf Editions of Peter Rutledge Koch—15 Jeffers poems with photographs in a cruciform unfolding box and an important Everson essay introduction. Pebble Beach Press Marketing and Operations writes that the book has yet no publication date.

■ *National Geographic* has produced (July 1993) a 31 x 10 in. double map, "Coastal California" (20-mile-wide strip only) in five colors, which will delight cartographers interested in Jeffers. It not only lists towns, creeks, missions, and points from Crescent City to Imperial but gives an insert on Fort Ord, Monterey and Carmel Bays, and Point Lobos. One side details highways, airports, missions, wildlife refuges, state beaches and parks, Indian reservations, and national forests. The verso map notes bays, channels, creeks, islands, lakes, forests and national monuments, recreation areas, points, ranges, reservoirs, and even springs. One counts 19 place-names between Monterey and Morro Bay. The map's own cover seems to be a photo-become-painting from Hurricane Point looking northward. Price \$2.65. It comes as an insert to a fascinating NG issue (Vol. 184, No. 1) featuring cover and extended article on "Lightning: Nature's High Voltage Spectacle."

■ *Carmel local legendizing*: A controversy has arisen regarding what is unofficially called by some the "Jeffers Forest," part of the 17 Mile Drive in Pescadero Canyon, between Holman Hwy. and the sea, touched off by Pebble Beach Company's plan to fell 57,000 trees as part of a proposed redevelopment. Opponents of the development cite Jeffers's 1935 introduction to the Modern Library *Roan Stallion* in which he reflects on

a 1924 meditation while crossing a waterpipe in the pine darkened canyon after collecting firewood, a moment which is seen in its ecological setting as the epiphany and creative impulse deciding the future direction of his creative energies.

■ *More legend: The Monterey Herald's Alta Vista Magazine* (24 October 1993) reports: "Another owner of the area was Robinson Jeffers, the renowned poet and playwright. Jeffers owned a lot with trees on it. The lot ran in front of [Gen. Joseph L.] Stilwell's house. One morning ... Stilwell—they used to call him Vinegar Joe—saw Jeffers and said in his commanding voice, 'Jeffers, I want you to cut down those trees—they're getting in my view of the ocean!' And how do you think the famed poet responded to the general's command? Jeffers responded [sic] by planting dozens of tall eucalyptus trees along his lot, which ran for a block."

■ A small number of copies of *Robinson Jeffers: Selected Poems* (Carcanet Press, U.K., 1987), the British centenary edition edited and with an introduction by Colin Falck, have recently become available and can be obtained from the editor at \$5.00 per copy including postage. Write to: Prof. Colin Falck, York College, York, PA 17403. First come first served.



# ***JEFFERS BOOKS IN PRINT***

## ■ ***Books by Robinson Jeffers:***

- The Alpine Christ & Other Poems.* Everson, ed. 1974. \$20.00. Cayucos.  
*Brides of the South Wind.* Everson, ed. 1974. \$80.00. Cayucos.  
*Cawdor & Medea.* Everson, intro. 1970. \$11.95. New Directions.  
*Collected Poetry of R.J.* Hunted. Vol. 1, 1920-28. 1985. Vol. 2, 1928-38. 1989. Vol. 3, 1938-62. 1991. \$65.00 each. Stanford U. Press. *Dear Judas.* 1977. \$7.95. Liveright.  
*The Double Axe.* 1977. \$12.95. Liveright.  
*Flagons & Apples.* 1970. \$20.00. Cayucos.  
*The Last Conservative.* 1978. \$40.00. Quintessence.  
*Rock & Hawk: A Selection of Shorter Poems.* Hass, ed. 1987. \$19.95. Random House.  
*Selected Poems.* 1965. \$7.00. Random House/Vintage.  
*Selected Poetry.* 1938. \$24.95. Random House. [listed as out-of-print]  
*Songs & Heroes.* Brophy, ed. & intro. 1988. \$165.00/\$300.00 ltd. Deluxe edition. Arundel.  
*The Women at Point Sur & Other Poems.* 1987. \$7.95. Liveright.  
*Point Lobos.* (Illus.) 1994. Pebble Beach.

## ***Books on Robinson Jeffers:***

- Alberts, S. *A Bibliography of the Works of R.J.* 1966. \$25.00. Small Press Distr.  
Antoninus, Bro. *RJ: Fragments of an Older Fury.* 1970. \$7.50. Oyez.  
Boswell, J. *RJ & the Critics 1912-83.* 1986. \$20.00. Scarecrow.  
Brophy, R., ed. *RJ: Dimensions of a Poet.* 1994. \$27.00/\$16.95. Fordham U. Press.  
Carpenter, E. *RJ.* 1962. \$10.95. Twayne/North Carolina U. Press.

Coffin, A. *RJ: Poet of Inhumanism*. 1971. \$32.50. U. of Wisconsin Press.  
Everson, W. *The Excesses of God: RJ as a Religious Figure*. 1988. \$32.50. Stanford U. Press.  
Gilbert, R. *Shine, Perishing Republic*. 1969 (1936). \$75.00. Haskell House.  
Karman, *Critical Essays on RJ*. 1990. G. K. Hall.  
Klein, M. & A. *Jeffers Observed*. 1986. \$24.95. Quintessence.  
Powell, L. *RJ: The Man & His Work*. 1973. \$59.95. Gordon Press. 1969. \$75.00. Haskell House.  
Zaller, R. *Centennial Essays for RJ*. 1991. \$39.50. U. of Delaware.

***Also available:***

Brophy, R. *RJ*. Western Writers Series. 1975. \$4.50. Boise State U. Bookstore.  
Brophy, R., ed. *RJN: Jubilee Gathering: 1962-88*. 1987. C.S.U.L.B.  
*RJ: Poet: A Centennial Exhibition*. 1987. \$15. Occidental/C.S.U.L.B.  
Zaller, R. *Elegies for Robinson Jeffers*. 1989. Tor House Press.

# ***BONI AND LIVERIGHT:***

## *A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE*

■ *Editor's note:* The following article is taken, with permission, from the journal *Firsts*, edited by Kathryn Smiley, July/August 1994 (brought to RJN attention by Allen Mears). Its pertinence to Jeffers studies should be clear, that is: Liveright as Jeffers's first trade publisher, as pioneer for publishing unknown Americans ("native-born and literary radicals"), as origin of the Modern Library editions, as Bennett Cerf's start and as connection with Donald Friede and Donald Klopfer and the founding of Random House, as bulwark for fighting censorship, as 1933 occasion of Jeffers's transfer to Random House, and as presentday subsidiary of the Norton company and thereby route in 1977 for reediting *The Women at Point Sur*, *Dear Judas*, and *The Double Axe*.

### History

Albert Boni dropped out of Harvard in 1912. A year later, he and his brother, Charles, established the Washington Square Book Shop in New York's Greenwich Village.

Horace Brisbane Liveright was a clerk in a brokerage firm in Philadelphia. In 1908, at the age of 22, he moved to New York and found a job on Wall Street. After failing in his first business (marketing a line of toilet paper), he convinced his father-in-law to back him in another project. He had met Albert Boni, who proposed that they publish a series of reprints of modern classics and popular fiction to be sold at a price lower than any other publisher's.

In 1917, Boni & Liveright published their first 12 Modern Library titles, which were an instant success. Income from the Modern Library allowed them to publish other titles. Perhaps their finest early writer was

Theodore Dreiser, whose works were frequently rejected by more established publishing houses or banned as obscene.

Boni favored publishing Continental writers' socio-political works, while Liveright was eager to publish works by unknown Americans. Finally, in 1918, their differences led to a split. Since neither would sell, they flipped a coin to see who would control the firm. Liveright won.

Retaining the firm's original name, Liveright then turned to publishing the work of native-born and literary radicals, including John Reed and Upton Sinclair. He also published poetry by Ezra Pound, T S. Eliot, Djuna Barnes, and Edgar Lee Masters. Liveright served as editor as well as chief executive until he hired Thomas R. Smith to be the firm's editor in 1921. Smith was the first of many strong editors who worked with the firm, among them Julian Messner, Louis Kronenberger, Edward A. Weeks, Donald Friede, and Bennett Cerf. In 1925, Liveright sold the Modern Library to Cerf and Donald Klopfer, contributing to the founding of Random House.

Financial and legal difficulties plagued Boni & Liveright, but in 1925 they had a brilliant literary year, publishing Hemingway's *In Our Time*; Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*; O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*; Anderson's *Dark Laughter*; Jeffers's *Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems*; and Aiken's *Bring! Bring! and Other Stories*.

In 1927, *An American Tragedy* was banned in Boston, and Friede, one of the editors, was fined \$300 for selling obscene material. Liveright won praise for fighting the case, and eventually the law was changed.

In 1928, Liveright incorporated and changed the firm's name to Horace Liveright. However, the company was always in financial turmoil, due largely to Liveright's unsuccessful theatrical and stock market investments. After the stock market crash, the company's bookkeeper, Arthur Pell, gained control of the firm by loaning large sums of cash in exchange for stock. Liveright moved to Hollywood, where he worked for a time as an adviser to Paramount Studios. In 1931, he returned to New York, jobless, but planning new publishing projects. He died in 1933 before any of them materialized.

The removal of Liveright did little to improve the company's fortunes. In 1933, the company fell into bankruptcy, and was purchased for \$18,000. The name was changed to Liveright Publishing Corporation. Pell retained his stock, however, and soon regained control. Liveright existed largely on reprint rights until it was acquired in 1969 by Gilbert Harrison of *The New Republic*. The company became a subsidiary of W. W. Norton in 1974.

## Some Notable Writers Published

Conrad Aiken, Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Atherton, Mary Austin, Djuna Barnes, Maxwell Bodenheim, Elizabeth Bowen, Hart Crane, e. e. cummings, Theodore Dreiser, T. S. Eliot, William Faulkner, Ben Hecht, Ernest Hemingway, Robinson Jeffers, Edgar Lee Masters, Anita Loos, George Moore, Liam O'Flaherty, Eugene O'Neill, Dorothy Parker, S. J. Perlman, Upton Sinclair, Mark Twain, Nathanael West, Thornton Wilder.

## Some Notable Books Published

Crane, Hart, *White Buildings* (1926), first book  
*The Bridge* (1930), first American edition  
cummings, e. e., *The Enormous Room* (1922)  
Dreiser, Theodore, *An American Tragedy* (1925)  
Faulkner, William, *Mosquitos* (1927)  
Hemingway, Ernest, *In Our Time* (1925), first American edition  
Loos, Anita, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925)  
O'Neill, Eugene, *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), Pulitzer  
*Anna Christie* (1930), Pulitzer  
*Strange Interlude* (1928), Pulitzer  
Perlman, S. J., *Dawn Ginsberg's Revenge* (1929), first book  
West, Nathanael, *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933)  
Wilder, Thornton, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), Pulitzer

## Identification of First Editions

From the inception of the firm until the mid-1970s, there is no statement of printing on the copyright page of a first edition. Later printings are noted. Occasionally there is a statement of first printing or first edition, but these are rare. Whenever they are encountered, they are true firsts. From the 1970s on, a number row is placed on the copyright page in accordance with W. W. Norton practice.

# ***WILLIAM EVERSON AND ROBINSON JEFFERS: SYBARITE AND GURU***

■ ***Editor's Note:*** Anyone interested in Jeffers criticism, editions, or fine-printing will quickly come in contact with William Everson/Brother Antoninus. Personally Everson believed that without reading Jeffers he would never have become a poet, or a believer. As Antoninus, he published *RJ: Fragments of an Older Fury*, critical essays. As William Everson he edited Jeffers's *Alpine Christ* and *Brides of the South Wind* and reedited *Californians*. As a fine-printer he was famous for his prize-winning collection of Tor House poems, *Granite and Cypress*. And six years before his death in 1994, to honor Jeffers's centennial, he published *The Excesses of God: RJ as a Religious Figure*. A subsequent RJN will run tributes connecting the two poets. The following is commentary by critic biographer David Carpenter on the early and enduring impact of the Carmel poet on this son of the San Joaquin Valley. The quotations are from Everson interviews:

The catalyst of the twenty-two-year-old [1924] Everson's poetic and intellectual awakening was not so much the return to college [Fresno State College], even though this is "where for the first time he experiences a lively exchange of ideas"; but rather it was what he encountered there—the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. Encountering the work of this California poet would solve the father-son conflict for Everson at the intellectual, artistic and spiritual levels; indeed, he would call Jeffers his spiritual father on numerous occasions throughout his life. In this man's work he found for the first time "the fatherly certitude, the beneficent guidance" he hungered for. Importantly, here was an artistically accomplished "father" who seemed, by his very convictions and lifestyle as an isolate poet in the tower, to attest to the value, the very legitimacy of

what the young and uncertain "son" was aspiring to become—a poet in his own right. Also, this "father" lived in California and wrote powerfully of a region the son had an autochthonous relation to. The way Jeffers wrote, the long and seemingly wracked-out lines which seemed to capture in their rhythms the very pulse of the sea waves, the whipping winds, the soaring or plummeting hawks and the things he wrote about were shockingly different and more violent than any of the "traditional," rhyming poems Everson had read in high school. Intellectually and artistically, Jeffers filled Everson's need for a teacher; psychologically, he filled the need for a father-figure who was by example supportive: "With me it was something ... like the Oriental relationship of the sycarite to the guru. As Koestler describes it in *The Lotus and the Robot*, 'It is not his words that matter, but his presence—they breathe him, they imbibe him, it is a process of acquiring merit by spiritual osmosis.' That is the way to look to Jeffers. ... I soaked him up. ... What I sought was a presence, a spiritual and psychological substance. The force from his pages hit me as something almost physical." Jeffers became that "presence," but he also led Everson to another, greater presence: God.

While reading and being "hit" by Jeffers' poetry, young Everson felt as though "suddenly all his father's anti-Christian repudiation, and the snobbery of the sages of New York, are made into a powerful transcendental mystique of pure pantheism. ... Here is a poetry of blood and fury and phallic sexuality: a poetry of the supremely procreative God. ... (24)" "For the first time," Everson has said, "I knew there is a God; and I knew where I was going to find Him—before my very eyes, as He is bodied forth in prime Nature. ... I saw that He was intensely, incredibly alive in my own region." Indeed, the pantheistical God Everson found because of Jeffers' poetry he would never lose nor abandon; and even though he would eventually enfold this God for a time in a different cloak nominally, the place where he would search out and from which he would delineate his God would remain the same throughout his career.

Significantly, both Jeffers and Everson had fathers who had married women much younger than they, a similarity which drew Everson even closer to his mentor: "In the terrible narratives, in the themes of incest and patricide, violence and destruction, I found an outlet for all the unconscious passion I had not realized was obsessing me. We were both sons of fathers twenty years older than the women they married. Upon us the mother projected that fateful fascination youthful maternity so often bestows upon the first male to open the womb ... we transposed the

maternal *imago* to unspoliated nature, and projected the deep paternal hostility upon civilization and its structures." Thirty-four years had to pass, however, including the death of Jeffers, before Everson could look across at his mentor as an equal and discuss both of them as "sons," as he does above, instead of as "father" and "son," as it was initially. Although the young Everson would travel down to Carmel once in 1935, to see first hand his guru's Falcon [sic] Tower, he would never meet Jeffers; no, the risk of rejection from this reputedly laconic but nevertheless *ideal* father-figure was too great. Better to inhale the pungent scent of the eucalyptus grove the older poet had planted beside his home; better to breathe in the salty air off the Pacific ocean roiling just below the boulder wall of the poet's yard; and better to "imbibe" this man by breathing him in at a distance, to leave him as "a man whom I knew deeply in spirit but never in life, one who was too near to me, too dear to me, too terrifying to me, and too necessary for me, back at that finding of the self which makes the pivot of a life, ever to face in the flesh." Shortly after his brief trip to Carmel, where he "crouched among the sea-gnawed granite under the wind's throat," he composed "Tor House," his first poetic articulation of the debt he now owed to Jeffers.

David Carpenter. *The Rage of Excess: The Life and Poetry of William Everson*. Bristol, Indiana: Wyndham Hall Press, 1987, pp. 8-9. Reprinted with permission.



# ***ROBINSON JEFFERS IN CANADA: FROM PRATT'S NEWFOUNDLAND TO PRAIRIE SKULL***

By C. J. Fox

■ It was from a fellow-resident of Newfoundland, Canada's easternmost province, that I first heard of Robinson Jeffers. That Newfoundland should have been involved in this discovery is entirely appropriate since the sparsely peopled Atlantic island is, like Jeffers's stretch of California, a gnarled and fearsome geological gloss on "the massive mysticism of stone" with, vaulting off behind it, the immensity of the North American continent. Its current inhabitants fondly refer to their rugged abode as "The Rock" and for much of the year it is all "intolerant north and high thrones of ice."

The Jeffers purveyor in these outlandish parts was Edward Flynn, one of those precocious loners who, among their contemporaries in youth, mercifully subvert the homogenizing handiwork of the educational institutions. After being sprung from our fog-shrouded little home city of St. John's, Flynn was ultimately to become a rousing unorthodox professor of English at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. At spirited talk-fests I had with him during his preprofessorial period in the mid-1950s, Flynn would cite Jeffers as a key illuminator of twentieth century violence, a master of narrative poetry and the neo-mythical, and a seer who dwarfed the shifting literary sets of his time.

Flynn had other literary enthusiasms equally challenging, one of them right at home in the form of Edwin John Pratt (1882-1964). E. J. Pratt was the Newfoundland-born "national poet of Canada." As it happened, Jeffers was significant to Pratt's work—not least, as will be shown here, to his lecture-room expositions as a leading Canadian academic. Pratt dealt with Newfoundland themes comparable to Jeffers's California in his shorter poems rather than in the longer narrative works for which he won even greater acclaim in mainland Canada. Many years

after his youthful disquisitions to me, Professor Edward Flynn was to write of Pratt:

For a Newfoundland poet whose imaginative impulse was essentially epic, heroic, and mythic, Newfoundland was not simply a certain geographical, historical, political, and socio-economic entity but a place of the imagination in the same sense as the Wessex of Hardy, the Ireland of Yeats, the Scotland of Hugh MacDiarmid, the Wales of David Jones, the Crete of Nikos Kazantzakis, the upper California of Robinson Jeffers, and the Mississippi of Faulkner were places of imagination—and no less real for all that (Review 364).

In the same essay, Flynn isolated one element shared by poets otherwise as different as Jeffers, Yeats, Pound, and Eliot. This was

a contempt for and a hostility to modern civilization which is prompted, among other things, by a conviction that it has given birth to a decadent culture which is incapable of sustaining the heroic impulse, or, what is worse, which has exploited and pervaded it in the interests of imperialist politics (365).

Pratt, however, in Flynn's view, disagreed with this. But at least one explicit link with Jeffers can be found in Pratt's verse through a comment the Canadian made about his 1939 poem "The Radio in the Ivory Tower." (Even without the comment, that poem invites comparison with "Watch the Lights Fade," like it suggesting the violence of a war-doomed world sounding, via radio, through the fastness of a coastal retreat.) Pratt wrote of "The Radio in the Ivory Tower," in December 1939:

Imagine a person today who with the desire of the hermit [...] builds for himself, like Robinson Jeffers, a castle on the California coast, where no human life can be seen, nothing but mountains and clouds, sunrises, sunsets, and the great expanses of the sea. He brings with him, however, a radio, and on one night in the complete silence of his environment he turns on the dial and the world from which he tried to escape has come back on him with double intensity (E. J. Pratt 113).

Recalling his younger years, Pratt once spoke of how a few American poets, Jeffers among them, "lay hold upon my soul" (Pitt 276). Yet in his long narratives Jeffers's influence would seem to have been an oblique one—perhaps heightening Pratt's awareness of Nature's power, as with the vivid representation in "Towards the Last Spike" of the vast Canadian Shield across which a "horde of bipeds that could toil like ants" drive a railway line to the Pacific coast (Pratt, *Collected* 370). In "The Cachalot," Pratt's whale takes on an immensity of life comparable to Jeffers's "great dark bulks of hot blood" in "Ocean." All this could simply be similarity rather than influence. But Dr. Flynn emphasizes one resemblance in particular, involving the all-important geographical conditioning of the two poets. Between Pratt's native Western Bay, Newfoundland, and "Jeffers Country," California, he finds a striking similarity—"headland after headland surging into the ocean" (Flynn conversation).

An American authority on Pratt, Henry Wells, saw a link between Jeffers and "Brebeuf and his Brethren," Pratt's narrative of missionary martyrdom in the seventeenth-century North American wilderness. This lay in "At the Birth of an Age" where Jeffers ("a poet whom Pratt warmly admires") stressed the disintegration of pagan beliefs and the rise of a fanatical Christianity and provided a "suggestive" precedent for "Brebeuf" (Wells 99). But a noteworthy Canadian critic, John Sutherland, insisted that there were large differences between Pratt and Jeffers. Sutherland quoted one commentator on Pratt, apparently E. K. Brown, as saying that, in the way he made one feel "the ally of universal power," he resembled Jeffers. Sutherland demurred:

Such a comparison leaves a false impression, and will not do the Canadian poet any good. Jeffers has that very sense of the tragic in human experience which Pratt does not possess. He has dealt consistently with the problems of the contemporary world, and he possesses the most individual philosophy in modern American poetry. If Professor Brown had deliberately wished to show Pratt's weakness, he could not have chosen a more apt comparison (Sutherland 16).

Certainly there are in Pratt an exuberance and a tolerance of modernity alien to the austerity of Jeffers. This is reflected in a detailed lecture on Jeffers which Pratt, in his role as Professor of English at the then Victoria College, University of Toronto, prepared around 1940. It be-

speaks not so much the warm admiration described by Wells as the spiritual "hold" which Pratt himself spoke of—but an unnerving, even frightening hold. The lecture indicates how forceful the American's impact could be north of the border. It is all the more telling by reason of Pratt's prestige at the time within Canada and the fact that, as will be shown later, he was not the only Canadian to register this particular storm among the many blowing into the largely placid and pragmatic Dominion from its millenarian powerhouse of a neighbor.

The lecture—surviving as over 2,000 words of mostly typed notes on four unpaginated leaves, the prose mainly finished but never published—stressed, to begin with, Jeffers's scientific education. This, Pratt suggested, provided an enhanced awareness of the hugeness of space and of primeval and elemental power. And he reflected in his lecture notes: "A great deal of the pessimism of the age comes out of this sheer sight of space and power, unlimited space, unlimited power" (Pratt lecture notes, here and subsequently). Jeffers, in Pratt's estimation, shared the fear of power being seized by maniacs but at the same time he glorified "the wild and the untamed and the savage" and showed an "appalling" contempt for humanity. As paraphrased by Pratt, he could not pity humanity since "at death [man] returns to the great kingdoms of dust and stone when he is done with this petulant finite regrettable consciousness. ... Death is a guarantee of peace and freedom from the torments of life and agonizing consciousness."

Jeffers, Pratt declared, was "blind to all forms of idealism." Then comes praise:

His themes are terrible, monstrous, and would be melodramatic but for the gigantic power with which they are treated and the magnificence of the metaphors and similes. ... Jeffers can lift a scene of horror into one of sublimity by a phrase.

By Pratt's account, Jeffers deemed life so evil that the only exit was despair, death, and nothingness. Man he considered a blot on the universe and, like Hardy and Schopenhauer, he felt consciousness to be the great blunder. Pratt argued that Jeffers was caught by advancing science's propagation of "the sense of helplessness and terror, the feeling of homelessness in the midst of vast non-human forces indifferent to humanity." Pratt quoted Barclay's outburst in "The Women at Point Sur" about the "alien universe" and his rhapsodizing, as the lecturer saw it, on annih-

lation. To Jeffers, human evolution was in fact retrograde and, Pratt said, his narratives reflected this:

His characters are pathological in their impulses, they are introverted, and the idea of incest assumes a large and grotesque proportion in Jeffers[']s] mind. As against the dynamic beliefs of men like Whitman, Sandburg and Lindsay in the future and greatness of America, Jeffers writes about the Perishing Republic.

He admired only inanimate, inorganic things or organic life symbolizing power.

Why all this, Pratt wondered, when Jeffers had said he had had a happy life and would gladly live several centuries? Himself the son of a Methodist minister and actually ordained in 1913, Pratt theorized that Jeffers may have been caught early in the "predestination web" by way of his Presbyterian clergyman father. Moreover his study of biology had taught him that the more developed the human brain the greater the agony and that "the attainment of human consciousness had produced a more refined brute but left man a brute nevertheless." Perhaps it was predictable that, as a Christian humanist, Pratt would flinch at what he took to be Jeffers's glorification of power and the suggestion by a reviewer, whom he did not identify, that this had led the poet to "extol Hitler." Not that Jeffers, Pratt hastened to add, accepted the Fascist program but he did see Hitler as "the instrument of that destruction of civilization, that obliteration of humankind which J has long considered as necessary and good. As far as the politics of Fascism was concerned [,] J didn't take sides." Pratt discerned many similarities between Jeffers and Hardy but they differed, he said, on the issue of power and pity. And, just as he quotes from a Lawrence Clark Powell salute to Jeffers's mastery of landscape, he also quotes Delmore Schwartz's 1939 attack on Jeffers in *Poetry* and ends with the statement of an unnamed second commentator that "Jeffers either knocks you out cold or makes you fling his books down in madness or disgust." The notes give all quotations without comment from Pratt.

He was by no means the only Canadian poet pondering Jeffers during the latter's lifetime. In Montreal, where a lively circle of English-language poets developed after World War II alongside the city's French preponderance, the swaggering and at times bombastic iconoclast Irving Layton brought contemporary verse into courses he taught at school and college level. In 1954, an exasperated Layton wrote Robert Creeley,

then publishing the Montrealer's poetry from the Divers Press in Majorca, of how one student had protested: "But, sir, Jeffers is a psychotic; his poetry proves it, all this dwelling on violence" (Layton 109). Louis Dudek, a sometime poetic cohort of Layton and an influential lecturer at McGill University, included six poems by Jeffers in his anthology of modern poetry for students and introduced him there as "an isolated and lonely figure in twentieth-century poetry, violent and rhetorical in his prophecies of doom and his vivid conception of evil at the core of a mechanical, urban society." But Dudek added that Jeffers was "large and serene in his evocation of nature's beauty as a timeless order, and classical in the austerity of his tragic vision" (163).

In his capacity as poet and little-magazine editor, John Sutherland (1919-56) was in the forefront of the Montreal ferment-makers. Reaching out as critic to evaluate the western Canadian poet Earle Birney, Sutherland noted in him parallels and contrasts with Jeffers. Birney's narrative poem "David" was, Jeffers-like, set in the mountains of the Pacific Coast (further north, of course, in British Columbia) and, in Sutherland's view, raised problems—"the paradox of the good and the bad," for instance—which would have fascinated the Californian. But the Birney poem possessed a "warmth and intimacy and a personal note that do not appear in Jeffers" (94).

How apt if it had been in the Dudek anthology that a Saskatchewan poet, Garry Radison, discovered Jeffers. Radison's fourth book (1988) was called *Jeffers's Skull*. Its title poem was stylistically, anything but "Jeffersian," a cool terseness being this Prairie writer's chief quality in his determination "to avoid: lyricism, / waste." But his Jeffers poem is full of tautly suggested feeling for the spirit it invokes, to whom in effect it marshals a tribute as haunting as "the cold accolade / of the sea" (56-60).

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**Editor's Note:** C. J. Fox, a freelance writer living in Toronto, Canada, has edited collections of prose by Wyndham Lewis and has reviewed extensively in Britain and elsewhere. Among his articles on twentieth century writers is "Full Circle: The *Zeitgeist* and Robinson Jeffers," *Antigonish Review* (Nova Scotia), 43 (1980), 91-104. The quotations from E. J. Pratt's lecture notes are used by kind permission of the Victoria University Library, Toronto, Canada.

# ***THE DANCE OF SHIVA AND CONCEPTS OF HINDUISM IN ROBINSON JEFFERS'S POETRY***

By Grant Hier

■ In the night of Brahma, Nature is inert and cannot dance till Shiva wills it. He rises from his rapture and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo! matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about him. Dancing, he sustains its manifold phenomena. In the fullness of time, still dancing, he destroys all forms and names by fire and gives new rest. This is poetry; but none the less, science.

-Ananda Coomaraswamy (Ross 32)

Robinson Jeffers's poetry is full of images of destruction and rebirth, of the violent cycles of nature and the eternal universe. Jeffers reminds us time and again that human existence is finite and of little consequence in the grand scheme, that everything which exists will be obliterated in turn. The universe as we know it will be annihilated as well, yet a new one will bloom (or bang) to take its place; for it is the whole of the cosmos, not merely the human species, that is divine. These are the very tenets of Hinduism. For the Hindu, as for Jeffers, the universe is an endless cycle of birth and death repetitions. These cosmic cycles are of no purpose in and of themselves, the Hindu believes, other than to provide an ever-changing world through which each person's individual soul, or atman, passes. Similarly, Jeffers writes in one of his very last and untitled poems:

There is this infinite energy, the power of God forever working  
toward what purpose?-toward none.  
This is God's will he works, he grows and changes, he has no  
object.



No more than a great sculptor who has found a ledge of fine  
marble, and lives beside it, and carves great images,  
And casts them down. That is God's will: to make great things  
and destroy them, and make great things  
And destroy them again. (CP III: 455)

As Jeffers saw the whole of the cosmos as God, Hinduism sees the backdrop of all as Brahman-the invisible source of all things-pure, unchanging spirit. Each universe will last billions of years before it, and everything in it, is destroyed. In this way all things are returned to Brahman, yet a new universe will always bloom as a lotus does, for the universe is divine. Surprisingly, very little has been written on the numerous aspects of Hinduism that exist in Jeffers's poetry. Despite the direct allusion to the Hindu god of destruction Shiva (Sanskrit: Siva) in the title, Bill Hotchkiss's book *Jeffers: The Sivaistic Vision* discusses Hinduism for only 10 lines, and offers no commentary on the relevance of Hinduism or Shiva to the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. Instead, the book is a commentary on the work of Jeffers's past critics and a study in archetypal criticism regarding those poems where nature's cycles (hence the word choice "Shivaistic") provide a major theme. Although there survives no documentation as to the extent that Jeffers studied the Hindu religion or associated himself with its philosophy, we do know Jeffers was a life-long scholar of mythology and world religions. There is little to glean from Jeffers himself as he rarely granted interviews and almost never discussed his own work, claiming, "If I bring it into light it leaves me" (Adamic 9). Once we are able to comprehend the fundamental tenets of Hinduism, however, especially in regard to how violence can be reconciled into the balance of nature, then new light is shed on the writings of one of the world's most misunderstood poets.

In the private mythology which Jeffers continually invented throughout his life, there definitely exists more than just a cursory nod toward certain aspects of Hindu belief, beginning with his poems from the 1920s and continuing throughout his career into his very last writings in the 1960s. There is, however, but one direct reference to Hinduism in Jeffers's text, and that is the poem titled "Shiva" (CP II: 605). From this, we can surmise that Jeffers was at the least aware of the fundamentals of Hinduism and what Shiva represents on a symbolic level. Although the God of destruction, Shiva represents also the embodiment of eternal cosmic energy for Hindus. Shiva has many incarnations,



**Shiva, Lord of the Dance**  
12th Century India, Bronze  
© Rijksmuseum-Stichting, Amsterdam

but it is in Shiva Nataraja—more commonly known as Dancing Shiva, or "King of the Dancers"—that one can most clearly discern Shiva's role and ultimate purpose. This world, as the human being sees it, is veiled by what the Hindus call *maya*, or illusion; for as long as we remain within the boundaries of this flesh our lives are governed by false perceptions. Shiva's upper right hand holds a drum, the world-creating beat

of tempo and the temporal, the heartbeat that makes us believe time is linear, thus veiling us from eternity. The sound of the drum and our heartbeat creates *maya*, the illusory way human beings experience life. The drum also represents sound as the first element in the forming of the universe. Jeffers uses this imagery in "New Mexican Mountain" (CP II: 158). The right drum hand, then, is the hand of creation. Shiva's opposite upper left hand holds the flame of final destruction, burning away the temporal veil to reveal timeless eternity, the unending cosmic ocean in which the universe resides. The unenlightened human, aware of only the right hand and not the left, is in a constant state of suffering because of this illusion regarding time. Shiva does his dance for the specific purpose of revealing the truths of the universe to his followers: within the dance we find the balance of life and death, creation and destruction; we see the snare of illusion and the finite which causes us suffering; and we see Shiva and his destruction as the source of all movement within the infinite cosmos. Shiva dances to lift the mortal veil of *maya* so that his followers might understand a greater balance, and as such accept the violence, pain, decay, and death as essential and necessary. Robinson Jeffers the poet is like Shiva the dancer, aware of this greater state of things. For the same reason Shiva dances with flowing arms and hair, Jeffers poetry sings in wild cadence: to reveal the violence and destruction as a part of the overall balance of the universe, and to illuminate such cosmic truths for all to see.

The most familiar depictions of Dancing Shiva are the bronze sculptures that came from South India in the 12th century. Here we see Shiva poised on one foot, arms and hair waving, within the center of a circle. This place of the dance, *Chidambaram*, is the center of the universe (the center of the universe is symbolically within the heart) and the dance is a representation of the forces of the universe moving in grace and balance. Indeed, the pose of Shiva's body forms the Sanskrit symbol of *Om*, and the symbol can also be seen carried in the palm of Shiva's lower right hand, held forward in the "fear not" pose. *Om* is the word that represents the entire universe; it is also said to be the sound that is made each time the universe begins anew. Sanskrit is a language that focuses on the sounds of words, thus the resonation of *Om* carries significance, as well. The vowel "o" in Sanskrit is sounded as a fusion of "a" and "u," and *Om* is regarded as a four-syllable word: 1) "ah" starting at back of the wide-open throat (beginning of the universe); 2) "u" rolling forward and shaped by the mouth (life and living); 3) "m" somewhat nasalized, evolving all into a hum at front of mouth, closing and ending at the lips



### Sanskrit Devanagari Script Om

(death); and 4) silence as a syllable, the pause between the repetition of the next *Om* (a new universe falling and rising out of the silence). This proves relevant not just to Robinson Jeffers's poetry, but all of language and literature, for as Joseph Campbell points out in *The Mythic Image*: "So pronounced, the utterance will have filled the whole mouth with sound and so have contained (as they say) all the vowels. Moreover, since consonants are regarded in this thinking as interruptions of vowel sounds, the seeds of all words will have been contained in this enunciation of AUM, and in these, the seed sounds of all things" (361). The sounded syllables of *Om* are said also to represent the parallel *Trimurti* (trinity) of Brahman: 1) Brahma (the creator); 2) Vishnu (the preserver of life), and; 3) Shiva (the destroyer). (It should be noted here that, although similar, the Hindu words Brahman and Brahma are distinct in meaning: Brahman refers to the one source, the pure spirit [read God]; Brahma, the deity of creation, is but one aspect of the infinite Brahman, as are Vishnu and Shiva.) The observer of Dancing Shiva is to understand that Shiva's dance is the universe—the rhythmic play as the source of all movement within the cosmos—simultaneous creation and destruction in one gesture. For the Hindu, as for Jeffers, this is essential. Despite any human wishes to the contrary, the universe is a violent arena where nothing is spared in this balanced dance of life and death. Hinduism stresses there is only one "Absolute Reality," or Brahman, the Eternal Spirit. Similar to how Jeffers's pantheism saw God discovering himself in all things, each of Hinduism's many millions of lesser deities merely represent individual aspects of this one infinite Brahman.

Each of the three faces of the *Trimurti* is absolutely necessary in order for Brahman and the universe to continue: Brahma creates life, Vishnu preserves it, and Shiva the destroyer allows the possibility of continued creation, making room for the new by eliminating the old. It has been said that the destruction of the whole universe is to the Hindu "as certain as the death of a mouse, and to the philosopher no more important" (Ross 32). This might seem rather catastrophic to Western thought, but it is not to Hindus—and certainly not to Jeffers.

This entire sounding of *Om* and all it implies can be found contained in one of Jeffers's poems from 1924, "The Treasure." Here, in ever outward expanding images, we find the mountains, the waves, the earth, the stars in the nebula, all "short-lived as grass," yet the stars are seen as "scattered black seeds of a future" (CP I: 102). As if reaching back some 5,000 years to quote the *Rig Veda*—the oldest religious document known to man, and the Scripture upon which both the *Upanishads* and Hinduism were founded—Jeffers writes:

... nothing lives long, the whole sky's  
Recurrences tick the seconds of the hours of the ages of the gulf  
before birth, and the gulf  
After death is like dated: to labor eighty years in a notch of  
eternity is nothing too tiresome,  
Enormous repose after, enormous repose before, the flash of  
activity. (CP I: 102)

What else is this, if not *Om*? Elaborating on the silence between the sound, Jeffers continues:

... I fancy  
*That* silence is the thing, this noise a found word for it;  
interjection, a jump of the breath at that silence;  
Stars burn, grass grows, men breathe: as a man finding treasure  
says "Ah!" but the treasure's the essence;  
Before the man spoke it was there, and after he has spoken he  
gathers it, inexhaustible treasure. (CP I: 102)

"Ah!" man says in interjection, but the universe sounds *Om*!

According to Hinduism, in fact, the universe is an endless repetition of *Om*—not unlike the current scientific theory of a "breathing" universe, exploding from a big bang (Shiva's drum sound as the initial ele-

ment in the creation of the universe) until it slows and stops, then all matter collapsing back upon itself into a singular mass so dense there arises yet another big bang. Likewise, the world cycles of Hinduism "follow each other in the apparently endless stream of time. The wheel of birth and death, reincarnation, encompasses the individual, the species, the social structure, the planet, the gods, the universe: it is the timescale of Nature herself. Endless, irreversible, unquenchable are the processes of alteration and change. The cycle of emanation, fruition, dissolution, and re-emanation from the primeval substance has a vastness incomprehensible to mankind" (Cotterell 57). Rather than a big bang of the primeval substance, however, the beginning of each new universe for the Hindu comes whenever Vishnu dreams. Vishnu sleeps on a great milky pond, the eternal cosmic ocean, couched upon the coils of the serpent Ananta ("Unending"), and there Vishnu dreams the universe. As he does this, from his navel sprouts a lotus (the symbol of divine energy and grace) and on the lotus sits Brahma, whose four faces illuminate each quarter of the world, giving us our world of light out of the darkness of Vishnu's sleep. When Brahma opens his eyes the world comes into being and Vishnu dreams, when he close his eyes the world goes out of being and Vishnu awakens. Before Brahma and Vishnu stand the five Pandava brothers with their wife, Draupadi; allegorically, she is the mind and they are the five senses. It can be said, then, that our livesthis human existence of the mind and five senses-is nothing but the dream of God. Next to Vishnu and Brahma stands Shiva and his wife, as well as gods Marut, Indra, and Airavata. According to Joseph Campbell:

... these are the leading Indian personifications of those universally revered powers that Robinson Jeffers (in "Roan Stallion") calls

the phantom rulers of humanity

That without being are yet more real than what they are  
born of, and without shape, shape that which makes them:  
The nerves and the flesh go by shadowlike, the limbs and the lives  
shadowlike, these shadows remain, these shadows  
To whom temples, to whom churches, to whom labors and  
wars, visions and dreams are dedicate. ... (Campbell 7-8)

The words immediately preceding this citation, however, would indicate Jeffers was primarily referring to the organized religions of the world: "The fire threw up figures / And symbols meanwhile, racial myths

formed and dissolved in it, the phantom rulers of humanity" (CP I: 194). This interpretation notwithstanding, both clearly represent the powers of the universe, and the passage holds meaning with either reading.

Campbell also sees Jeffers referring to the mysteries of the lotus in the five lines directly preceding these in "Roan Stallion." Sitting at Vishnu's feet as he dreams the universe is the goddess Shri Lakshmi, also known as Padma, or "Lady Lotus." She is the one who stimulates the cosmic dream and the sprouting lotus by massaging Vishnu's right leg. Campbell writes:

For as stated in the Indian Maitri Upanishad ... that lotus is the same as space: the four quarters and four intermediate quarters are its petals. The Breathing Spirit and the Sun, these two, strive to approach each other. The lotus, then, symbolizes both the sun as the heart of space and the heart as the sun of the body, both moved by the same indwelling self (atman). And accordingly, the lotus open to the sun symbolizes the fully flowered knowledge of this mirrored truth, while the lotuses in bud mark stages of approach to its realization. The poet Robinson Jeffers has written of this mystery in his poem "Roan Stallion," using, however, a more modern metaphor:

The atom bounds-breaking,  
Nucleus to sun, electrons to planets, with recognition  
Not praying, self-equaling, the whole to the whole, the  
microcosm  
Not entering nor accepting entrance, more equally, more utterly,  
more incredibly conjugate  
With the other extreme and greatness; passionately perceptive of  
identity. ... (228, 231-232)

There is implied in this concept of "the universe as a dream of God" that the reason God keeps dreaming his creatures is so that he might experience the universe with new eyes and non-omnipresence. What is there left to do if one is all-knowing, all-seeing, all-present, and eternal? By surrendering his all-pervading consciousness to sleep and dreaming creatures who are his antithesis—that is, ignorant, myopic, limited, and mortal—Brahman is able to rediscover the universe. Thus, as an ultimate act of self-discovery, it could be said that the human race is one of God's sense-organs. This, in fact, is what Robinson Jeffers offers

verbatim in one of his very last and posthumously published poems, "The Beginning and the End" from 1963:

The human race is one of God's sense-organs,  
Immoderately alerted to feel good and evil  
And pain and pleasure. It is a nerve-ending,  
Like eye, ear, taste-buds (hardly able to endure  
The nauseous draught) it is a sensory organ of God's. (CP III: 434)

If this is true, then these abilities to feel good and evil, pain and pleasure, our ignorance of the eternal and our fascination with dualities, are purposefully inherent in the human condition and crucial to our role within the universe. Jeffers elaborates:

... so the exultations and agonies of beasts and men  
Are sense-organs of God: and on other globes  
Throughout the universe much greater nerve-endings  
Enrich the consciousness of the one being  
Who is all that exists. This is man's mission:  
To find and feel.... (CP III: 434)

Jeffers insists elsewhere in "The Beginning and the End" that we should "Never blame the man," for he is nothing more than a "deformed ape" (CP III: 433, 434). This sentiment is hinted at more than thirty years earlier in "Margrave" from 1932: "But who is our judge? It is likely the enormous / Beauty of the world requires for completion our ghostly increment, / It has to dream, and dream badly, a moment of its night" (CP II: 167). The poet Robinson Jeffers here, aware of the greater state of things, is like Shiva the dancer, moving to enlighten us. Shiva's right foot stamps rhythmically to the beat of the right hand drum that projects the temporal world, and the foot is planted on the back of a dwarfish demon named "Forgetfulness." The dwarf represents human ignorance and the conjurings of *maya*, the reason for our human psychological attraction to this realm of bondage in unending birth, suffering, and death. Symbolically, it is the foot of bondage and ignorance. Just as Jeffers moves to enlighten us in "The Beginning and the End," Shiva's metered gesture serves to remind us that although ignorance, suffering, pain, and destruction are inherent in the human condition, there is a greater structure we remain unaware of—the dream of Brahman. As a father, a dreamer, a poet, and creator of his own characters as



sense organs—a God of sorts—Jeffers accepts his responsibility outright in "Margrave":

I also am not innocent  
Of contagion, but have spread my spirit on the deep world.  
I have gotten sons and sent the fire wider.  
I have planted trees, they also feel while they live ...  
I ... have widened in my idleness  
The disastrous personality of life with poems,  
That are pleasant enough in the breeding but go bitterly at last  
To envy oblivion and the early deaths of nobler  
Verse, and much nobler flesh; And I have projected my spirit  
Behind the superb sufficient forehead of nature  
To gift the inhuman God with this rankling consciousness. (CP 11: 166-167)

Would God himself accept such responsibility for his role in things, in putting us through the range of emotions and experience simply that he might experience the universe anew? Jeffers offers an opinion in one of his earliest poems, "Apology for Bad Dreams," from 1925. In Part I of the poem we see a mother and her son punishing a horse, chaining it by its swollen tongue to a tree, while the gestures and the blood and the faces involved become indistinguishable in the overall beauty of the earth and sky. In this juxtaposed balance, the section ends with, "What said the prophet? `I create good: and I create evil: I am the Lord'" (CP I: 209). Jeffers offers this last quote as perhaps what God's apology—or defense—would be regarding the Shivaistic violence that our world contains. As a parallel, Jeffers first focuses on the intense thread of violence that runs through the scene, then pulls back to a distance where this thread blends into a tapestry of "unbridled and unbelievable beauty" (CP I: 209).

Part II finds Jeffers once again admitting to his part in the tragedy as a creator and artist:

This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places: and like  
the passionate spirit of humanity  
Pain for its bread: God's, many victims', the painful deaths, the  
horrible transfigurements: I said in my heart,

"Better invent than suffer: imagine victims  
Lest your own flesh be chosen the agonist ... (CP I: 209)

Paraphrasing what he would echo with greater perspective at the end of his life in "The Beginning and the End," the young Jeffers here suggests that, just as the poet creates other characters to take the suffering for him, perhaps God does the same with his creation:

... for what are we,  
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips  
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,  
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner more liable  
Than the other animals. Pain and terror, the insanities of desire;  
not accidents but essential. ... (CP I: 209)

The entirety of Part III of "Apology for Bad Dreams" can be said to be a series of images that render a portrait of Shiva: boulders broken from the headland; soil thick with discarded shells (like bones), that are "the tide-rock feasts of a dead people" (CP I: 210); fire-scarred granite where the dead's fires once burned; a flamelike ghost passing by saying, "I am Tamar Cauldwell, I have my desire" (CP I: 210). The spirit of Tamar, of Shiva, ends the section with surprising "sprung rhythm" in poetic terms—full of alliteration, assonance, and false rhymes. We can easily envision Shiva's gently rocking arms as we read: "... Beautiful country burn again, Point Pinos down to the Sur Rivers / Bum as before with bitter wonders, land and ocean and the Carmel water" (CP I: 210).

Part IV at last, brings Jeffers to the conclusion that God is no different. Just like his microcosm found in the creator poet, just like all humans plagued by dreams of violence and pain, God's dreams—that is, the tragedies of life in a violent universe—are bad dreams:

He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor  
From the bruised root: a man having bad dreams, who invents  
victims, is only the ape of that God.  
He washes it out with tears and many waters, calcines it with fire  
in the red crucible,  
Deforms it, makes it horrible to itself: the spirit flies out and  
stands naked, he sees the spirit,  
He takes it in the naked ecstasy; it breaks in his hand, the atom is  
broken. ... (CP I: 210-211)

This last image can be found repeated in "Roan Stallion," written the same year: "I say / humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, / The atom to be split" (CP I: 189). Clearly this refers to the same destruction/renewal as can be found in Shiva, as well as in Tamar. "Apology for Bad Dreams" similarly concludes that all of the previous destruction has allowed for the cycle to begin anew, and ends with the lines: "... a certain measure in phenomena: / The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland, the ever-returning roses of dawn" (CP I: 211).

In the poem titled "Shiva," we can find the embodiment of all the Hindu god represents in one of Jeffers's favorite symbols: the hawk. "There is a hawk that is picking the birds out of the sky" Jeffers's compelling opening line informs (CP II: 605). That hawk, of course, represents Shiva, "pure destruction, achieved and supreme, / Empty darkness under the death-tent wings" (CP II: 605). The balance of Shiva's dance, that which allows room for Brahma the Creator to operate, is found in the closing couplet at the end of the sonnet: "She will build a nest of the swan's bones and hatch a new brood, / Hang new heavens with new birds, all will be renewed" (CP II: 605).

It is interesting that Jeffers refers to Shiva in the feminine here, just as he personified Shiva in the female character of Tamar. Although Shiva is regarded primarily as a male in Hindu writings and is referred to in the masculine, one of the things Shiva represents is the transcendence of opposites. This is precisely the purpose of Shiva Nataraja's dance, as we have said. Just as the right hand of the drumbeat and time is balanced by the left hand of fire and the eternal, so the corresponding right foot of ignorance stamping on the back of "Forgetfulness" is balanced by the raised left foot, signifying release. The left foot has been removed from the world of *maya* and floats in the realm of wisdom, thus representing refuge and salvation for the Shiva devotee. This foot is being pointed to by the parallel second left hand, held in the "Elephant Hand" pose to signify teaching—for just as an elephant goes through the jungle and clears a path for all animals to follow, so it is a teacher leads the way through the darkness that his students might subsequently find their way to enlightenment. The encircling ring of the dance is a flaming aureole springing from the mouth of a double-headed water monster, representing the vital processes of universal creation in fire (destruction) and water (life). The balance of opposites can also be found in Shiva's hair, where there is both a skull (death) and a crescent moon (rebirth). Regarding the issue of gender specifically, the transcendence

of opposites can be found symbolized in Shiva Nataraja's earrings: the right is a man's, the left is a woman's. Shiva's female aspect is personified in his consort Shakti (Sanskrit for power, capacity, energy, faculty, or capability) and in Shiva Ardhanari, who is the god Shiva in hermaphroditic form, half male, half female. Joseph Campbell explains that the important Sanskrit term *Shakti* has "been used in a technical sense basic to all Oriental religious thinking; namely, to denote the energy or active power of a male divinity as embodied in his spouse. Carried further (by analogy), every wife is her husband's shakti and every beloved woman her lover's. Beatrice was Dante's. Carried further still: the word connotes female spiritual power in general" (217). In *Three Ways of Ancient Wisdom*, Nancy Wilson Ross clarifies:

Shiva can assume many roles ... Among his many titles (is) the Divine Hermaphrodite ... Hinduism-not only in philosophy and literature but also in art-has the capacity for immense conceptions, profound and subtle apprehensions, that can entice the imagination and stun the mind with their depth, range and boldness. The many masks of the many gods, their various appearances and incarnations, have been employed to suggest the infinitely possible variations of one supreme essence. In seeking to give expression to that almost inexpressible idea of a unity which admits also of polarities, a "union beyond the opposites," Hinduism created such arresting icons as the divine two-in-one embrace of Shiva and his Shakti; or Shiva alone, presented in androgynous aspect, half male, half female. (57-58, 75)

Just as Shiva is symbolically androgynous, so is the greater Brahman which the Shiva is but an aspect of. The ultimate end in Hinduism is to leave behind this false and painful world of *maya* where we divide the whole into opposite polarities (like male and female), and be reunited with the one Brahman. This union is reached by manifesting into the acts of day-to-day existence "the ideals of Hindu living: purity, self-control, detachment, truth, non-violence, charity and the deepest of compassion toward all creatures" (*World's Great Religions*: 15). At the end, then, awaits Brahman, poetically described in the Upanishads: "Thou art woman, thou art man; thou art youth, thou art maiden; thou, as an old man, totterest along on thy staff; thou art born with thy face turned everywhere. Thou art the dark-blue bee, thou art the green parrot with red eyes, thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, the seas. Thou

art without beginning, because thou art infinite, thou from whom all worlds are born"  
(*Upanishads*: 249-50).

"Shiva" the poem, however, while clearly addressing the Shivaistic balance of destruction that allows for creation, is more of a metaphor for political systems and earthly, man-made power. Here the hawk's (Shiva's) prey are other birds, but they are all metaphorical: "the pigeons of peace and security;" "the lonely heron of liberty;" "the wild white swan of the beauty of things" (CP II: 605). It is this swan of beauty the hawk will claim last, and whose bones she will use to serve as nest to hatch the eggs of the next beautiful world.

An image of Shiva that speaks strictly of the universal forces in nature sans politics can be found in an earlier Jeffers poem, "Fire on the Hills." Here we have a "roaring wave" of fire destroying all life caught within its path without mercy (CP II: 173). As a mystic who sees the universe in its totality as God does—through enlightened eyes void of all *maya*—Jeffers writes, "I thought of the smaller lives that were caught. / Beauty is not always lovely; the fire was beautiful, the terror / Of the deer was beautiful" (CP II: 173). This is the true dance of Shiva: total destruction; annihilation by fire. The balance of the dance, however, can be found at the end of the same sentence: "... an eagle / Was perched on the jag of a burnt pine, / Insolent and gorged, cloaked in the folded storm of his shoulders" (CP II: 173). Destruction of life by fire, which allows for the continuation of life—this is precisely the role of Shiva the destroyer. If the universe is beautiful, then the fire on the hills is beautiful. With the knowledge of this balanced dance, then, it becomes easy to see the beauty inherent in the destruction, as Jeffers does: "I thought, painfully, but the whole mind, / The destruction that brings an eagle from heaven is better than mercy" (CP II: 173). The word "mercy" is used in the poem to mean compassion, especially that which forebears punishment. To grant mercy would imply saving the lives of the terrified "deer" and "smaller lives that were caught" by the fire out of compassion. But the universe is not compassionate; the earth and its creatures, the ancient stellar furnaces that burn in the void beyond, the laws that govern everything, all of the universe is sustained by the violence. So, as it is Shiva's destruction of life that allows for new life to exist, that creates the continuum and is therefore essential to the balance of the universe, to grant mercy would mean disruption of life on a greater scale. Like Shiva, Jeffers reveals here how destruction is better than mercy.

Embracing this philosophy, it is easy to see why Jeffers was reluctant to interfere in any way with the course of nature. When he did it obvi-

ously affected him deeply, as is evident in his poem "Hurt Hawks" from 1928. In one of his most often quoted and misunderstood lines, Jeffers writes, "I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk" (CP I: 377). This is commonly misinterpreted as Jeffers's "Inhumanism" dismissing mankind and the value of human life. The truth is, most likely, that Jeffers felt he could kill neither man nor hawk. He made such a dramatic statement merely to emphasize the importance of the hawk's life since few people regard all life forms as equally precious, as Jeffers appeared to. Thus the line is intended to stress not just the nobility of the hawk, but the value and respect that should be accorded *all* life. In *Robinson Jeffers: A Portrait*, author Louis Adamic relates how Jeffers explained his own "inability to kill animals or birds is a matter of self-indulgence, not principle. Life is one of the cheapest and most abundant commodities on earth and in itself far from sacred to him (Jeffers): but he hates to inflict pain" (24). Una, however, immediately dismisses her husband's explanation, relating that "he never picks a flower wantonly, or prunes a tree or roots up a weed if he can avoid it. She believes that life is more honored by him than he realizes. In his everyday life he is perhaps the gentlest person living" (24). The reader whose experience of him comes only from a cursory reading of his verse and its often harsh subject matter might never suspect as much, but it can be surmised from Adamic's intimate profile, as well as numerous other first-person accounts and Jeffers's own letters, that Jeffers clearly aspired to all of the aforementioned Hindu ideals of purity, self-control, detachment, truth, non-violence, charity, and the deep compassion toward life in all forms, as Una confirms. As such, any non-violence and detachment would clearly be violated by putting the hurt hawk out of its misery, but in the end his compassion for the suffering of the bird forces his hand. While the indifferent universe in "Fire on the Hills" shows no mercy, Jeffers in "Hurt Hawks" does: "He had nothing left but unable misery ... I gave him freedom ... I gave him the lead gift in the twilight" (CP I: 377-378).

*Thurso's Landing*, the collection that contains "Fire on the Hills," also includes the poem, "November Surf." Here we witness the "white violent cleanness" of "great waves" that come as a part of the cycle each November to cleanse the accumulated "filth" left by human presence (CP II: 159). This, too, is reminiscent of Shiva, for although he carries the symbolic fire of destruction in his hand, Shiva represents destruction of all kinds and many Hindus believe this world will be destroyed by Shiva through water. This is the image that closes the poem, as:

The earth, in her childlike prophetic sleep,  
Keeps dreaming of the bath of a storm that prepares up the long  
    coast  
Of the future to scour more than her sea-lines:  
The cities gone down, the people fewer and the hawks more  
    numerous,  
The rivers mouth to source pure; when the two-footed  
Mammal, being someways one of the nobler animals, regains  
The dignity of room, the value of rareness. (CP II: 159)

The more one looks, the more one can locate recurring parallels to Shiva throughout Jeffers's poetry. Certainly elements of Shiva are apparent in the character of Tamar. The local farmers "firing the brush to make spring pasture" is a foreshadowing of the destruction Tamar is to bring at the narrative's end (CP I: 60). Just as watershed areas such as timberlands and hillsides periodically need to burn in order to replenish the soil with nutrients and allow for new life to subsequently bloom in the overall balance of the ecosystem, it is essential throughout nature that the old be destroyed to make room for the new. In due time wildfires rage over the dry brushlands, the Forestry Service ignites regular controlled burns in cyclic fire regimes, and Tamar's flames spark to life. When Tamar says, "I have to kindle paper flares of passion / Sometimes," we realize that, like Shiva, she has reached a distancing and peace over the destruction she knows she must wreak; like Shiva, Tamar must fulfill her role as the ultimate agent of destruction (CP I: 72). "Tamar" ends appropriately:

    Grass grows where the flame flowered;  
A hollowed lawn strewn with a few black stones  
And the brick of broken chimneys; all about there  
The old trees, some of them scarred with fire, endure  
    the sea wind. (CP I: 89)

Also from the collection *Tamar and Other Poems* we can find a more abstract acknowledgment of Shivaistic cycles in the lyric, "To His Father." Here Jeffers admits to rejecting the teleological Christianity of his father, "having followed other guides / and oftener to my hurt no leader at all, / Through Years nailed up like dripping panther hides / For trophies on a savage temple wall / Hardly anticipate that reverend stage / Of life, the snow-wreathed honor of extreme age" (108). Jeffers clearly

confesses to not anticipating any linear progression toward a finite end. However unpersuasive it might seem to his father and other Christians, Jeffers views the devoted creative act of writing poetry as his own path to immortality. He *suggests* that one becomes closer to the realization of God and the true nature of the universe by letting go of the Christian idea of "heaven as the final reward" and embracing instead the idea of life as a passing moment in eternal recurring cycles, all of which are a part of a greater universal dance based on Shivaistic cycles of destruction and rebirth. The Upanishads concur:

Becoming and destruction  
He who this pair conjointly knows,  
With destruction passing over death,  
With becoming wins the immortal. (*GRMM: 89*)

Jeffers, like the Greeks, transcended the apparent tragedy of this world through his art, suggesting (like Dancing Shiva) that there is a greater balance. The suffering and violence of life on earth finds resolution in a larger whole that can only be seen from a greater perspective. This is the role of the artist, and this is the lesson of the dance of Shiva Nataraja. As Will Durant noted, Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* asserts "it is only as an esthetic phenomenon that existence and the world appear justified. ... The sublime is the artistic subjugation of the awful" (407). Will Durant elaborates that "the noblest of Greek art was a union of the two ideals-the restless masculine power of Dionysus and the quiet feminine beauty of Apollo" (407). It is interesting to note that *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* claims, "Siva has the genial intoxication and mystic fervour of Dionysus, with whom the Indo-Greeks confused him" (374). Of course, Jeffers's use of Greek myth and drama in his poetry is well documented. Indeed, Durant could very well have been referring to Jeffers and his drama when he wrote:

The profoundest feature of Greek drama was the Dionysian conquest of pessimism through art. The Greeks were not the cheerful and optimistic people whom we meet with in modern rhapsodies about them; they knew the stings of life intimately, and its tragic brevity ... But the Greeks overcame the gloom of their disillusionment with the brilliance of their art: out of their own suffering they made the spectacle of the drama. (Durant 407)



"The Caged Eagle's Death Dream" from "Cawdor" finds Jeffers reaching the sublime through his artistic subjugation of the awful in yet another Shivaistic image:

There the eagle's phantom perceived  
Its prison and its wound were not its particular wretchedness,  
All that lives was maimed and bleeding, caged or in blindness,  
Lopped at the ends with death and conception, and shrewed  
Cautery of pain on the stumps to stifle the blood, but not  
Refrains for all that; life was more than its functions  
And accidents, more important than its pains and pleasures,  
A torch to burn in with pride, a necessary  
Ecstasy in the run of the cold substance,  
And scape-goat of the greater world. ... (CP I: 513)

Throughout all stages of his poetry Jeffers sees the hawk, like Shiva, as the ultimate symbol of survival via destruction, the graceful bird of prey that is at once all-powerful and yet calm in its role in the universe as destroyer. In "Rock and Hawk," Jeffers witnesses a falcon perched on a rock and asserts:

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 II: 416)

Jeffers could very well be talking about Shiva the destroyer here. With phrases like, "your emblem to hang in the future sky," and, "Not the cross," it is clear he is addressing religious iconographies and spiritual,

cosmic themes. Rejecting the Western, Christian symbols once again, as he does in "To His Father," Jeffers speaks of those qualities also found personified in Shiva: "bright power, dark peace"; "Fierce consciousness joined with final disinterestedness"; and "Life with calm death."

*Fear not!* gestures Shiva's second right hand, upturned in blessing and the "fear dispelling posture." Death will come, but be calm. Just as we know that the stars are violent and raging nuclear furnaces ripping across the void of space, when viewed from a greater perspective they appear calm and serene and provide us with much wonderment and light. Life to humans seems a swirling of conflicts and opposites; yet there is a greater rhythm of the eternal that we don't see to which Shiva dances. The drumming heartbeat and eternal fire, the stamping heel and uplifted foot, the "Elephant Hand" and uplifted palm all combine to tell *us*: *Fear not!* Shiva's destruction is a necessary step in this balanced dance of the universe.

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# ***LINCOLN STEFFENS:***

## ***THE MAN OF FAMILY***

By Una Jeffers

■ ***Editor's Note:*** It has been said now many times that the Jefferses of Tor House were of a conservative political bent, following a policy of individualism and, for Jeffers, isolationism. Una characteristically was outspoken in her social and political opinions. The anomaly is that their friends were often the far side of liberal. James Rorty, Noel Sullivan and Langston Hughes, Sara Bard Field and Erskine Scott Wood, Carey McWilliams and list goes on. None were more on the left than Lincoln Steffens and Ella Winter; yet friendship grew from human warmth rather than from calculating reason. Una, for herself, apparently agreed to disagree and went on with friendship, even to the point of writing reviews for Steffens's *Pacific Weekly*. They were friends; that was the given. And differences made life interesting. In a *Carmel Pine Cone* special number on Lincoln Steffens (Vol. XX, No. 7, Feb. 16, 1934) Una wrote this tribute illustrative of the point:

When Mrs. Blackman said I must give a glimpse of Lincoln Steffens in his home, I wished he were listening. I knew he would chuckle, for Home and Family are the topics of our sharpest disagreements. I pleading for the close-woven fabric of the family, he for breaking the threads, I for the home as my unit of measurement, he for some larger unit that has always some dreadful implication of communal nurseries and kitchens. His theory, I mean, for he has practiced otherwise.

Having acquired his pleasant many-windowed house, he encouraged Ella Winter, who has a lucky hand with flowers, to fill the garden with vivid bloom, and a strip of velvet lawn beyond. (He did revert to theory once about the lawn, his "capitalist lawn" he calls it, for while Ella was away he yanked it up and gave it sod by sod to Stan Wood—only to produce another bigger, greener lawn before she came back.) Together they

trained that gorgeous passion vine to grow and grow until it is as opaque a screen as my stone wall, and no longer, as I dash by, can I glance in to see whether Stef is moving sedately about the garden paths with his neat rake, or leaning on it, contemplating Jo Davidson's image of Pete by the pool, or latching the gate of "The Getaway" so Betty Ann can't wander. Betty Ann is Welsh Anna's baby, for when Anna acquired husband and child they too were absorbed into the household. It is gentle-voiced Anna who cheerfully answers your knock and brings you into the studio room where the work of local artists is often shown informally. Guests from London, from Paris, from all the world, appear and depart. Here Stef tirelessly heartens the young writers and Liberators who cluster about him; or on other days, delighting above everything in his own finesse and casuistry, leans back, cigarette between fingers, to watch amid the gusts of theory

"... the balloon of the mind  
That belies and drags in the wind."

When one comes in who is all for Living, her he prods into a recital of what tragic or comic event has just "hurtled into view" in the village, or gets out his Victrola record of Joyce reading from Anna Livia Plurabelle to convince her that when Joyce reads his shapeless Halfwords they are right.

Most courteous of hosts he is in his enjoyment to see you eating and drinking at his table, no matter how Spartan his own diet. Often Stef's dearest friend enters, —that's his son Pete, about whom he has blissfully theorized aloud and on paper since he let out his first wail. We have all kept a speculative eye on Pete from the time he first arrived, a tiny boy with charming hand-kissing foreign manners, and progressed through stages of swaggering, bullying, big black sombrero-wearing, to the present moment, when he startles us by energetic washings and combings before he comes up with a friendly handshake.

Since those early days in his father's house at Sacramento, Lincoln Steffens has crossed many a public square and supped at many strange boards, but the circling years, late as early, have brought him again to the warm entrenchment of his home.

Well, here's to the powerful young Jeffers, alive with health, and of sanest vision, qualities so necessary to handle and to treat sick and bewildered humanity. He took up his abode by the sea, where he could walk like the priest Chryses along the shore of the many-tongued waters, and get their rhythms. And he went back to the Greeks to brighten his eyes for contemplation of the American scene, the wisest things—that an American poet could do.

—Edgar Lee Masters

I am still dazed from contact with certain blind souls who cry "unmoral" "obscene" "destructive" after reading Jeffers's poetry. No poet has ever come to us with cleaner hands or purer heart. He has attacked the poison, as he sees it, at the root of life, not with sugar coated pills but as a great physician and surgeon—with aloe and wormwood, with sharp knives laying open the repulsive sore that the heart of humanity may be made clean as the bitter waters by which he lives, clean as the Carmel Coast.

—Sara Bard Field

I think Jeffers the largest of our living poets, the greatest English poet of today.... My reason for placing him as I do—the greatest of our poets—is not a reason at all, but an emotion. I feel instinctively—that he is a great original and originality is our most precious jewel.... I do not know of anyone else so little imitative—so dramatically imaginative. So much the bard, the seer, the poet.

—Erskine Scott Wood

Often I have the feeling that Jeffers is more than an equal of Balboa, for he too has discovered the Pacific Ocean. And to discover something as big as the Pacific Ocean, after others have discovered it, requires eyesight and navigation ability requisite to the business of being a poet.

—Carl Sandburg

### **Guidelines for Submissions to *RJN***

The *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* will print short notes, notifications of work-in-progress, announcements, requests for information, inquiries from collectors, bibliographic findings, etc. It especially welcomes short anecdotes relating to the poet and his works.

It has not been *RJN* policy to publish unsolicited poem tributes. Photos relating to Robinson Jeffers and family are most welcome and may be printed if not restricted by copyright.

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

#### **SUBMISSIONS**

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

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

#### **Essays:**

Place the title one inch below the top of the page, the author's name one inch below the title, the text two inches below the author's name. Affiliation of the contributor should be included.

#### **Notes, Book Reviews, and Bibliographies:**

Follow the form for essays, except that the author's name (and affiliation) should appear at the end of the text.

#### **Citations and Notes:**

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

#### **Quoting and Citing Robinson Jeffers:**

The standard edition of Jeffers's work is now *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press, Vols. I, II, III: 1988, 1989, 1991), abbreviated *CP*. Of course, for peculiar purposes, the original printings may be referred to, in which case the title in full or (when repeated) appropriately abbreviated, should be cited, along with an explanatory note. Until *The Collected Letters of Robinson and Una Jeffers* (Stanford) is available, references should be to *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Ann Ridgeway (Johns Hopkins, 1968), or, in the case of Una's letters, to the appropriate number of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*.

Robinson Jeffers' evocations of the divine in nature are so powerfully depicted in his poetry that he has served to revive our modern religious sensibilities. His spiritual insights were in three major areas: First, he has inspired mankind to see the world anew as the ultimate reality. Second, he perceived and described the physical universe itself as immanently divine. Robinson Jeffers was born on January 10, 1887, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, a town which is now part of Pittsburgh. His father, a professor of Old Testament Literature and Biblical History at Western Theology Seminary in Pittsburgh, supervised Jeffers's education, and Robinson began to learn Greek at the age of five. His early lessons were soon followed by travel in Europe, which included schooling at Zurich, Leipzig, and Geneva. When the family moved to California, Jeffers, at age John Robinson Jeffers (January 10, 1887 - January 20, 1962) was an American poet, known for his writing about the central California coast. Jeffers was born in Allegheny, Pennsylvania (now part of Pittsburgh), the son of a Presbyterian minister and biblical scholar, Reverend Dr. William Hamilton Jeffers, and Annie Robinson (Tuttle). His brother was Hamilton Jeffers, who became a well-known astronomer, working at Lick Observatory. His family was supportive of his interest in poetry.