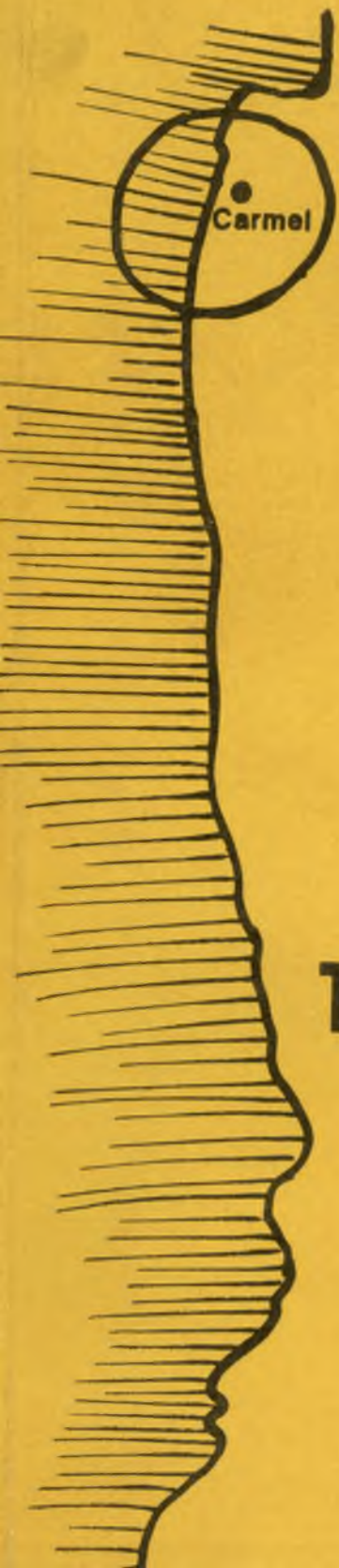

TADEUSZ SŁAWEK

THE DARK GLORY

Robinson Jeffers and His Philosophy of Earth Time & Things

Uniwersytet Śląski
Katowice 1990

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Contents

The scenery was marvelous — a hardly inhabited country — mountains 4000 feet high standing on the ocean-cliff — streams in every canyon — and the immense sombre redwood trees, towering straight up, with trunks thirty feet or more in circumference. Here in Carmel we have gigantic pine-trees; but they are pygmies compared with those redwoods.

— Robinson Jeffers to dr. Lyman Stookey, December 15, 1915

I am as attached to this rock as if I were a feudal serf with an iron collar.

— Robinson Jeffers to Donald Friede, March 1928

Foreword

This book does not claim to do justice to the vast and manifold literary production of the California poet who, in his lifetime (1887—1962), learnt both the glory of popular success (with *Roan Stallion* or *Medea)* which he never looked for and the bitterness of ostracism (with *The Double Axe)* which he faced with indifferent dignity. What attracts us to Robinson Jeffers is less a technical skillfulness or mastery of poetic craft and more a depth of philosophical reflection.

We approach Robinson Jeffers as a "regional" poet, but "regionalism" does not speak of this or that particular geographic area (although in case of Jeffers the topographical location is of primary importance, and if there has been a California poet then Jeffers is definitely one), but it signals a wider and more fundamental problem of links and conditions upon which man enters into a meaningful relationship with his environment.

The question which we are tracing in Jeffers's poetry deals with the essential and inevitable "regioning" of man who exists authentically only as a being-in-and--with-the-world. It is the story of man's duty to face the earth and landscape as well as the consequences of the evasion or forgetfulness of this obligation that we try to read in the poetry of the author of *Roan Stallion.*

What is at stake in this attempt at the "poetic ecology" is a rethinking of the tradition of humanism or, at least, its central motive of man as the "measure of all things". Jeffers, and in this respect his thought take a desisively Nietzschean turn, does not privilege man by accepting human part of the world's history as central or most lasting but tries to reinforce the "geological" perspective for which man's history is but a thread in the tapestry of the cosmic process of becoming. It is this insistence upon becoming which opens in Jeffers a necessity of the reflection upon the Eternal Return and the profoundly temporal character of man's existence.

In the temporal mode of his regioning, however, man is accompanied by things and the rethinking of humanism must imply a re-vision of the status of the thing. If, as the analyses will hopefully demonstrate, the way towards authentic being goes through the unconcealment of what Heidegger calls „Nothing" *(Nichts)*

and what Jeffers describes as "dark peace", then it is things which in their enduring existence always loyal to their nature will turn out to be instructors and shepherds of men. Jeffer's fascination with stones and masonry stemms precisely from his belief that it is indispensible for man to rediscover his thingly nature.

It is about these three elements — earth, time and things — that this book on Jeffers's poetry would like to be a meditation on.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used to mark appropriate volumes of Robinson Jeffers's poetry:

AP — *The Alpine Christ and Other Poems,* with Commentary and Notes by William Everson (Cayucos Books, 1974)

BAS — *Be Angry at the Sun* (New York: Random House, 1941)

BE — *The Beginning and the End and Other Poems* (New York: Random House, 1963)

BSW — *Brides of the South Wind: Poems 1917—1922,* with Comments and Notes by William Everson (Cayucos Books, 1974)

CM — *Cawdor/Medea* (A New Directions Book, 1970)

DA — *The Double Axe and Other Poems* (New York: Liveright, 1977)

DJ — *Dear Judas and Other Poems* (New York: Liveright, 1977)

H — *Hungerfield* (New York: Random House, 1951)

SP — *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Random House, 1959)

WPS — *The Women at Point Sur* (The Blue Oak Press, 1975)

All the quotations from Jeffers's letters come from *The Selected Letters of Robinson Jeffers 1897—1962,* ed. A. N. Ridgeway (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1968).

1. Landscape

There are three dominating figures of the earth in Jeffers's work, and the geography of the poet's imagination finds three favourite locations: California, Ireland and Greece. Before considering the meanning of these localities one, however, has to ponder over the significance of the term "earth" which foregrounds all more specific topographies. We are asking, then, how the poet's geography reveals his Being which, necessarily, is always located in a certain topography. The issues at the junction of geography, topography and ontology, in a word — ontography, will become the center of our attention in this book. Ontography, in turn, can be briefly described as a study of man's Being in a given topographical locale, and a necessary consideration of the temporal dimension of this relationship. Thus, following John Muir, a classic of the American conservationist thinking, we act on the strength of the conviction that "man becomes interesting considered in his relations to the spirit of this rock and water"[1], and we are probing into "the human part of the mountain's destiny"[2].

We can look at nature either from a point of view of one involved in change and modifications usually subsumed under the term of "progress", or from a point of view of certain disinterestedness measured in the lack of commitment. In the first case the perspective is only a temporary stance to be soon transformed in an active participation: a point of view is only a place from which we estimate our future intervention in nature and thus, necessarily, it has to be abandoned. The quicker we move from estimation to action the higher is the usability

[1] *John Muir: to Yosemite and Beyond. Writings from the Years 1863 to 1875*, ed. R. Engberg and D. Wesling (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1980), p. 129.

[2] Ibidem, p. 162.

of a given point of view. The landscape is seen already as planned for the future actions, as already "used up", realized in its complete usability. Thus, it loses its identity; it is not necessarily personalized (although such a possibility is clearly indicated by Poe's *The Domain of Arnheim*) but certainly it is "humanized" by action, projected into the future in which human authorship will modify and authorize, sign and countersign changes. In other words, the landscape is no longer seen as what it is, but as what it will be, where "it" loses its separateness and secludedness and becomes a conglomerate of nature and human action (Pope's "nature methodiz'd" or Addison's "regulating nature without reforming her too much").

Such a stance necessarily implies the lack of anonymity on earth's part; it cannot just be a configuration of forms, but it has to reveal, to make known its attraction and values. These values (be they of industrial or pleasurable character) cannot be unique, cannot be exhausted in a moment of appreciation but have to be renewable, reproducible and thus extendable over a long period of time The earth seen from this perspective is no longer a source but a resource, i.e. a re-source, a source which has to replenish what has been used up. Getting used up is a vocation of nature, although — paradoxically — this vocation in surreptitiously supported by the nostalgia for the inexhaustibility of nature. The earth is then no more, but no less, than equipment which ought to serve as long as possible. The myth of the ideal equipment is the myth of the everlasting serviceability. As Martin Heidegger notices in the essay on *The Origin of the Work of Art:*

> The production of equipment is finished when a material has been so formed as to be ready for use. For equipment to be ready means that it is dismissed beyond itself, to be used up in serviceability.[3]

The dismissal "beyond itself" is precisely the heart of equipment, as it implies an act of closing a thing in its serviceability. The earth is closed not in itself but "beyond itself", in its functions, and thus an important break is introduced into the temporal structure of earth. It loses its temporal continuity and is emptied out in the sheer future. The economy of investment is the economy of future gains; the economy of equipment is based on its future usability in the service of a set of transcendental values (signifieds, the "beyond itself").

What strikes us in the other, "disinterested", approach is the stubborn subsistence of the point of view which appears as essential for disclosing a necessary distance between the viewer and the viewed. It is from this distance that earth becomes a landscape, i.e. a vision of earth in which I become aware of myself and earth as taking part in a more

[3] M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York, 1971), p. 64.

powerful universal game. I relate to the earth in my disinterestedness in the presence of a third party which, on the one hand, makes earth as a neutral reserve of my future actions disappear but, on the other hand, due to a sudden intervention of distance it creates the space where my vision can occur. Thus, my appreciating a landscape cannot be measured with a degree of concentration with which I react to the landscape which opens before me not as a certain futurity but as an unspecified presence of the now. In other words, the earth as landscape "happens here for the first time and such a work is at all rather than is not"[4].

> Last week we drove by mail stage some forty miles south of Carmel — "down the coast", they say here — into the valley of the Big Sur River. [...] We had a delightful drive, and returned the next day. The scenery was marvelous — a hardly inhabited country — mountains 4000 feet high standing on the ocean cliff — streams in every canyon and the immense sombre redwood trees, towering straight up, with trunks thirty feet or more in circumference.
>
> — R. J. to Dr Stookey, Dec. 15, 1915

As E. F. Hirsch writes in his remarks upon Heidegger's existential analysis:

> I may think of nature as a source of livelihood, but I may also enjoy nature without having any practical interest. In all these cases world discloses nature as "landscape".[5]

Landscape reveals earth which is without history ("Happens for the first time") and thus without a sense of direction or, rather, with all possible directions present in it. Landscape must inevitably open a sphere of ontological reflection as bringing us to the awareness of the difference between what **is** and **is not.** But also, as Hirsch claims, it is the "world" that discloses nature as landscape, which statement locks us in the uneasy triangle of "world", "nature" and "landscape". We shall try to bring these differences to the fore by means of another quatation.

In the 14th chapter of the first book of *Tristram Shandy* the protagonist refers us to his mother's marriage settlement in order to explain the aura of unhappiness attached to his life. He tries, then, to take a historical approach according to which a line of chronologically arranged facts can always interpret and explain away the present moment. But this attempt at introducing a "straight" relationship between the cause

[4] Ibidem, p. 65.

[5] E. F. Hirsch, "The Problem of Speech in Being and Time", in *Heidegger's Existential Analytic*, ed. F. Ellison (Mouton, 1978), p. 168.

and effect, the past and present, is bound to fail. A natural and visual metaphor comes back in this context:

> Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule, —straightforward; — for instance, from Rome all the way to Loretto, without ever once turning his head aside either to the right or to the left, — he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end: —but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually soliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly...[6]

Neither history nor landscape can be grasped by means of the linear progressing; what is more, such an attempt would be openly transgressive against ethics ("morally speaking") and humanity ("if he is a man of the least spirit"). The topography is not a matter of simple measuring of distances and predictability, but it brings about intricate problematics of relationships between man and earth. This laison could be best characterized, in moral terms again, as "responding" or "listening" to something which lies beyond myself. Sterne uses the phrase "perpetual soliciting" which emphasizes both somehow atemporal character of this relationship and its dialogical essence. This dialogue is not presented to me as what I can choose to accept or reject. "Perpetual soliciting" has nothing to do with my volitional structure; it grabs me, appropriates my being and determines my existential horizon. "Perpetual soliciting" is what I cannot resist ("views... which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly").

> Donegal was beautiful, with its mountains and seas. Two or three times I thought angrily that it was more beautiful than our own coast mountains, though not so strong, nor so much in earnest. But Fair Head, which we revisited today, is the most impressive promontory of them all. It is a pity that no people —not even the Irish! — is equal to its landscape. Except in Homer's Iliad and two or three other poems. With love from all four of us, Affectionately, Robin.
>
> — R. J. to A. Bender, Sept. 4, 1937

At the same time, Sterne's passage is firmly incribed in the metaphor of travelling, and here "perpetual soliciting" results in a sudden cessation of movement: the moment when I respond to the soliciting view is a moment of stillness ("standing still") which, apparently, runs against

[6] L. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (Penguin Books, 1967), p. 64.

my intentions. "Apparently" because as coming and appropriating me from and into the domain where I have no access, it must be prior and more powerful than all particular intentions. This is a situation where the world opens **before** me (in that I can see it) but also in **me** (as it must incorporate myself). The world reveals itself, or — as Heidegger puts it — "the world worlds":

> The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and be seen. World is the ever non-objective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being.[7]

The world as the "ever non-objective" is Sterne's "perpetual soliciting" which work is to bring to contact "me" and the "external reality" in such a way so as to blur and erase the dividing lines between the two categories. In other words, in Derrida's wake we could say that Inside and Outside ceases to be separate categories and can be used only *sous rature*, and thus written down as Inside "is" Outside.

The world is a sudden stillness which is solicited by a view and in which I can see my decisions (e.g. travel from "Rome to Loretto") as orchestrated with decisions which are not mine ("fifty deviations from the straight line"). The world is what happens when I realize that my intentions ("straight forward") must comply with decisions which are not only not mine but, basically, non-human. The world occurs when the straight line sees itself fundamentally rooted in "crooked paths"; in Sterne's terms: the world is a straight line which actualizes itself as "fifty deviations from a straight line" (see Deleuze's and Guattari's analysis of *droite* and *strie* in *Rhizome).* However, this conjunction of decisions is based upon what trespasses all decisions. Was not the decision of the muleteer to travel from Rome to Loretto as quickly as possible, and is not his decision thwarted by the "perpetual soliciting" of views? The question, however, is not whether the decision was thwarted or not, but to see that any decision can be understood only on the ground of what defies decision. A straight line defends itself as a tension between "fifty deviations". The point of destination will, finally, be reached and the trip will even be fast and seemingly performed along the straightest of lines, nevertheless it necessarily has to be founded upon what darkly detours us from the destination as otherwise, Sterne flatly concludes, we would be deproved of "the least of spirit". What we can plan and master (a trip from Rome to Loretto) is rooted in what defies our mastery. In Sterne the moment of greatest clarity (when I experience the stillness evoked by the world) is also the time of greatest obscurity (the traveller cannot resist the soliciting of the view, even if he wants

[7] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 44.

to, in the same way as he would not be able to fly no matter how strong his will to do so might be).

> There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the product of our minds, as it might all too easily seem.[8]

If the world is a territory where my decisions come to terms with the non-human, there is also a realm where the non-human operates without any intervention on my part. In the world my decisions are absent, as what is designated as "I" or "mine" has not been outlined yet. We have then, as it can be interpreted from Sterne's passage, three spheres of movement:

1) Human, all too human (as we might say borrowing the phrase from Nietzsche) where nothing exists except man's volitional structure, and thus nature is seen as left at man's disposal and, thus exhausting itself in man's projects. No "world" can exist in this real as

> ...man exalts himself to the posture of the lords of the earth. In this way the impression arises that everything man encounters exists only in so far as it is his construct.[9]

This is Sterne's travelling straight forward "without ever once turning... head [so as to] foretell... to an hour... [the] journey's end". The mood of *menschlich all zumenschlich* dominated a large section of the 17 and 18 century landscape poetry which heard geography speak the language of politics and economy. Sir John Denham proceeds in his tone setting poem *Cooper's Hill* (1642) from presenting the Thames as a "profuse King" who

> Visits the world, and in his flying towers
> Brings home to us, and makes both Indies ours,

to generalize the purpose of his activity in terms of economy and physical attractiveness,

> So that to us no thing, no place is strange,
> While his fair bosom is the world's exchange.[10]

Denham's "no place is strange" is a war cry of this stance toward the world where appropriation (both economic and sexual) is the motivation of man's operations.

2) Human and non-human, where the "world" comes to the fore, i.e. where nature is viewed not as the standing reserve (Heidegger's *Bestand),*

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[8] Ibidem, p. 53.

[9] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, trans. W. Lovitt (New York, 1877), p. 27.

[10] *Poetry of the Landscape and the Night*, ed. Ch. Peake (Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 31.

but as the fold which surrounds man who himself is no more than another fold of the matter. In this experience of the world we become aware of it as texture, that is to say as physicality of figures which solicit my attention. We should note immediately, however, that the notion of "world" is very different from aestheticism or mystical sense of unity with nature, as I remain at the same time both distant (a "distant" view) and close to it. The "world" is necessarily a matter of **difference** which is the source of the stillness which we tried to describe below.

> ...its [nature's] hourly changes, day and night, in the great comings and goings of seasons. The gravity of the mountains, the hardness of their primeval rock, the slow and deliberate growth of fir trees, the brilliant, simple splendor of the meadows in bloom, the rush of the mountain brook in the long autumn night, the stern simplicity of the flatlands covered with snow — all this moves and flows through and penetrates daily existence up there, and not in forced moments of "aesthetic" immersion or artificial empathy, but only when one's own existence stands in its work.[11]

George Crabbe in his Aldeborough poem *The Village* (1783) will warn against the "artificial empathy" of the pastoral convention claiming that he will

> ...paint the cot
> As truth will paint it, and as bards will not.

The reality of the world is uncovered precisely by the analysis of man's toil in conjuction with the work of natural rhythms:

> ...when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
> The poor laborious natives of the place,
> And see the midday—sun, with fervid ray,
> On their bare heads and dewy temples play.[12]

Whereas Denham spoke of the appropriation of the world thus questioning the very idea of "my place" (imperialism is a large scale war against "the native": local inhabitants are colonized and, therefore, estranged from their land, for the imperialist the "native place" is but a space where he collects objects from "somewhere else"), Crabbe insistently draws our attention to the "natives" who reveal their existence in their work.

The moral dilemma of conquest and commerce which, on the one hand, as Thomson put it, allows England to "extend your Reign from shore to shore", but — on the other — stimulate brutal colonization helps us to see that the domain of human and non-human is the most appropriate realm for the ethical reflection. Unlike the all-too-human eulogizing over man's progress and salutary activity which defies ethics

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[11] M. Heidegger, "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?", trans. T. J. Sheehan, in *Listening*, No. 12 (Fall 1977), p. 122.

[12] *Poetry of Landscape...*, p. 146.

as non-problematic, and unlike the prehuman which transcends ethics as non-essential, the human and non-human looks at the world as at a complex network of relationships where the human being is also involved in the "work" of land.

The concept of "work" reveals the principal ambiguity of early capitalist colonization: it describes the exploitative labour of native slaves, but also pertains to the mute "labouring" of earth hiding natural resources. Thus, the ontological problem of placing "one's own existence in its [nature's] work" must necessarily induce its moral aspect: once we have entered the work of nature, we inevitably have to face the other type of work — the labour of "wretched slaves". If one fails to come to terms with the latter, it is due to the inauthenticity of his ontological placement. It is the non-human character of nature's "work" that allows us to fully notice and reflect upon the (ethically) "non-human" trait of imperialism as an activity deproved of ontological grounding. This seems to be what John Dyer meditates upon in a passage from The Fleece:

> On Guinea's sultry strand, the drapery light
> Of Manchester or Norwich is bestowed
> For clear transparent gums and ducitile wax.
> And snow-white ivory; yet the valued trade,
> Along this barbarius coast, in telling wounds
> The generous heart, the sale of wretched slaves;
> Slaves by their tribes condemned, exchangin death
> For life-long servitude; severe exchange!
> These till our fertile colonies, which yield
> The sugar-cane and the Tobago-leaf,
> And various new productions, that invite
> Increasing navies to their crowded wharfs.[13] (Iv. 11. 189—200)

3) Prehuman, where both myself and the world are prepared as different figures, where we are being fixed in the truth of the figure. It is the prehuman which, closed for man's inspection, brings everything to the outline. If in the realm of "human, all too human" things are locked up in their usability, in the prehuman they remain in the stage of preparation for obtaining a shape. The prehuman, as the not ready, is what frames *(Ge-stell)* the figure *(Gestalt)* which no longer lies before man as ready made to use *(vor-gestellt)* but is only rising towards the figure. This is a realm of what Heidegger calls "earth" orchestrating it with the "world":

> ...as the world opens itself the earth comes to rise up. It stands forth as that which bears all, as that which is sheltered in its own law and always wrapped up in itself. World demands its decisiveness and its measure and lets being attain to the Open of their paths. Earth, bearing and jutting, strives to keep itself closed and to entrust everything to its law.[14]

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[13] *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside and John Dyer* (London, 1855).

[14] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 63.

James Thomson in *The Seasons* (1726) wondered at the location of this never fully accessible power and the sources of its energy. Thomson's meditation, which wants to penetrate into the realm where earth prepares its work, takes characteristically — as if no answer were possible — the form of a list of questions.

> Ye too, ye Winds! that now begin to blow,
> With boisterous Sweep, I raise my Voice to you.
> Where are your Stores, ye powerful Beings! say,
> Where your aerial Magazines reserv'd
> To swell the brooding Terrors of the Storm?
> In what far-distant Region of the Sky
> Hush'd in deep Silence, sleep you when'tis calm?[15]

Thomson's phrase "aerial Magazines" particularly well describes the prehuman which operates, on the one hand, on the level of the non-human, immaterial and evanescent ("aerial"), but simultaneously it has to make use of the repertory of human images ("Magazines"). Like Derrida's collosus the prehuman is both human and too large to be restrained by the exlusively human reference.[16]

> The feeling of deep earnestness and nobility in natural objects and in the universe: — these are human qualities... but it seems to me I would not impute them into objects unless there were something in not-man that corresponds to these qualities in man.
>
> — RJ to B. Miller, Febr. 1938

In Sterne's passage the prehuman is this power which prepares, juts forward the forms the traveller is unable to resist. What constitutes a part of the world, where my decisions twist with the non-human, is a result of a long process of outlining and standing out of forms before they made themselves visible (the proximity of "jut" and "jot" emphasizes the identity of rising to form and outlining). Not only figuratively, we can say that the prehuman is the geology of the human and non-human.

When Hirsch claims that the "world" discloses "nature" as "landscape" he summarizes the movement that necessarily and incessantly takes place between the three realms. The "world", the territory where human and nonhuman meet, opens "nature", i.e. the prehuman which defies my decisions, but this disclosing can only happen as a certain outline, as something that separating — combines. The hidden forces of "nature" (Heidegger's "earth") can only be made visible at the moment of their least involvement in the sphere of human conscious plans and designs,

[15] *Poetry of Landscape...*, p. 105.

[16] See J. Derrida, *La verité en peinture* (Paris, 1978), pp. 136—168.

i.e. at the moment of outlining. "Landscape" is precisely this place in the history of reality where I grasp the emerging of things, their transition from "earth" to the purely human. "Landscape" belongs then to the "world":

> It is a basic design, an outline sketch, that draws the basic features of the rise of the lighting of beings.[17]

Hence, inevitably, landscape belongs to the sphere of culture subjected to human understanding and cognition. This understanding, however, is conditioned by distance. Only as a **between,** as difference can landscape be comprehended. Significantly, when Spengler wants to explain the phenomenon of culture he has recourse to both detachment and landscape. It is only when we stand in "detachment from the objects considered" *(die Distanz vom Gegenstande)* that we are able

> ...to view the whole fact of Man from an immense distance, to regard the individual cultures... as one regards the range of mountain peaks along a horizon.[18]

This is a frequent experience of Jeffers's protagonists who by adopting *Distanz* gain such a point of view from which the landscape is understood as a contour that removes man from the safe position of self-identity. Landscape is what takes me further away from myself. As we have already noted, landscape is accessible only through distance which is difference, not a mere diversity of forms but a difference with the opposition: I see the variety of shapes and, at the same time, perceive myself as opposed to them which, in turn, redefines my identity opposing me to myself. Bruce Fergusson on his way back from the dance meditates upon the coast mountains:

> The mountains, those were real persons, head beyond
> head, ridge, peak and dome
> High dark on the grey sky;... (BAS, 41)

It is this emergence of distance which intervenes not only between man and earth but also internally within the structure of self removing me from myself that constitutes the central experience of landscape. I know what landscape is when there is the haunting and silent presence of the Other which claims for itself my person-ality (mountains are "real persons").

This internal location of distance interested Nietzsche who believed that without a necessary intervention of distance within the human self *(Distanz-Erweiterung innerhalb der Seele selbst)* no overcoming of the present human paradigm was possible. Following Nietzsche we can argue

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[17] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 63.

[18] O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West,* trans. Ch. F. Atkinson, Vol. 1 (London, 1928), p. 94.

that landscape, as shown in Jeffers's texts, is not only the silent presence of the Other, but also that this presence changes the status of my humanity (it is as Nietzsche calls it *Selbst-Überwindung des Menschen*[19])

> Think of me as one of those friedly natural objects like a tree outside the window, that hasn't much means of communication but all it has is well intended.
>
> — RJ to W. Bynner, October 1931

[19] F. Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Bose*, aph. 257.

2. Landscape & Time

The experience of landscape occurs when we, safely sheltered by the "folds" of "world" (the sphere of the human purpose imposed upon the nonhuman), feel a penetrating presence of the prehuman. Landscape, in short, is a sudden unfolding, stretching out of the folds of "world". It is a minimal manifestation of the prehuman as disclosed in, and by, outline. Although not all the traditions of painting recognize this fact, nevertheless landscape seems to be set up upon what is not only non-human but, first of all, upon what is prehuman. It is in the sense of this uncovering of the prehuman that Robinson Jeffers can be described as a poet of landscape.

To see landscape is to, necessarily, face the limit of humanity; landscape is disclosed from the point where humanity of the viewer reaches its "end". This end is usually the end of language which fails us when we try to render the experience of landscape. Reverend Barclay, a mad protagonist of *Women at Point Sur,* knows that to deal with landscape means to go beyond the limitations of semiotic representation. His constant reflection is

> ...I am out of maps,
> Breaking strange waves. (WPS, 46)

But it is also the end of the earth; the end signifies a position of certain extremity. When landscape eventually forms itself as a figure of our perception, earth stops being what it usually is, a set of well-known forms, and appears as uncanny. In other words, we are able to detect a certain excess of life which no longer fills particular shapes, no longer matches them perfectly, but is seen as an overflow, an excess which — although difficult to name — becomes unexpectedly apparent. The experience of landscape is then the figuration of the collosal, i.e. of that

which, on the one hand, is definitely too uncanny to be represented, but which — on the other hand — has to communicate (that is, represent) its uncanniness, monstrosity, grandeur. We can say of landscape what Kant holds to be true about the colossos, that it is almost too big for any representation *(für alle Darstellung beinahe zu gross ist)*[1].

Landscape can be experienced only from the point which we have described as the "end". There are two aspects of this terminus:

1) it is the end in the sense of the final movement of withdrawal; we cannot move further back because a next step would bring us to the nothingness of earth and, thus, would prevent us from seeing anything. This meaning of "end" corresponds to the phrase "travel to the end of the world" as descriptive of the following experience:

> He was standing on a ledge of smooth, finished metal. Not a dozen yards from his feet, the ledge dropped sharply away; he hardly dared approach the brink, but even from where he stood he could see no bottom to the chasm before him. And the gulf extended out of sight into the glare on either side of him.[2]

2) "end" also signifies the end of the earth as a body of raw materials left at the disposal of man, the earth "seen to the point". Both these elements (the colossal and seeing free of pragmatic purposes) operate in the early section of *The Women at Point Sur*:

> ...Onorio Vasquez
> Never sees anything to the point. What he sees:
> The ocean like sleek gray stone perfectly joined
> To the heads and bays, a woman walking upon it,
> The curling scud of thes strom around her ankles,
> Naked and strong, het thighs the height of the mountain,
> walking and weeping,
> The heavy face hidden in the hands, the lips drinking
> the tears in the hollow hands and the hair
> Streaming north. (WPS, 11)

Landscape marked in our perception as the experience of "end" spells the termination of the earth (in the colloquial sense) and the appearing of "earth" (in the Heideggerian sense), the transition between the two represented by the colossal.

> I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray, the established
> sea-marks, felt behind me
> Mountain and plain, the immense breadth of the continent, before
> me the mass and doubled stretch of water. (SP, 87)

For Jeffers the earth ends in the most literal sense, as his voice takes root in California, the "continent's end". But the end is also the between:

[1] J. Derrida, *La verité...*, p. 143.

[2] F. Pohl, "The Tunnel under the World", in *Science Fiction Omnibus*, ed. B. Aldiss (Penguin Books, 1973), s. 367.

..."The ocean", he said
"On one side, the hills on the other, witnessing
The terrible horror, the sacrifice, the marriage of God." (WPS, 78)

The one who sees and uncovers landscape is not simply placed before a view, but he has to be aware of the movement that has brought him to this particular placing where the view presents itself to him. In other words, seeing landscape must be necessarily rooted in the mood of all previous landscapes ("felt behind me... the immense breadth of the continent"). Landscape is, then, what I have **before** me and **behind** me, but this position of between cannot be interpreted simply as a point where the past opposes the future. The between is where the past comes to terms with the future, i.e. where the dialogue implying the necessity of presence takes place. Hence in "Point Joe" man is located "between the solemn presences of land and ocean" (SP, 79). The between is then the experience of the **having been** in which present becomes the cutting edge of the past moving towards the future. The present moment is a gift of the past offered to the future, and man is viewed as a mediator in this exchange. In an early poem "To the Rock that Will Be a Cornerstone of the House" we read:

Lend me the stone strength of the past and I will lend you
The wings of the future, for I have them. (BSW, 107)

The **having been** can only partly be made visual, and thus "seeing" is merely an introductory phase initiating us into the mystery of landscape In "Continent's End" Jeffers stubbornly fixes his glance upon a sign, a mark, a demarcating line which are signals for the emergence of "earth" always felt not seen. Visuality is possible to the degree to which we deal with figures, recognizable outlines, while "earth" defies figures and thus escapes sight. Visuality is preoccupied with the "established sea-marks", while what stretches "behind me" and "before me" is either "immense" or "doubled".

"Felt" in the experience of **having been** does not have an emotional colouring; it does not connote man's subjugation to desire, but, just the opposite, it introduces the element of the prehuman which is, as we have said, an essential factor in the emergence of landscape. What started as the "immense" and "doubled" regresses futrher towards what is inarticulate and formless. The experience of landscape organizes itself along three stages: visual boundary, felt immensity (the colossal), ontological indescribability (what I see reveals Being of another order which defies my formulations or figurations).

The tides are in your veins, we still mirror the stars, life is your
child, but there is in me
Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye that
watched before there was an ocean. (SP, 87)

The **having been** refers then to what preceded man and is still preserved in his ontological structure. To see landscape is to discover the essential process of preservation in man of what is "larger and harder" than man. Landscape is an act of overcoming the human history on behalf of geological memory which, necessarily, is much more voluminous than human. "Earth" disclosed as landscape translates the human into the geological. This game of disclosing, however, is very subtle; it is not exploitative uncovering, not setting something up for my disposal (because it breaks with the past in the name of the future), but it is a movement which uninterruptedly brings back the past and gathers it in the present. The experience of landscape implies then both care and sheltering ("life is your child"), but on the other hand it also reaches out towards what preceded it and which is a denial of maternity and desire ("harder... impartial"). Landscape is disclosed in three movements: human ("child"), non-human ("tides, stars"), and prehuman ("older and harder than life... before there was an ocean").

However, what is felt, what goes beyond seeing, will eventually come back to the realm of vision. Landscape inaugurates itself to the eye, then withdraws towards the felt in order to reemerge as a visual phenomenon. This process implies a certain purification of vision: "I (eye) gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray" becomes "the eye that watched before there was an ocean". The first eye belongs to "world", it is the organ through which an individual subject perceives the world and constructs the network of his purposes; the eye which mediates between the human and the non-human, the individuated eye of an I.

The other eye is "older" than "life" and thus free of the individuation processes. Reverend Barclay longing for "one power which fills and forms" will claim that "there is no distinction of persons" (WPS, 49). The abrogation of the individuation process must inevitably question the function of outline and figuration. It is here where we can refer to Blake's famous aphorism "if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, that is to say, infinite". We can do so, however, with a careful reading of the last word. Blake's infinity is profoundly illuminated by his theory of line and, paradoxically, signifies a sudden revelation of the object in the glory of its contour. Infinity is the epiphany of shape and form.

> ...outline is the basis not only of a sublime romantic classicism but also a religious salvation. Only the divine imagination can transcend the limiting categories of reason and perceive the holiness of everything that lives, but its perceptions need to be articulated in clear, specific, and carefully outlined forms, if they are to survive in a sceptical world.[3]

[3] A. Kostellanetz Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* (Berkeley, 1974), p. 236.

For Jeffers, infinity is a retrogressive movement "beyond belief" (SP, 581), where "they have made no words for it" (SP, 139), and has nothing to do with either salvation or imagination. Jeffers's purification of "the doors of perception" deals critically with the illusion of shapes and outlines and amplifies the necessity of the unconcealment of the prehuman.

> As the eye fails through age or disease
> And the world grows a little dark it begins to have human
> figures in it.
> A stone on the mountain has a man's face
> [...]
> The eye's tricks are strange, the mind has to be quick
> and resolute or you'll believe in them
> And be gabbling with ghosts. For take note that
> They are always human: to see the human figure in all
> things is man's disease;
> To see the inhuman God is our health. (BE, 66)

Landscape as the having been resides precisely in the moment when the inarticulacy of what is "older and harder than life" reaches the edge of articulateness, touches upon the contour.

The fascination with the earth betrays a Romantic bend of Jeffers's writing. A similar emphasis on the hidden treasure deposited under the crust of earth rings in Novalis's apotheosis of the miner who is content to know where the metal powers are found, but who

> ...takes more delight in their peculiar structures and habitat than in their possession. They have no charm for him any more once they are turned into commercial articles, and he had rather looked for them within the strongholds of the earth... than to follow their call into the world...[4]

However, where Jeffers parts with Romanticism is the strongly emotional context of the romantic philosophy. While for Novalis the geological experience evokes "hearty affection" and a feeling of "blood kinship of all mankind"[5], for Jeffers the same experience implies a change in our emotional structure. In the act of seeing landscape we reach the prehuman, and thus subdue human passions and desires and, on the semiotic lavel, we overcome the merely human system of representation. The world has ended, but it has not become completely inarticulate. Its history continues in signs different from human.

> The lighthouse rock apexed, and the lesser morro
> Flanked on the south; these two alone breaking the level
> Opposite the straight sea-wall of the ended world. (WPS, 55)

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[4] Novalis, *Henry von Ofterdingen*, trans. P. Hilty and F. Ungar (New York, 1964), p. 69.

[5] Ibidem,p. 70.

Thus, the experience of living at the "continent's end" so frequently rendered in Jeffers's poems and geographically embodied in his life-long residence in California is a characteristic feature of any disclosing of earth as landscape. The word "continent" retains in Jeffers its adjectival sense of controlling one's passions and desires: we see landscape from the "rock-edge of the continent" in the **having been** of world, and also in the movement between passion and impartiality. What is begun as a decision (I want to look at what is in front of me) or soliciting (like in Sterne's passage), quickly evolves into a previsual sensation ("felt"), and eventually turns out to be dying out of desire (impartiality). It is precisely this interplay of decision, i.e. mastery, and indecision that constitutes the nature of landscape. As Heidegger puts it,

> ...the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which decisions comply. Every decision, however, based itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision.[6]

> You should incluse in your meditation the grass or weeds in that cemetary, the texture of the stones; and the faces of buildings or mountains, the color of a girl's skin, the colors and shapes and motions of things, —to give the poem body as well as soul.
>
> — RJ to (?) Wechsler, 29 May, 1935

[6] M. Heidegger, *Poetry*..., p. 55.

3. Gathering Sticks

As we have seen the experience of the **having been** involves nature in geological rather than biological terms. Jeffers's phrase from "Continent's End" in which he alluded to the "insolent quieteness of stone" itself rests upon the geological reference to rocks. Thus, in seeing landscape I see it always as bringing me to the point where I myself am also revealed as participating in the geological perception of forms.

> ...it is not we who presuppose the unconcealedness of beings; rather, the unconcealedness of beings ...puts us into such a condition of being that in our representation we always remain installed within and in attendence upon unconcealedness.[1]

Heidegger's rhetoric is at the same time spatial ("installed within") and ethical ("in attendance") which emphasizes the general line of his thought in its constant movement between the materiality of objects and their ontological foundations, between dwelling ("The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *buan*, dwelling"[2]) and building ("Building accomplishes its nature in the raising of locations by the joining of their spaces"[3]).

> I spend a couple of hours every afternoon at stonemasonry, having still much to build about the place; or bringing up stone from the beach, violent exercise.
>
> — RJ to Dr. L. Stookey, 21 August, 1920

The spatiality of rhetoric implies a necessity of particular locations not only in geographical terms (and these abound in Jeffers's work, to mention only the most important like Point Joe, Ventana Creek, Big Sur, Monterey, Mill Creek), but also

[1] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 52.
[2] Ibidem, p. 147.
[3] Ibidem, p. 160.

in terms of metaphors within individual poems. In "Point Joe" the landscape presents itself as, in part, an architectural structure:

> ...and beyond
> the desolate
> Sea-meadows rose the warped wind-bitten van of pines, a
> fog-bank vaulted
> Forest and all....
> [millions of flowersts] whose light suffused upward into the fog
> flooded its vault... (SP, 78)

Thus, at the moment of disclosure, we find ourselves "installed in" the the world as in a cathedral ("vaults"), seemingly sheltered against the assaults of the elements ("van of pines"). "Seemingly", because this location is not a place of rest but of movement ("we wandered through a weird country", "one other moved there"), of human unrest and inquisitiveness. "Earth", intruding into the world, radically preserves its right to self-enclosure which defies human interference and exploration. Hence, unobservedly, the architectural mixes with the acquatic and marine:

> Point Joe has teeth and has torn ships...
> I saw the spars and planks of shipwreck on the rocks (SP, 78)

The same transition between the two set of metaphors occurs in an early section of *Tamar*:

> ... He returned another way, from the headland
> over Wildcat Canyon,
> Saw the immense water possessing all the west and saw Point Lobos
> Gemmed in it, and the barn-roofs and the house-roof
> Like ships' keels in the cypress tops... (SP, 7)

The metaphors underscore the impossibility of either true dwelling or genuine building. The architecture of landscape in "Point Joe" turns out to be deadly, and in *Tamar* the house is a "little box":

> ...the withered house
> Of an old man and a withered woman and idiot woman. No
> wonder if we go mad, no wonder. (SP, 8)

If the surfaces of architecture remain misleading, the ground is a source of illumination. In the geological metaphysics of Jeffers it is the floor of the cathedral which acquires significance denied to the sophisticated vaulting. The natural architecture calls for a glance downward rather than upward: the light which usually enters a building from above in Jeffers's imaginary structure radiates from below:

> ...we wandered
> Through a weird country where the light beat up from the
> earthward... (SP, 78)

It is the solidity of the ground is the essence of Jeffers's architecture; like in an Egyptian pyramid the earth becomes not only grounds on which a structure is erected, but it is a realm where a building takes place. The place taken by the building is as important as its walls, and like in the Egyptian architecture it is "la cinquiem face de la pyramide si important dans sa signification symbolique".[4]

In Jeffers this importance takes on a luminous character: the ground radiates light. But it is not shining which will interest us here; it is the essential movement of the head that calls for attentive reading. If light shines from the earth, then, the fundamental direction of man's look is downward. In "Point Joe" this movement is augmented and becomes not only a glance but a physical gesture of the whole body. The viewer sees "an old Chinaman gathering seeweed from the sea-rocks". It is upon this tender action of a bent human body that Jeffers focuses his attention. The Chinaman is the only other human presence on the beach, and thus he has to come to the fore as a displaced being thrown among elements which bare his existential qualities.

> To submit to this displacement means: to transform our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work.[5]

The displacement is manifested on several levels:

— existentially, man is alienated from his usual, man-made, environment;
— nationally, the Chinaman is shown as estranged from his native soil;
— phenomenologically, man gets a view of himself not as a consumer of food, but as a gatherer, collector of nourishment which brings him closer to earth than to the realm of human culture where food is usually provided but not gathered.

The man bends down towards earth in the movement of **gathering,** and in this gesture he counteracts the movement of light which "beat/s/ up from earthward". Bending towards earth man is coming closer to the source of light. At the same time, the very word "gather" introduces a particular relationship of nearness between man and earth. Gathering implies that the gathered and the gatherer come from necessarily different realms, but through the very action, a gesture of collecting, they are placed in the immediate vicinity of each other. To "gather" means to bring to certain closeness something previously distant which, however, does not lose its integrity and separateness. Gathering is then a name for a certain **harmony** between the gathered and the gatherer, the

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[4] C. Parent, "La Pyramide a l'Enverse" in *Le Monde* (Avril 14—15, 1935).
[5] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 66.

harmony where "clearcut forms still continue to exist individually, not fused into an all-embracing atmosphere"[6].

This harmony holds not only between the gathered and the gatherer, but it also calls forth other elements of the world thus losing the character of the subject-object type of relationship. In Heidegger's essay on "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" we read that

> With the banks, the bridge brings to the stream the one and the other expanse of the landscape lying behind them. It brings stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood. The bridge gathers the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows... The bridge gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals.[7]

Similarly, the gathering in "Point Joe" is a gesture of ritual bowing to and before earth in which other elements are invoked. "Seaweed", a plant growing in the sea calls for the generative power of soil; "sea--rocks" revealed momentarily by the ocean bring us to the neighbourhood of the darkness of waters, as well as induce a delicate but essential ambiguity as to the proverbial bareness of rock which, in this case, turns out to be nourishing and productive.

Gathering takes place among the elements, i.e. it is a gesture in which one element necessarily invokes another. In "Point Joe" the sea is shown as neighbouring with the land, and water touches the sky:

> ...and old Chinaman gathering seaweed
> from the sea-rocks,
> He brought it in his basket and spread it flat to dry on the
> edge of the meadow.

It is this "edge" which is particularly significant in this context. It marks the territory of transition where two adjacent areas are made separate, but also it demarcates the space where they come into a relationship. The edge introduces a necessary distance, a mnimal but essential **difference** between two beings or spaces but, at the same time, it illumines them by he light of the **same**. This sameness does not imply identity; it is to be understood as a horizon common to all beings. The same in which stands the seaweed is the land and the sea, the sky and water, and it is impossible not to address these elements when looking at the plant drying on the beach. In this respect the same is nothing else but the power of Logos interpreted by Heidegger as Saying which has nothing to do with a linguistic expression but which

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[6] L. Spitzer, *Essays on English and American Literature*, ed. A. Hatcher (Princeton, 1962), p. 15.

[7] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, pp. 152—153.

> ...refers to the cosmic "owning" which gathers beings together to abide in themselves and with other beings as a cosmos.[8]

Hence, the same, horizon or Logos is the very antithesis of privacy which has been so devastatingly criticized by Nietzsche:

> All is now private: this is Nietzsche's conclusion about modern times: All is done purely with reference to self and without horizons.[9]

Gathering, which overcomes the privacy of self and which seems to be the equivalent of such Greek terms like Heraclitus's *logos,* Parmenides's *moira* and Anaximander's *chreon,* brings things to the edge, i.e. it opens an unlimited view forward and backward. Man as the one who gathers exists on the edge, on the thin line between the water and land, past and present:

> Man gleaning food between the solemn presences of land and ocean,
> On shores where better men have shipwrecked, under fog and among flowers,
> Equals the mountains in his past and future;...

In these lines man's gesture towards earth becomes more than gathering. "Gleaning" is collecting to which two important moments have been added: first, it is a gathering which comes after the crop has been collected; second, it is picking up what was left by others. The economy of gleaning is the strategy of utmost, care: nothing can be lost, every tiny particle has to be sheltered. Man as a gatherer has lost the air of producer but preserved that of a clever consumer; man as a gleaner sees himself as a late comer to the feast, a protector of crumbs and sticks which cannot be wasted. Thus, to "glean" means to "bend" (like in the act of gathering), but it also implies coming later than others. The difference between gathering and gleaning is the difference of humility. "The poor are allowed to enter and glean upon another's ground after the harvest without being guilty of trespass"[10].

It is this belatedness and poverty of man that draws Jeffers's attention: as a gleaner man is coming only after others have already come, he enters "between the solemn presences of land and ocean".

Nourishing, a vital occupation of man, is located then in the most ontologically vulnerable area of "between" or **edge**. Food is gleaned between the solemn presences of elements because in this gesture there resides the significance of gathering: gleaning is gathering as it brings the smallest particles to the presence of the elements. One of the

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[8] M. E. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self. The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* (Athens—London: Ohio University Press, 1981), p. 242.

[9] T. B. Strong, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley, 1975), p. 181.

[10] Blackstone 1768, *OED*, 4, 210.

traditional meanings of "glean" was to "gather or collect into one receptacle, one mass" as testified by a line from Shakespeare's Henry Viii: "Yes, that goodnesse of gleaning all the lands wealth into one"[11].

But as Jeffers says man also gleans food "between the solemn presences" of mountains and ocean. Here we read two important thoughts: first, that true nourishment must be appropriated by its elemental presence (unlike the tradition of modern eating which, purposefully, tries to erase the traces of the "elemental" from foodstuffs turned into a commodity); second, that man gleans food as a between, as what introduces a gap into the same, into what is "harder and older than life". Man is a wound, a cleavage that separates land and ocean and prevents elements from a full participation in the Same. Man's present being introduces a difference between "land" and "ocean"; it is man's consciousness that both necessitates the fissure and determines the possibility of the cure. As Jeffers claims in the Heraclitean language:

> Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our tones [the poet's and the ocean's] flow from the older fountain. (SP, 88)

Man is what, through the ambiguity of its time, introduces difference into the domain of the Same. Glean, on the one hand, emphasizes the sheltering aspect of human existence which can take place only in the present (and also in the presence of the other), but simultaneously the verb suggests the pastness of the situation as "gleaning" is only a finishing touch added when the main work is over. Man is then a belated newcomer to the Same.

Man appears on "shores where better men have shipwrecked, under fog and among flowers". The present perfect construction brings us again to the vicinity of **gathering**: these deaths do not belong to the past but can be called forth, brought to the open of, what we may call, the geological presence. Men who **have** shipwrecked are "better" because they already belong to the geological presence which has to be revived despite the imperfections of the purely human presence. What we refer to in this essay as the **geological presence** is also the "fire", the "older fountain", and hence can also be described as **pre-sense.**

Man, however, is not only "between" but also "under" and "among". While the first prepositional phrase, as it has been demonstrated, displays man as a difference bearer/barer, the other two serve as ancillary descriptions: **under** suggests coveredness from the top, **among** — from the sides. Man as a **between** does not present himself in an easy way but has to be unconcealed from the **under** and **among**. The moment when this happens is the gleaning of food, when man under fog and among flowers bends towards earth picking up what was left on the ground.

[11] *OED*, 4, 210.

We should not let it go unnoticed that food appears at least twice in the poem. As human nourishment it is gleaned, collected and sheltered in humility; as a drama of geological forms it is grasped and torn to pieces, claimed with deadly ferocity. It is only the latter which is discussed in terms of aesthetic categories:

> Point Joe has teeth and has torn ships; it has fierce and solitary beauty...

The culinary metaphor in "Point Joe" oscillates between tearing (a savage destruction gratuituously leaving unconsummed remains of the feast) and gleaning (a sheltering activity of salvaging the ungathered remnants). The latter takes place in the face of serious danger: man gathers food in the "solemn" presences of land and ocean which, although disclosing the sphere of the Same ("fire", "older fountain"), are mortally dangerous to man. Gleaning is performed always in the shadow of tearing. As Jeffers puts it in the final lines of "At the Birth of an Age":

> The long river
> Dreams in the sunset fire
> Shuddering and shining. (SP, 560)

Displacement is, as we have seen, a necessary beginning for the revaluing of man's relationship with the world. Now this estrangement from the familiar is augmented by depicting nature not as a place of refuge but as the domain of "shuddering" and "tearing".

> Boulders blunted like an old bear's teeth break up from the headland. (SP, 175)

If Hölderlin speaks of the "blessed nature" and of the "fullness of the living universe which feeds and satisfies my starving being with its intoxication"[12], he uses the culinary rhetoric to demonstrate a Romantic domination of man over the universe which satisfies man's hunger with its Dionysian quality ("intoxication"). This rhetoric of satisfaction is absent from Jeffers's poems. Man is not only the eater but, first of all, the one who is eaten, "torn" by "the teeth" of nature. While Hölderlin places his emphasis, at least in *Hyperion*, on the fullness of nature which thus can bestow its excessive value to a man, in Jeffers neither man nor nature are in a position to impart anything to each other.

Man's gleaning takes place in the shadow of tearing, and it is this violence withdrawing man from his habitat which Heidegger ascribes to the domain of the "holy" (*das Heilige*) that makes "gleaning" what it is. Gleaning, we shelter what has been left against the original violence ("A withered old Chinaman came regularly to pull edible seaweed

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[12] Hölderlin, *Hyperion or the Hermit in Greece*, trans. W. R. Trask (New York 1965), p. 22.

from the rocks"[13]) which has already removed us from our place. Heidegger calls the "holy" *das Entsetzliche* and, as a critic comments, he does so

> Because the holy expels all experience from its habituation and withdraws it from its habitat... it is *ent-setzend*, that is, according to the etymology of the German word, de-ranging or dislodging. In this sense the holy as "entsetzlich" is also the terrible.[14]

Two questions need to be asked now. What is the meaning of our sheltering gesture? What is it that tears us to death, us who stand between the tearing powers and salvage food from rocks and sea? Heidegger at this moment withdraws into silence as "nothing mediated... is ever capable immediately of attaining the immediate"[15]. Besides, as Heidegger himself warns us the "t" question "comes too soon and is too crude. For ... without cause and without scruple, we accept it as an established fact that one can and may ask about this "It" exclusively in terms of what "It"? or who "It"[16]. Let us rely, then, on a writer's rendition of "It". On the third of February 1798 Dorothy Worsdworth, a superb master of poetic thinking in prose, noted in her journal:

> A mild morning, the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills. The sea at first obscured by vapour; that vapour afterwards slid in one mighty mass along the sea-shore; the islands and one point of land clear beyond it. The distant country (which was purple in the clear dull air), overhung by struggling clouds that sailed over it, appeared like the darker clouds, which are often seen at a great distance apparently motionless, while the nearer ones pass quickly over them, driven by the lower winds. I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea. The clouds beneath our feet spread themselves to the water, and the clouds of the sky almost joined them. Gathered sticks in the wood: a perfect stillness. The redbreasts sang upon the leafless boughs. Of a great number of sheep in the field, only one standing. Returned to dinner at five o'clock. The moonlight still and warm as a summer's night at nine o'clock.[17]

We notice immediately that the passage opens and closes with precise temporal designations, but the time in question is indicated not only by a clock but, first of all, by food. Nourishment is the beginning and

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[13] Una Robinson Jeffers in Melba Berry Bennett, *The Stone Mason of Tor House. The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers* (The Ward Ritchie Press, 1966), p. 87.

[14] A. Schuwer, "Nature and the Holy: On Heidegger's Interpretation of Hölderlin's Hymn 'Wie wenn am Feiertage' ", in *Radical Phenomenology. Essays in Honor of Martin Heidegger*, ed. J. Sallis (Humanties Press, 1978), p. 235.

[15] M. Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1971), p. 63.

[16] M. Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking*, trans. F. D. Wieck and J. G. Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 188.

[17] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. M. Moorman (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 5.

end of human time which without it becomes barren and unhospitable. It is also food that institutes human dwelling, i.e. that is the basis of departure and return: the house is a sheltering place only when the beginning of the day is accompanied by breakfast and at the return home the table is laid for the evening meal.

> There is no welcome where no meal, no food and drink can be offered. There is no stay here for the mortals, in the sense of dwelling at home.[18]

But the dwelling in which mortals gather at the table is never a place of only seclusion and separateness; sheltering, it also opens up to include the world: "the windows open at breakfast...", "The moonlight still and warm...". What fills the framework of food signifying human time and human dwelling is, however, more than human: when at home, the perspective opens into "the distant country". We cannot ignore the fact that Dorothy Wordsworth's landscape, like Jeffers's, is locked in between "the solemn presences" of land and sea and, again like Jeffers, she speaks from "under fog" whereas the sea is "obscured by vapour". Neither for Jeffers nor for Dorothy is this fog a sign of the lack of clarity. It does not constitute an impenetrable veil but functions as what has to be taken into necessary consideration if the clarity is to be achieved. Thus, man emerges from "under fog", and "vapour slid along the shore" to make us aware of the possibility of vision, in other words, fog is interpreted as a problem posed to our sight and understanding.

> I think it is the business of a writer of poetry, not to express his own gospel, but to present images, emotions, ideas, and let the reader find his good in them if he can. Not to form a way of thought but perhaps to activate thoughts.
>
> — RJ to F. I. Carpenter, Nov. 18, 1933

Characteristically, it is not considered to be a feature of what Heidegger calls "dreamy romanticism", but in a very matter of fact way it is rendered precisely as a problem, i.e. as a thought provoking phenomenon. With this qualification we are coming back to the culinary rhetoric. In Heidegger's *Was heisst Denken?* we read:

> There is no welcome where no meal, no food and drink can be offered. There is no stay here for mortals, in the sense of dwelling at home. If mortals are to be made welcome and to stay, there must be water from the rock, wheat from the field... This frequent turn of phrase [there is] was mentioned when we tried to characterize what gives food for thought before all else — what is most thought-provoking. It gives us food for thought.[19]

Fog is, then, food for thought, and it is precisely as a result of a reflection that the landscape is 'translated' from the language of the

[18] M. Heidegger, *What Is Called...*, p. 190.

[19] Ibidem, p. 189.

visual into the language of philosophy. "I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea" is Dorothy's equivalent of Heidegger's gatheredness. The very verb reappears in the following sentence: the most appropriate response, and the only way of tuning oneself to the unity is a sheltering gesture of the human body. Man bending towards earth to receive its gift is introduced into silence. The perfection of this stillness consists in that it is a territory where movement (of the body) does not oppose the immobility of a thing (sticks), and silence is augmented by a song of a bird.

Jeffers's "gathering seeweed from the sea-rocks" and Dorothy's "gathering sticks in the wood" poetically call forth presences more powerful than man's and are both figures of thought submerging man in the inexhaustible richness of nature. In other words, while loyal to the world (to everything which we do to perpetuate our understanding of reality, to bring it to light) they disclose what cannot be fully disclosed, what resists light and understanding, i.e. earth. Dorothy Wordsworth's earth is experienced as an ultimate seriousness of everyday life reality of food and walks; for Jeffers, solemnity is only a passing phenomenon itself; "solemn presences of land and ocean" eventually turn out to be manifestations of "nature" in which solemnity is only another name of laughter:

> ..that glow from the
> earth was only
> A trick of nature's...

Nature is a sequence of forms which reveal themselves as real and apparent ("tricky") at the same time: a trick is constituted precisely by a thing which is and is not what it presents itself to be. Light, seemingly radiated by the earth is ultimately a "trick" because earth is what opposes light in a sense that it never lets light penetrate its interior. Nature, underlying land, ocean and man, the It we have been talking about, plays the role of *physis* which Heidegger describes in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*:

> ...*physis* originally encompassed heaven as well as earth, the stone as well as the plant, the animal as well as man ...*Physis* means the power that emerges and the enduring realm under its sway.[20]

Let us turn now towards the two questions which we asked not long ago: "what is the meaning of our sheltering gesture?" and "what tears us into fragments?". The answer to the first one is that by bending towards earth we can balance domination and humility and, carefully looking at seeweeds or sticks, we realize not only their usefulness but their

[20] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim (New York, 1961), p. 12.

"graceful" subtlety. Tearing comes in at the moment when this experience becomes foregrounded in the awareness that the subtlety is a play of appearing which extends unto the whole reality ("a thousand graceful subtleties"). A "trick" summarizes a tragedy of semiotics: it signifies a "deceptive appearance", but it is precisely because the appearance has emerged that we can talk about it being "deceptive".

Jeffers's poem deals then with the belatedness or impossibility of truth: only when a form has appeared and was recognized as true can we claim that it is deceptive and fraudulent. Only when the dress has been put on (to trick = to dress or to deck, to adorn), and the outline thoroughly sketched (to trick = to sketch or draw in outline) and admitted and perceived as real can we suddenly notice the nakedness (of the king) and deceptiveness (of the rank; in heraldry a "trick" is a sketch in pen and ink of a coat of arms). But this recognition must always come too late: the naked king does not stop being a king, a false aristocrat preserves his title, a ship learns the sharpness of the teeth of Point Joe when shattered to pieces by the rocks. Tearing is described as a "trick of nature's, and it is this phrase which is a correlate of Heidegger's *physis* because, like this old Greek concept, it signifies "gleaning" (sheltering, bringing to light) which always rests upon what is hidden and dark.

> *Physis* is the process of a-rising, of emerging from the hidden, whereby the hidden is first made to stand.[21]

[21] Ibidem, p. 12.

4. Romanticism & the Minimal Difference

> There is nothing we philosophers like better than to be mistaken for artists.
> — F. Nietzsche in a letter to G. Brandeis, May 4, 1888

We have seen that while romanticism may be tempted by the idea of indifferent unity in which individual objects dissolve and become one with the universe, Jeffers constantly writes and thinks from **between** changeable forms of reality whose will to change is called "nature". the alternative readings of the **between** have been specified by Derrida:

> ...it is between different things that one can think difference. But this difference-between may be understood in two ways: as another difference or as an access to nondifference.[1]

Jeffers's "nature" with its quality of trickery functions as a third essential term in his philosophical anthropology. First is **world** which comprises the reality of environmental setting in relation with productions of human mind. We could claim that **world**, even when relying on natural foundations, is less "naturalist" and more "constructivist", i.e. it is the sphere where the natural is spoken of with regard to the human. As Nietzsche puts it:

> What you have called the "world" that is something which should first be created by you: it should reflect your reason, your image, your will and your love.[2]

The study of relationships between man and world is fundamental for Jeffers's philosophy. Thurso's Landing (in itself a story of a failed

[1] J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore, 1974), p. 223.

[2] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Penguin Books, 1961), p. 75.

technological intervention of world into man's life) opens with a scene in which world is placed literally on the way towards man:

> The coast-road was being straightened and repaired again.
> ...
> And the man: "I wish they'd let the poor old road be. I don't
> like improvement." "Why not?". "They bring in the world;
> We're well without it." (SP, 266)

The road on which world is approaching man is evidently a path of destruction:

> ... At
> the far end of those loops of road
> Is what will come and destroy it, a rich and vulgar and bewildered
> civilization dying at the core,
> A world that is feverishly preparing new wars... (SP, 581)

"Civilization" is the most advanced stage of world, its most protruded point; it is a calling that comes from world. Civilization is world sent forth as an agent or emmissary to operate in the territory that has, so far, been foreign to world. Thus, the imagery of the world/civilization intrusion is that of expansion, annihilation of distance and individuality:

> ... a strangely
> Missionary world, road-builder, wind-rider, educator, pronter and
> picture-maker and broadcaster.

Secularization of the "mission" results in political imperialism ("a world of heavier tyrannies") and in a domination of the inauthenticity of business. The ecclesiastical connotation of "mission" is ironically continued by the biblical metaphor of love as an economic transaction: world is "like a drunken whore... of fled charms".

> I don't think industrial civilization is worth the distortion of human nature and the meanness and the loss of contact with the earth, that it entails.
>
> — RJ to J. Rorty, April 1932

The movement from a restricted concept of "improvement" to the all--inclusive "civilization" is more than a point in Jeffers's artistic biography. It marks also the end of certain aesthetics of landscape which has dominated human relationships with nature for nearly 150 years.

Romanticism begins not as a history of nature but as a theory of human intervention into nature, i.e. actions previously performed without an eye on theory now find justification in writings of poets and critics. At the beginning of the English romantic theory of landscape stands the statement which, for Jeffers, announces the Apocalypse of nature. In 1810 Uvedal Price publishes his monumental three volume study *Essays on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful and on the Use of Studying Pictures for the Purpose of Improving*

Real Landscape which begins with a complaint that nature is given priority over the intrusion of the man made theory:

> Formerly the decorations near the house were infinitely more magnificent... but the embellishments of what are called the grounds... were much less attended to; and... the park, with all its timber and thickets, was left in a state of picturesque neglect.[3]

Price's thought concentrates on what we have called **world** by establishing a link between painting and reality, i.e. by consciously ascribing to art (human intervention) the status of experimental reality. **World** is what evolves when earth is treated as a reference:

> ...with respect to the art of improving, we may look upon pictures as a set of experiments of the different ways in which trees, buildings, water, &c. may be disposed, grouped, and accompanied, in the most beautiful and striking manner...[4]

The language of improvement is a rhetoric of grouping, and its economy is that of conciseness: a picture is valuable as it brings together what is naturally dispersed, if it is a short and modified version of reality. Improvement consists in subjugating nature to a system of organized events, and the improver who "presupposes every thing to succeed as he chooses" works "by carefully collecting and cherishing the accidental beauties of wild nature; by judiciously arranging them, and skilfully combining them with each other, and the embellishments of art."[5]

The embellishments are designed to turn nature into a spectacle of ideas, and **world** defies understanding in the name of the pleasure of the eye. Simultaneously, a vital part of the spectacle centers round various strategies the purpose of which is to give to **world** a pretence of naturalness. Thus, art has to remain concealed, and **world** remains a tour de force of the secret skill:

> How best to bid the verdant Landscape rise,
> To please the fancy, and delight the eyes;
> Its various parts in harmony to join
> With arts clandestine, and concealed design;
> To adorn, arrange; — to separate, and select
> With secret skill...[6]

For a romantic theorist landscape is constituted by a series of disguises which create the illusion of nature. Thus, the romantic landscape results from a network of pretences, and its mechanism is that of concealment:

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[3] U. Price, *Essays on the Picturesque...*, London 1810, p. 1.

[4] Ibidem, p. 5.

[5] P. Knight, *The Landscape. A Didactic Poem in Three Books* (London, 1795), p. 46.

[6] Ibidem, p. 36.

a hidden design (as a hidden sexual vice) must remain concealed through effects of chance and use:

> For as the cunning nymph, with giddy care
> And wanton wiles, conceals her study'd air;
> And each acquired grace of fashion tries
> To hide in nature's negligent disguise;
> While with unseen design and cover'd art
> She charms the sense, and plays around the heart;
> So every pleasing object more will please,
> As less observer its intention sees:
> But thinks it form'd for use, and placed by chance
> Within the limits of his transient glance.[7]

On the other hand, Jeffers reveals the structure of **world** precisely as a hidden design, a contrivance, a well-planned sexual intrigue from which only innocence or distance can protect man:

> ...and old drunken whore, pathetically eager to impose
> the seduction of her fled charms
> On all that through ignorance or isolation might have escaped
> them. (SP, 581)

Similarly in *Tamar*, **world** represented first by Monterey then by France is also a figure of drunkeness and prostitution. Returning from Monterey young Cauldwell observes a landscape:

> A night the half-moon was like a dancing-girl,
> No, like a drunkard's last half-dollar... (SP, 3)

Later in text Tamar synonimizes between **world** and sexual promiscuity:

> Agh, you can't wait
> To get to France to crawl into strange beds,
> But Monterey to-night. You — what a beast,
> You like them dirty. (SP, 54)

World is, in short, what arches over earth and separates man from it.

Jeffers's rejection and critique of **world** is, in part, understandable in the light of the American tradition of viewing landscape, a tradition that could not accept European psychological aesthetics focusing on man's impact upon reality. As Van Zandt puts it, any doctrine which "stressed the importance of human art and artifice in landscape... encountered a severe American opposition."[8]

It is with **earth**, the second term of Jeffers's triad, that the problems of landscape come to the fore. The tradition of romanticism with which Jeffers was certainly familiar (the early volume of Jeffers's poems *Californians* is described as "shaded by his preoccupation with Swinburne,

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[7] Ibidem, p. 55.

[8] R. Van Zandt, *The Catskill Mountains House* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1966), p. 86.

Coleridge, Shakespeare, and particularly Wordsworth and Shelley"[9]) accentuates the original character of landscape. This originality is, however, carefully created and consists in a regressive movement towards the moment of creation. The purpose of a landscape painter is to catch natural scenery not so much in its purity but, first of all, in its anciency: to see a land not as un-created but as just created. The assumption is that the originality of the natural phenomena was, no more and no less, a moment of minimal difference. The intimate closeness of the natural reality is cut open by a sharp awareness of the interpretative, secondary, delayed character of *nature*. In the 19th century Wordsworth has to travel many miles to see what he considers ancient nature which, however, is already marked by the "ancient architecture". The regressive movement towards the minimal difference is unthinkable without the presence of man. Since, as Marianne Thalmann puts it in her book on German Romanticism, "mountains and forests no longer appear before their windows, but instead there are roofs, towers, portals, market stalls, and sentinel boxes" the artists had to "imagine nature fragmentarily and allogically" fabricating reality originating "in the sanctuary of our inner self."[10] The supposedly original sphere of natural phenomena turns out to be a system of signs and, thus, locks itself for ever in the realm of trace, secondariness and belatedness.

Wordsworth in his *Guide to the Lakes* (1810) complaining of a sudden invasion of man upon nature which was "instantly defaced by the intrusion" does not try to counteract it by suggesting a man-free landscape but, in keeping with the regressive movement theory, attempts to recapture the vision of land in which man-made innovations have just been outlined. Nature is then caught at the moment when the present is reinterpreted by the ancient, by that which was closer to the origin although never identical with it.

> ...why should the genius that directed architecture of these vales have deserted them? For the bridges, churches, mansions, cottages and their richly fringed and flat-roofed outhouses... have been substituted structures, in which baldness only seems to have been studied, or plans of the most vulgar utility.[11]

The romantic traveller departs from the urban territory of a decisive difference, of a strongly marked interruption, and arrives at the realm where interruption is a play of forms, and a difference has been minimalized but by no means dispensed with. The distinction between "unpractised minds" and artistic soul is the contrast between a strong, vulgar

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[9] M. Berry Bennett, *The Stone Mason...*, p. 79.

[10] M. Thalmann, *The Literary Sign Language of German Romanticism*, trans. H. A. Basilius (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p. 32.

[11] W. Wordsworth, *A Guide to the Lakes* (London: Henry Frowde, 1906), p. 65

difference and its subtle variety. In other words, stress is placed not on "demarcation" but "gradation":

> ...unpractised minds receive ... impressions only from objects that are divided from each other by strong lines of demarcation... a new habit of pleasure will be formed opposite to this, arising out of the perception of the fine gradations by which in Nature one thing passes away into another, and the boundaries that constitute individuality disappear in one instance only to be revived elsewhere under a more alluring form.[12]

In Europe the regressive movement towards the minimal difference included man and his interventions in the continuum of nature, and thus turned nature again, despite the promise of originality, into **world**, a sphere where nature is converted into a meaning, a new reality in which what is exists as related to a "me". Meaning is a degree of relatedness of the external reality to the ego. From this perspective we can understand better Novalis's description of the artist as a "cryptographer" or Herder's belief in art bringing man to the light of knowledge:

> Will sich der unkörperlichste Philosoph das Feinste in seiner Natur, den Gedanken einer Seele denken: er wird Lichstrahl! Da geht er auf, da blitzt er in die Seele: alle Weisheit und Wissenschaft wird nur Klarheit, Helle, Erlauchtung...[13]

If it is human activity that constitutes the province of the minimal difference in Europe, in America the outlining of forms, articulation of difference is pushed further backward. Consistently in Locke's adage "At the beginning all world was America" the difference generating role in the country where "the key word is still wilderness"[14] is ascribed to God.

> Dear to the heart of every true romantic was the over-riding belief in the transcendental world of nature — the belief that the visible landscape of the earth was an emanation of God... without the need of human intervention for its own self-contained glory.[15]

As however the self-defeating rhetoric of Van Zandt's statement makes it clear "self-contained glory" is fundamentally incompatible with the status of an "emanation" which, as generated and secondary, is — at most — a reminiscence of its origin. Nature has to be redeemed by **world**, by a sign, by the *ancient* which category is another term for the

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[12] Ibidem, pp. 72—73.

[13] J. G. Herder, *Werke*, ed. Suphan, Vol. 6, p. 139.

[14] R. Van Zandt, *The Catskill...*, p. 52.

[15] J. Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape*, (London: John Wiley, 1975), p. 41.

minimal difference. Phrases like Van Zandt's "transcendental world of nature" are particularly illuminating since they place the significance of nature outside it either in the domain of human imagination ("The artist is concerned with things imagined"[16]) or divine creation ("Some apprehensions of the process of landscape-making by the instrumentalities of the Creator is necessary... to conduct the process of landscape painting by the feeble instrumentalities of man"[17]). In both positions, however, nature is seen as a sign, articulation, inscription of the invisible hand, i.e. as a mediation or necessary sacrifice on the part of the Whole which makes itself manifest only in fragments. Transcendentalized nature becomes **world** (hence incidental correctness of Van Zandt's phrase). As a following citation from Novalis shows clearly **world** is a result of a semiotization of nature, of interpreting it as a message, communication or revelation:

> Alles, war wir erfahren ist eine Mitteilung. So ist die Welt in der Tat eine Mitteilung-Offenbarung des Geistes... Der Sinn der Welt ist verloren gegangen. Wir sind beim Buchstaben stehen geblieben.[18]

Landscape is then **world**, unthinkable without human or divine intervention, with a definite although indefinable sense of transcendence. To this reading of the external reality Jeffers opposes the concept of *earth*. In the already discussed poem „The Coast Road" the ominous approaching of **world** is locked between two responses. One comes from man and as such is necessarily rooted in a certain mood ("In having a mood, *Dasein* is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over in its Being"[19]). The observer

> ...shakes his fist and makes the gesture of wringing a chicken's neck, scowls and rides higher. (SP, 581)

The other counter-charge is announced in moral terms as "consolation" and comes from natural forms.

> Where is our consolation?
> Beautiful beyond belief
> The heights glimmer in the sliding cloud, the great bronze gorge —
> cut sides of the mountain tower up invincibly,
> Not the least hurt by this ribbon of road curved on their sea-foot.

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[16] M. Thalmann, *The Literary Sign Language...*, p. 32.

[17] Louis Noble quoted by B. Novak, *Nature and Culture. American Landscape Painting 1825—75* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), p. 73.

[18] Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. Kluckholm, vol. 2, p. 378.

[19] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Basil Blackwell, 1962), p. 173.

Against the acceptance on the part of natural phenomena, the road is no more than an incision. It is this ability to remain a forever untouched surface upon which **world** articulates itself which we call here *earth*. It should be noticed that *earth* remains untouched not because of the impeccable smoothness of its surface; just the opposite, it is **world**, man's imagination projected as reality, that speaks in categories of smoothness. Mark, a crippled visionary from "Thurso's Landing", pictures a woman as velvety gloss:

> ...because the seer was virgin,
> Knowing only pictures of women, he saw smooth white
> What's rough in nature;... (SP, 317)

The domain of earth is "torn" and "cut", but these wounds have not been inflicted by **world**: they result from movements and shifts within *earth* which, are, in Jeffers's texts, frequently represented as catastrophes, disasters and wounds. In "Night without Sleep" we read:

> Cataracts of rock
> Rain down the mountain from cliff to cliff and torment the
> stream bed... The laurels are wounded,
> ...
> I feel the flesh of the mountain move on its bones in the wet
> darkness.
> ...These wounds will heal in their time; so
> will humanity's. (SP, 609)

What we have, after Heidegger, called *earth* is then to be understood literally as a configuration of geological and biological formations but also figuratively as a certain impenetrable an ineffable depth over the surface of which **world** erects its system of abstract references. A problem which Jeffers diagnoses in his philosophy is the ever diminishing contact between **world** and *earth*. If, in Heidegger's interpretation, **world** is "picturable as supported by the earth as the finite articulation of earth", and *earth* is construed "as the solid and supportive earth, the fundament of world"[20], Jeffers stresses a division between the two realms. Like in Heidegger, *earth* remains a ground for **world**, but the latter is showing complete forgetfulness as to the nature of its foundation. The story of **world** in Jeffers a narration of forgetfulness and a growing discrepancy between *earth* and **world.**

> ..We have gathered vast populations incapable
> of free survival, insulated
> From the strong earth... (SP, 588)

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[20] J. P. Fell, *Heidegger and Sartre. An Essay on Being and Place* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 196.

It is easier to understand now why in "The Answer" man is described as "dissevered from earth and stars". (SP, 594)

> My wife, Una Jeffers, died three years ago; ...she was in many ways a mediator between me and the world... I still live in the same place, and open my eyes every morning on the same rocks and ocean, ever new under the restless weather and flighty sea--fowl. Recreations: stone masonry, dog-walking, intervention in dog-fights, and the art of being a grand--father.
>
> — RJ to J. Ennis, 1953

5. Earth, World & the Trick of Nature

Man's estrangement from earth is a familiar theme found in such modernist writers like D. H. Lawrence or Oswald Spengler. Spengler realizes that we are the dwellers of the *Steinkoloss Weltstadt* which separates us from earth "by the pavement underfoot"[1], and only with the greatest difficulty could we reconstruct the experience of the "strong earth":

> Let the reader try to merge himself in the soul of the peasant. He has sat on his glebe from primeval times, or has fastened his clutch in it, to adhere to it with his blood. He is rooted in it as the descendant of his forebears and as the forebear of future descendants. His house, his property, means here not the temporary connection of person and thing for a brief span of years, but an enduring and inward union of eternal land and eternal blood.[2]

Spengler tries to render what Jeffers negatively described as "insulation". Thus, a peasant is linked with his soil, glebe *(Scholle)* not temporarily, but this laison allows for the genuine temporalization of man's existence. If **world** is forgetful **of** time, *earth* is permeated **with** time, and the saturation is made complete by reference to blood which is this union (*Verbundensein*) is never exclusively human. *Earth* is what transforms, through the continuity of time, peasant's blood into "eternal" blood.

Temporal continuity (the circle of generations, what Spengler calls *Kreislauf, Zeugung, Geburt und Tod),* spatial nearness ("he has sat on his glebe") both reappear in Nietzsche's principle of "faithfulness to earth":

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[1] O. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, vol. 2, p. 92.

[2] Ibidem, vol. 2, p. 104.

> Remain loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue. Let your bestowing love and your knowledge serve the meaning of earth.[3]

Nietzsche's command is placed in the context of loving care: man is to serve the earth with his bestowing love *(schenkende Liebe).* Similarly, Spengler's description makes use of the rhetoric of emotion: man has "fastened his clutch in it", i.e. man clings to earth not in despair but in the endurance of love. The German original hears a neighbouring voice of love in the phrase which suggests that a peasant "von Urzeiten her auf seiner Scholle sitzt", as *Scholle* is not only a neutral noun for "glebe" (describing it rather as "lump" or "clod" than a vast area of productive land), but it also functions in such emotionally charged phrases like "an der Scholle hangen" expressive of our loving relationship with the earth. There is a peal of love in the earth (*scholl* is 3 person sg praet, of *schallen* — to peal or ring) and it is our closeness of this sound that transforms **world** into *earth.* When Mark sees as "smooth" what in nature is "rough" he draws our attention not only to the ambiguities of "rough" (oscillating between violence and unevenness) but also to the intricacies of the phrase "in nature". It declares that roughness appears "in nature", i.e. in the external reality of geological and biological forms, but also — more importantly — that roughness is the essence, the nature of object. We can see then that nature is far from serenity and balance and consists in the essential, fundamental conflict. It is precisely man's smoothing, mitigating policies that introduce a gap beween **world** and *earth.* In terms of the type of landscape the contrast is visualizable as a juxtaposition of the flat and hilly scenery.

> Walking in the flat Oxforshire fields
> Where the eye can find no rock to rest on but little flints
> Speckle the soil... (SP, 483)

It is the mountains which reveal the fulness of *earth* in which roughness, violence and unevenness, unreadiness of shapes (which are "rough" in a sense of being decisive but unfinished by the completedness of the process of culture) unconceals *earth* as body. The experience of *earth* is the tactile experience of texture. Thus, walking through flat lands

> ...I remembered impatiently
> How the long bronze mountain of my own coast,
> Where color is no account and pathos ridiculous, the sculpture
> is **all**,
> Breaks the arrows of the setting sun
> Over the enormous mounded eyeball of ocean. (SP, 483)

Unlike **world** which is made manifest by either abstractions or inessential additions

[3] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Prologue 3—5".

Sports and gallantries, the stage, the arts, the antic of dancers
The exuberant voices of music (SP, 163),

earth bodies forth rough, unready, unprepared shapes as facts, i.e. as something that is not simply there but which calls for our attention. For Jeffers, **world** operates on the level alienated from the fundamental necessities of essences or grounds. The economy of **world** is that of abundance:

„We must adjust our economies to the new abundance..."
Of what? Toys: motors, music-boxes
Paper, fine clothes, leisure, diversion. (SP, 569)

The very reference to toys qualifies **world** as in-essential, the sphere where clothes are not related to physiology (body) but aesthetics of ornament ("fine"), and time is compartmentalized into working periods and spells of excitements ("leisure"). It is a diagnosis which Spengler would have found difficult not to endorse. In the chapter on "The Soul of the City" we read:

> Tension, when it has become intellectual, knows no form of recreation but that which is specific to the world-city — namely, *détente,* relaxation, distraction. Genuine play, *joie de vivre,* pleasure, inebriation, are products of the cosmic beat and as such no longer comprehensible in their essence. But the relief of the hard, intensive brain-work by its opposite — conscious and practised fooling — of intellectual tension by the bodily tension of sport, of bodily tension by the sexual straining after "pleasure" and the spiritual straining after the "excitement" of betting and competitions, of the pure logic of the day's work by a consciously enjoyed mysticism — all this is common to the world-cities of all the civilizations. Cinema, Expressionism, Theosophy, boxing contests, nigger dances, poker and racing — one can find it all in Rome.[4]

The rhetoric of the Spengler passage is, like Jeffers's, a rhetoric of interruption. The vision of history is necessarily presented in terms of a series of discontinuities and polarities, extremes which do not enter into a play but solemnly justify each other. Thus, brain-work *(Denkarbeit)* can be considered as radically different from fooling *(Trottelei)*, intellect from sports, etc. Hence, like *diversion* — a key word for Jeffers's world — *distraction* synthesizes Spengler's Weltstadt. "Diversion" signifies a general disorientation, a turning aside from a certain direction, a misplacing of one's purpose with a strong overtone of inattentiveness. "To divert" means to misleadingly refocus somebody's attention, or to purposefully draw one's attention off from the operation. We see then that Jeffers's "diversion" maps out a state of misplaced attention or false attention which world generates in its inhabitants.

Similarly, Spengler's *Zerstreuung* (distraction) emphasizes the ill-

[4] O. Spengler, *The Decline...*, vol. 2, p. 103.

intended interruptedness of a process of enjoyment turned into harmless and inauthentic game of pretences, but simultaneously opens new meanings which also lurk behind Jeffers's philosophy. Thus, *Zerstreuung* purports a notion of dispersion and dissipation, misfocusing of vision (like in *Zerstreeungslinse* — diverging lense), and through a phonetic similarity with *Zerstörung* brings to the fore the imagery of destruction, frustration, ruin and demolision.

If world connotes distraction, dispersion, forcible discruption and pulling asunder, earth signifies gathering collectedness, pulling together and attention. In "The Wind-Struck Music" the Spenglerian telluric rhetoric of soil is combined with the sartorial imagery of roughness, unevennes, texture. Having fallen in "a deep-cut gully" chasing a heifer, old Tom Birnam — who admits he has not "an ounce of poetry" in his body — reflects on his life:

> He [Ed Stlies] saw the
> earth banks, the sparse white grass,
> The strong dark sea a thousand feet down below, red with reflections
> of clouds. He said "My God,
> Tom, are you hurt?". Who answered slowly, "No, Ed.
> I am only lying here thinking o' my four sons" — biting the words
> Carefully between his lips — "big handsome men, at present lolling
> in bed in their... silk... pyjamas...
> And why the devil I keep on working?" (SP, 585)

The fall is a profound one: from weakness to strength ("strong sea"), from the inebriation of labour disclaiming poetry to a sudden revelation of the poetic nature of existence (a union of "earth banks", "strong sea" and the cloudy sky), from smooth surface to texture (rough working attire vs. "silk pyjamas").

It is this textural quality that makes Spengler's *Kreislauf* possible: the voice of generations speaks repetitively from inside the folds of matter constituting the main substance of meaning. For Jeffers, meaning is not only radically "naturalist" but also based on the mechanism of repetition whose measure is not the ability to create but to affirm what has already happened. The meaning of *earth* is not novelty, but recurrence modelled on the Nietzschean *amor fati.*

> ...This old man died last winter, having
> lived eighty-one years under open sky,
> Concerned with cattle, horses and hunting, no thought nor emo-
> tion that all his ancestors since the ice-age
> Could not have comprehended. (SP, 586)

Like the continuity of generations which establishes the voice of earth speaking through the body of each individual, also the physical identity

of human body is described in terms of organic forms. Old Mrs Fraser, tendered in sickness by Fayne, acquieres a topographical dimension: her breasts and chest are

> ... white upland
> Between the blond mountains of falling flesh
> That had fed Lance.
> ...
> Lance's mother
> Wished for that green winteroil again; Fayne rubbed it
> On the white plain and the roots of the great soft udders. (SP, 412)

Mother's body as the originary landscape (the thought not unknown to Spengler who spoke of birth as of "the first comprehension of depth" in which "culture is born out of its mother-landscape"[5]) is extended from a merely human reference a cosmic motherhood. Lance Fraser in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks" emerges not only from his mother's womb but also from the earth.

> ...then far and high, like a tiny horn on the hill
> against the green-saffron heaven
> Lance grew into sight, the man and the horse and the evening
> peace...
> He was
> like this mountain coast,
> All beautiful, with chances of brutal violence; precipitous, dark-
> natured, beautiful; without humor, without ever
> A glimmer of gayety; blind grey headland and arid mountain,
> and trailing from his shoulders the infinite ocean. (SP, 406)

The rhetorical bearing is evident: the man is like nature. But the whole passage is much more than a simile; it not only depicts man in likeness to nature but, first of all, brings man and nature to a common area. This domain is more than Heidegger's "nearness": man not only approximates nature, but grows out of it.

"Lance grew into sight": this phrase emphasizes a connection, the fundamental relatedness from which man begins to appear. "To grow into sight" signifies that only this can be seen which appears in the vicinity of other objects, this which collects and gathers other outlines. There is no real appearance unless it is a gathering of beings in a common territory ("the man and the horse and the evening peace"); no appearance can take place without recalling the presence of the sky ("green-saffron heaven"). Such an appearance locates man on the horizon, i.e. where he occurs together with non-human. Only on the line of horizon can man live with the infinite ocean trailing from his shoulders.

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[5] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 174.

> Think of me as one of those friedly natural objects like a tree outside the window, that hasn't much means of communication but all it has is well intended.
>
> — RJ to W. Bynner, October 1931.

But, for Jeffers, life does not exhaust itself in a dialectic tension between world and earth. The former is not only ornamentation ("fine clothes"), inessentiality ("toys"), and excess ("we love our luxuries"). We would not be doing justice to this notion were we to interpret it mainly as the domain of pleasure-principle.

World is also life alienated into

> ..battleships and destroyers, and great fleet of war-planes ...all the proud instruments
> of man imposing his will upon weaker men... (SP, 590)[6]

Similarly, *earth* is far from a pastoral setting providing man with indispensible symbols. The romantic wish to treat nature as an alphabet ascribed to man a privileged position of the reader, the addressee of the message. In Jeffers earth speaks the language which is not directed to man either in time

> Each hundred years
> One of the enormous stones will move an inch in the dark.
> Each double century one of the oaks on the crown of the mound
> Above us breaks in a wind... (SP, 470),

or sense

> This
> ebb of vitality feels the ignoble and cruel
> Incidents, not the vast abstract order. (SP, 608)

Even the methaphor of motherhood and birth is questioned and suspended or, at best, relegated to the long distant past:

> The long migrations meet across you and it is nothing to you,
> you have forgotten us, mother. (SP, 87)

World does not rest quietly on *earth*, but both are disturbed by a process which, in "Point Joe" Jeffers describes in the following way:

> ...that glow from the
> earth was only
> A trick of nature's... (SP, 79)

Three lines above it he speaks of "solemn presences of land and sea" thus locking us in an uneasy situation between solemnity and playfulness, *earth* and nature. We realize then that *earth* is not the final stage

[6] One may refer here to Nietzsche's remark from the Notebook: "Truth turns into a power when we have first isolated it as an abstraction", in F. Nietzsche: *Philosophy and Truth. Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, trans. D. Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 59.

in the interpretation of reality, what is more, it cannot be taken for granted in its seriousness. What is at stake here is the issue of truth. Neither **world** nor *earth* seem to house truth since they offer only a contrastive reading of reality.

From what follows in "Point Joe" it becomes obvious that *earth* is largely a playing field of illusions since we are admonished to "forgive nature a thousand graceful subtleties". But it is not only *earth* where the tendency to dissimilate is manifest; the same holds for **world** whose seriousness is also called into question. Commenting upon the inexorable fate of civilization Jeffers discovers in **world** a power to deceive:

> You have seen through the trick to the beauty;
> If we all saw through it, the trick would hardly entice us and
> the earth
> Be the poorer by many beautiful agonies. (SP, 566)

Illusion has a dominating power of attraction and seduces man into beauty and life. To live implies a concession on the part of man to recognize the power of untruth, as it is only through the untruth of delusion that we can achieve the truth of life.

With such a statement we are brought to the vicinity of Nietzsche. In *Human, All-too-Human* Nietzsche almost literally anticipates Jeffers's philosophy of the existential irreplacibility of error and deception:

> What we now call the world is the result of errors and fantasies which, in the total development of organic being, gradually emerged and interbred with one another, and have been bequethed to us as the accumulated treasury of the entire past.[7]

This is a sign of recognition of untruth that can harldy be overestimated: to lice is to acknowledge illusion as a necessary condition of what is. Hence, as Gilles Deleuze puts it in his profound exposition of Nietsche's thought, "If someone wills the truth it is not in the name of what the world is, but in the name of what the world is not"[8]. Thus, when Jeffers considers truth "his errand" he does it, significantly enough, in the context of a dream. After the cloud-inspired vision of the final extinction of man is dispersed truth comes to the fore as a dream opposing another dream.

> "What a pity our kindest dreams
> Are complete liars" ,and I turned from the glowing West toward
> the cold twilight. "To be truth-bound, the neutral
> Detested by all the dreaming factions, is my errand here." (SP, 591)

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[7] Quoted by A. Danto, *Nietzsche as a Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 74.

[8] G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Ch. Tomlinson (Press, London: The Athlone Press, 1983), p. 96.

But the dream of truth, the dream beyond the calamities of human presence, remains nevertheless a dream, and what claims to be "neutral" is but another "dreaming faction". No life is possible outside deception present both in **world** and *earth*, outside illusion which underlies both territories like a tectonically uncertain stratum that causes incessant movement of the ground. Nietzsche puts it very concisely in his notes:

> Illusion is a necessity of life for a sensate being.[9]

In a sketch of his lecture "On the Pathos of Truth" he amplifies deception with a metaphor of a dream:

> Truth! Rapturuous illusion of a god! What does truth matter to men!... And where has it gone! A vanished dream which has been erased from mankind's countenance by other dreams! It was hardly the first![10]

Jeffers, like Nietzsche's thinker, is locked in a series of dreams despite his ambitions of prophesying truth ("truth-bound"):

> "Wake him up!" Shouts the philosopher in the pathos of truth. Yet while he believes himself to be shaking the sleeper, the philosopher himself is sinking into a still deeper magical slumber.[11]

This status of beauty is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, one has to see through the "trick" to see it, on the other — beauty is also implied in life which has just been defined as a "trick". Trick is then a strategy underlying both **world** and *earth*, and its operation consists in the evocation of a series of nontruths, illusions, deceptions which have to be, in the final analysis, accepted as a foundation of existence. On the one hand,

> Joy is a trick in the air (SP, 262),

but it is this deception that makes the human difference:

> ..."I am neither mountain nor bird
> Nor star; and I seek joy." (SP, 170)

Jeffers locates Dasein's fulfilment in the domain of a trick, but it is important that what he calls "nature" also uses the same mechanism ("nature's trick"). Thus, in "trick" we have to hear this foundational sense. "Trick" is not so much an overcoming, a sublation, an *Aufhebung* of either world or earth, but it is their mute definition according to which neither of them can be regarded as a province of truth. "Trick" is, as we read, in OED, "a particular habit, a way of acting, a characteristic quality, trait, practice or custom, the system upon which a thing is constructed". A trick, which Nietzsche calls in a letter to Franz Over-

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[9] *Philosophy and Truth. Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks...*, p. 56.

[10] Ibidem, p. 65.

[11] Ibidem, p. 65—66.

beck "a coquetry on nature's part"[12], is a movable foundation an unanchored beginning

> a mighty genius of construction who succeeds in piling up an infinitely complicated dome ...upon an unstable foundation, and, as it were, on running water.[13]

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[12] *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche,* trans. C. Middleton (University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 258.

[13] *Philosophy and Truth...,* p. 85.

6. Perspective

"Trick" belies stability and connotes a constant movement. Thus, a study of a trick must be a study of certain radical dynamism which, in case of Jeffers, is not limited to the interplay of world and earth, but leaves its traces upon the character of vision. "Apology for Bad Dreams" opens with a long distance vista:

> In the purple light, heavy with redwood, the slopes drop seaward,
> Headlong convexities of forest, drawn in together to the steep
> ravine. Below, on the sea-cliff,
> A lonely clearing; a little field of corn by the streamside; a
> roof under spared trees. Then the ocean
> Like a great stone someone has cut to a sharp edge and polished
> to shining. Beyond it, the fountain
> And furnace of incredible light flowing up from the sunk sun.
> In the little clearing a woman
> Is punishing a horse; she had tied the halter to a sapling at
> the edge of wood, but when the great whip
> Clung to the flanks the creature kicked so hard she feared he
> would snap the halter; she called from the house
> The young man her son; who fetched a chain tie-rope, they
> working together
> Noosed the small rusty links round the horse's tongue
> And tied him by the swollen tongue to the tree.
> Seen from this height they are shrunk to insect size. (SP, 174)

The look is that of an attentive eye which sees not only "slopes" and "ocean" but also "a roof under spared trees", and a whip clinging to horse's flanks. The eye sees more than it is offered: a young man participating in the ceremony is the woman's son. It is the eye that sees everything and which penetrates into family relationships and quoates the prophets ("What said the prophet? I create good: and I

create evil."). It is the eye that knows; the eye of God. Robert Brophy notices the ambiguity of the deictic pronoun in the phrase "seen from **this** height" and, quoting other examples from Jeffers's texts, sugessts that "the poet seems to be looking down as though he were God or looking for God's perspective."[1]

The vision begins as a definite and dramatic movement downwards ("drop", "steep ravine"), yet it soon regains the balance as the light "flows up from the sunk sun". It is between these two movements, half way up and half way down, that the vision has focused itself. "A lonely clearing", "a little clearing": it is the place where vision becomes lucid, where light not so much fights darkness but reveals it, where wilderness dialogues with planned productivity ("little field of corn"), and where the house does not dominate but is sheltered by the trees. The clearing marks also certain fragility: it is "lonely" and "little" whereas everything else forms a unity and a gathering. The slopes are "drawn in together", hills "darken together", the ocean is like a (one) "great stone". The clearing is also "little" vis-a-vis the splendour of natural phenomena as Jeffers's perspectivism focuses on a detail which, on the one hand, is centrally located (between the mountains and ocean) but, on the other hand, is reduced almost to illegibility in terms of actual significance.

Thus, even if we agree with Brophy's description of Jeffers's version of tragedy as "an exhibition of the essential elements by the burning away through pain and ruin of inertia and the unessential"[2], we would have to add that the sense of tragedy, for Jeffers, seems to lie in precisely amplifying and foregrounding of the elements which are notoriously unimportant and marginal. Hence, to the degree to which it deals with human protagonists tragedy is a drama of the unessential which is evident in the way Jeffers looks at his characters. In "Mara" Ferguson

> ...looking down the long cataract of rock-set ridges and
> their blue shadows pouring to sea level
> From the new-risen sun, saw Fawn and Allen
> Small, clear and distant, riding up from the west
> Along the lip of the canyon... (BSA, 16)

Similarly, in "Thurso's Landing" perspective is a mode of not only seeing but also commenting upon reality. Height is the place from which truth is revealed. From the mountain top what is below is revealed in its pretence:

> Nearly straight down,
> At the edge of the wood, in the pool of the blue shade in the
> cleft hill

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[1] R. J. Brophy, *Robinson Jeffers. Myth, Ritual and Symbol in His Narrative Poems* (Archon Books, 1976), p. 281.

[2] Ibidem, p. 260.

The two men were seen, one burdened, like mites in a bowl; and
Helen with a kind of triumph: "Look down there:
What size Reave Thurso is really... (SP, 271)

Needless to say, this baring of deception is deceptive itself since what is seen below is reduced by distance and height; thus, a perspectivism of vision stands in a perfect agreement with a perspectivism of truth as trick. The visual perspective which translates human beings into insect or "faint specks of humanity" (SP, 386) becomes an ideological perspective turning Jeffers's poetry into a philosophical fable which disrupts illusion by translating a metaphor into a literal meaning, and the volatility of philosophy into "heaviness" of visuality. It is from ambiguity of the term *Weltanschauung* that philosophical fable spins the fabric of its stories. As Max Friedländer puts it:

> The word *Weltanschauung* with its double meaning (philosophy and world view or outlook) establishes the bridge from visual experience to metaphysical dogma and points out how dependent the history of looking, and hence the history of art, are on the life of the mind and its permutations.[3]

The insect metaphor is not simply a critique of man but a transvaluation of his position in the world. In this perspectival vision man loses his dominating role and is interpreted as a being-with-other-creatures rather than a being-above-other-creatures. The most concise formula translating visual perspectivism into philosophy is to be found in "At the Birth of an Age" where man's being-with is again foregrounded in the insect imagery:

Life is too little to love, too little to hate.
Temperately share the house
With beetle and louse. (SP, 557)

In Jeffers's philosophical evolution the order of gradation is reversed:

For often I have heard the hard rocks I handled
Groan, because lichen and time and water dissolve them,
And they have to travel down the strange falling scale
Of soil and plants and the flesh of beasts to become
The bodies of men... (SP, 366)

If man marks the low bottom of Jeffers's perspectivism then, at the same time, it is with man that the movement of recurrence begins. What differentiates man from other beings is his awareness not so much of himself but of his nostalgia: man is viewed as a creature that from within a difference dreams a dream of the Same. This, however, implies a more general vision which inaugurates a movement upward. Fayne and Lance, reduced to insects ("They rode like flies upon the face of a wall", SP, 450) begin climbing the hills, and while their domestic

[3] M. Friedlander, *Landscape. Portrait. Still Life*, trans. R. F.C. Hull and B. Cassirer (Oxford, 1949), p. 151.

valley disappears they are transformed again into animals, this time embodied in a bird. Man becomes a being-for-himself only after he has been painfully made aware of his status as a being-with-others.

> We have come out of the world and are free, more hawk than
> human, we've given our hearts to the hawks to keep
> In the high air. (SP, 451)

In Jeffers's perspectival vision man is a "mite" dreaming of an eagle, and in "Mara" man is directly shown as an insect parasite of a bird:

> I shot an eagle once,
> And looked at the gorgeous corpse, ruffled the plumes
> And saw the lice under them: we the white lice
> On this eagle world. (BAS, 15)

It is here that the difference between Nietzsche and Jeffers comes into play. Although both begin by reducing man in size ("In this book you will discover 'a subterranean man' at work, one who tunnels and mines and undermines... [man is]...a solitary mole [*Maulwurf*]"[4]) and lead to his transformation in a bird ("like the eagle staring long, long into abysses... Thus eagle-like, panther-like, are the poet's desires"[5]), Nietzsche believes in the ultimate possibility of the indestructible character of living on a hight:

> When the air grows clear,
> When the dews comfort
> Rains down upon the earth.[6]

If we wanted to remain in the circle of the animal metaphor we would say that whereas in Nietzsche *Übermensch* overcomes the "worm" and "the monkey" ("Ihr habt den Weg vom Wurme zum Menschen gemacht und vieles ist in euch noch Wurm, Einst wart ihr Affen..."[7]), man's fate in Jeffers is to be "content" (as Bruce Ferguson says in "Mara") with his animal status. For Nietzsche the monkey is a degraded form of *kleinen Mensch*, for Jeffers *klein Mensch* is redeemed by the awareness of and the contentment in his apishness.

The form of new existence takes in Nietzsche's thought the appearance of a leap. The poet is "soaring, hovering about" like an eagle[8]; in Jeffers a leap is always transformed into a fall. Lance is standing on the ledge of the rock

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[4] F. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. R. I. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 1.

[5] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke...*, p. 310.

[6] Ibidem, p. 308.

[7] F. Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner, 1930), p. 8.

[8] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 308.

looking down
The straight vast depth, towards the beauty of the ocean
...
She could not call to him
Before he leaped and went down. He was falling erect
With his feet under him for a long time... (SP, 456)

Thus, the ultimate destiny of Nietzsche's perspectivism is Icaricism: to achieve a summit in order to be returned to earth which turns out to be the final reality of the myth of soaring. In Jeffers's rendering of the myth, however, Icarus is less a meditation upon the abilities and limitations of man, and more a beginning of the reversed evolution: after the fall man reaches the level of being-with-other-objects and can regress through plants and soil till, after millenia, he becomes a "hard rock".

Perspectivism is, then, not a question of repose but movement. Like in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, the summit is necessarily grounded in the experience of abyss:

> I stand before my highest mountain and my longest wondering: Therefore I must first descend deeper than I have ever descended.[9]

It is the birds (and Icarus is but a poor human imitation of the ornitological form), "the jewel-eyed hawk and the tall blue heron, the black cormorants... the red-shafted woodpecker" (SP, 259) that represent the full power of perspectivism. Unlike Icaricism, the ornothological imagery does not bring about a fall, but it is completed by perching, and its metaphor is not one of death but of marriage and endurance: a falcon perched on a rock is

> The birds make a fine part of our lives here... song-sparrows and phoebes, red and gold finches, bluebirds, and buntings; the swallows are the only ones that go off in winter, and seaward of the house are always gulls and a solemn convocation of cormorants on the rock, pelicans at least half the year, and lately miles and miles of thousands of shearwaters... The great blue herons... and the night herons, the various hawks — I was forgetting the meadow larks!
>
> — RJ to B. Christy, Nov. 1925

married to the massive
mysticism of stone. (SP, 563)

Flying, in its freedom from the terrestrial bond, is then an intensified form of climbing which allows us to overcome the limitations and live in "the high air". In the act of climbing/flying man distances himself

[9] Ibidem, p. 174—175.

from his human form but, at the same time, remains painfully aware of the inaccessibility of the "inhuman beauty". Thus, climbing and flying become metaphors of the tragedy of the human existence. Ascending means intensified perception of "inhuman beauty" combined with acute self-criticism:

> ...the higher I climb, the more I despise him who climbs...
> How ashamed I am of my climbing and stumbling! How I scorn my violent panting! How I hate the man who can fly![10]

Flying is a domain of unlimited perspectivism and opens, as such, the cosmic vista. In "Cawdor" the dead eagle

> Unwound the ever-widened spirals of flight
> As a star light... (SP, 185)

and, through what Nietzsche in *Human, All-too-Human* calls *Vogel-umblick*, provides us the vision of universe and cosmic life. But such a perspective is also a perspective of certain knowledge and, as Jean Granier puts it,

> Each appearance is an apparition... and there is nothing to look for beyond these manifestations... By affirming the perspectivism of knowledge, Nietzsche in fact defends an ontological pluralism; the essence of Being is to show itself, and to show itself according to an infinity of viewpoints.[11]

What Granier calls the "ontological pluralism" can be interpreted as a vision of reality as a succession of appearances, i.e. signifiers. The world means something to the degree to which I am aware of the movement of "apparitions", this however can happen only when I relate them to something that can be exempt from the "ever-widened spirals of flight". As we have seen in our analysis, neither earth nor world nor "trick of nature" can play such a role, as all of them are subject to "tricks" and mask changing. What remains then is, as the wonderfully ambiguous phrase of Granier's "there is nothing to look for beyond these manifestations" holds it, a nothing. Perspectivism in philosophy tries to name in a series of metaphors this nothing that preceded all the metaphors and on the strength of which metaphors make their appearance.

This is what Heidegger describes as "horizon" and, in an attempt to name it, ends up in a phrase of ultimate indecision: the horizon is "not a being...but still 'something'" ("Ein Nichts...nicht ein Seindes, aber

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[10] Ibidem, p. 70.

[11] In *The New Nietzsche. Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. D. B. Allison (New York: Delta Books, 1977), p. 191.

gleichwohl 'Etwas'"[12]). Horizon is what a critic's commentary holds to be "the condition of possibility of the revelation of beings"[13].

Thus, a perspectival vision will inevitably try to understand man from a point of view located somewhere outside limitations of man's position but, at the same time, will constantly find itself confined by the horizon. Jeffers, like Heidegger, seems to think of horizon not as something beyond which we can penetrate, but as "something which we can neither widen or go beyond, but which provides the limits for certain intellectual activities performed 'within' it"[14]. Man's perception and knowledge is then restricted to parts and fragments, and the notion of totality is removed outside its bracket. Robert Zaller rightly locates such a re-vision of perception and episteme at "the core of Jeffers's poetic strategy":

> The part would not define the whole; man was perhaps an instructive anomaly, but to take his history for the world's drama or even a firm clue to its purpose was folly. Knowledge of the world, and of man himself, could come only from a perspective outside man.[15]

The knowledge that man is trying to gain cannot forget man's subjectivity. Man entangled in himself and his projections cannot see objects clearly separated from his own structure. A Spenglerian postulate of the "detachment from objects considered" also put forward by Nietzsche (it has to be added that Spengler paranthetically scolds Nietzsche for being "far from possessing enough of it himself"[16]) can only partly be actualized. Nietzsche realizes the difficulty of the extreme philosophical perspectivism, and he finds recourse in the animalistic imagery:

> ...if each of us had a different kind of sense perception — if we could only perceive things now as a bird, now as a worm, now as a plant... then... nature would be grasped only as a creation which is subjective in the highest degree.[17]

Perspectivism is monstrous not only because of its animalistic imagery but, first of all, because it demonstrates that man's subjectivity is not the only possible. At the same time, perspectivism is inscribed, so to speak, in its perspective: it cannot master all the possible points of view, cannot bring together all dispersed visions into one vision of totality. The nothing of the horizon inevitably makes its appearance, and the

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[12] M. Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Bonn: Cohen, 1929), p. 114.

[13] J. M. Demske, *Being, Man and Death, A Key to Heidegger* (The University of Kentucky Press, 1970), p. 81.

[14] Translators' comment. in M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 1.

[15] R. Zaller, *The Cliffs of Solitude. A Reading of Robinson Jeffers* (California University Press, 1983), p. 87.

[16] O. Spengler, *The Decline...*, vol. 1, p. 93.

[17] *Philosophy and Truth...*, p. 87.

only eye that can go beyond its limits and dream to the end the dream of wholeness is a dead eye. In "Cawdor", the dead eagle, its spirit, a destilate of "the acquiline desire" climbs the height "and desert space of unbreathable air"

> Where meteors make green fire and die, the ocean dropping
> westward to the girdle of the pearls of dawn
> And the hinder edge of the night sliding toward Asia; it saw
> far under eastward the April-delighted
> Continent; and time relaxing about it now, abstracted from being,
> it saw the eagles destroyed,
> Mean generations of gulls and crows taking their world: turn
> for turn in the air, as on earth
> The white faces drove out the brown... It
> neither wondered nor cared, and it saw
> Growth and decay alternate for ever, and the tides returning. (SP, 186)

The situation of the one living "in the unbreathable air" is interesting from several points of view. First of all,those who dwell, in Nietzsche's terminology" in "pure mountain air", must see themselves "vis-à-vis people still inhabiting the haze of the valleys"[18], and this is the way in which the dead eagle sees

> ...the mountain — dividing
> Canyon of its captivity (that was to Cawdor
> Almost his world) like an old crack in a wall,
> Violet-shadowed and gold-lighted... (SP, 186)

Second, the vision involves stepping outside time, at least time understood in its everyday life sense. To be abstracted from being entails "time relaxing" its hold over entities. In such a situation, life becomes the "archetype body of life", where the notion of archetype suggests both recurrence and alienation from chronology. Third, paradoxically, such a perspective revealing "the great Life" is in a profound sense life's antinomy; the cosmic vision spreads before a dead animal, and the archetypal pattern of life in Jeffers is a model of blindness:

> ...the eyes
> Were spouts of blood; the eyes were gushed out; dark blood
> Ran from the ruinous eye-pits to the hook of the beak
> And rained on the waste spaces of empty heaven. (SP, 187)

At the center of vision lies darkness and, in Paul de Man's rhetoric, we could say that blindness is but another name for insight. The fulfilment of the dream of perspectivism must necessarily undermine its very foundations: we can go beyond the horizon of subjectivity only when neither life nor sight are possible. Reverend Barclay gathers the antinomies of knowledge together in the story of his life crisis, and

[18] *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 168.

The Women at Point Sur can be looked upon as a narrative which begins with a rejection of the "haze of the valley", goes through a bizarre experience of time to wind up in a tragedy of man attempting to transcend the horizon. For Dr. Barclay, who "outgrew his profession", the human predicament is determined by the lack of appropriate knowledge on the one hand, human weakness on the other. Admonishing his parishioners, he claims that

> no man
> Down all the blind milleniums has known anything, no,
> not a scrap, not a dust-grain: I am calling you to
> that
> Blind adventure, I call you to take despair by the throat:
> I know you are fools and soft, woman-brained,
> I have lived among you, I have held my mouth not to
> despise you... (WPS, 21)

The second stage is marked by Barclay's estrangement from time. Like the eagle in "Cawdor", having seen "towers of millennial inexhaustible life" Barclay realizes

> ...I shall be young still
> A thousand years from this day, nothing can weary me. (WPS, 90)

Finally, the vision of the "inexhaustible life" results in the claim to knowledge, a new episteme which remains in touch with the original truth:

> ...And knowledge he [God] gave me, that
> stands against the fountain and touches the stir of
> currents
> Before they are streams; the intent moves in his depth
> And is born cauled in clear flame to be stars
> And new structures of suns, and vermin on the planets... (WPS, 90)

7. Man

Ratcliff Squires defines the dilemma of Jeffers's writing by inscribing the poet in the old controversy between the "unrestrained, self-conscious methods of romanticism" and his "antiromantic ideal" arguing that, eventually, Jeffers demonstrates what may be called a "classicism that has succumbed to the romantic imagination"[1]. On the other hand, we shall try to show that if Jeffers's imagination can be labeled as "romantic" it is because there is a marked tendency toward the dissolution of an individual being which, however, is anchored in the very constitution of the human self.

Like Nietzsche, Jeffers seems to view romanticism as a movement toward self-annihilation either by "repose, quietness, calm seas, and deliverance from themselves through art or knowledge, or else intoxication *(Rausch)*, spasm, bewilderment and madness *(Wahnsinn)*"[2]. In both thinkers, however, this tendency is counterbalanced by the will to perpetuation *(der Wille zum Verewigen)* which could be the

> ...tyrannical will of a sorely-suffering, struggling, or tortured being, who would like to stamp his most personal, individual, and narrow characteristics...as an obligatory law...on others.[3]

The predicament of the human self (romantic or not) seems to lie somewhere between self-erasure or forgetfulness and remembrance, between "the self annihilation" and "the will to perpetuation". In Jeffers's "Inscription for a Gravestone" we read:

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[1] R. Squires, *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963), pp. 131—132.

[2] F. Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, trans. T. Common and F. Ungar (New York: 1960), p. 332.

[3] Ibidem, p. 335.

I admired the beauty
While I was human, now I am part of the beauty. (SP, 480)

The problem seems to be defined by the change of accentuation: Jeffers tends to shift the emphasis from "human" upon "ego" thus making it possible to qualify the notions like "self", "ego", or "identity" with other descripitions. The ego is now rendered as, first of all, non-human or pre-human. The shift from human to non-human is a move between two structures of temporality, from "I was (human)" to "I am part of the (non-human) beauty". The lasting effect of this modification is emphasized by the Present Perfect Tense of the initial line "I have only become inhuman".

Now we can see better why Jeffers was so fascinated by landscape which opened for him a new possibility in redefining the human self, the possibility which could still justify the existence of humanity despite the fall and collapse of the renaissance myth of anthropocentric universe. In a late poem Jeffers convinces us that his perspectival vision reducing man to the size of insect was only a technical vehicle but a constant philosophical practise aiming at saving whatever can still be salvaged from the grandiose construction of humanity:

I cannot walk the mountains as I used to do
But my subject is what it used to be: my love, my loved subject
Mountain and ocean, rock, water and beasts and trees
Are the protagonists, the human people are only symbolic
interpreters-
So let them live or die. They may in fact
Die rather quickly, if the great manners of death dreamed up
In the laboratories work well. (BE, 50)

Human self is then viewed as a "symbolic interpreter", is conceived of as a constant hermeneutic process of coming to terms with the external reality. It is self-indulgence, the inwardness of vision, that brings about false assumptions and inauthentic ambitions inflating human individual. Such mechanisms distorting and misreading human position in the universe are part and parcel of "nature's trick", and the dilemma of man seems to reside in the fact that the human being has constantly to resist its own visions and projections.

The eye's tricks are strange, the mind has to be quick
and resolute or you'll believe in them
And be gabbling with ghosts. For take note that
They are always human: to see the human figure in all
things in man's disease;
To see the inhuman God is our health. (BE, 66)

Hence, the landscape of the human self is modelled upon partly animal past ("the animal-stinking ghost-ridden darkness, the human soul", BE, 10), and partly upon geological formations:

...This villainous king of beasts, this deformed ape? — He has mind
And imagination, he might go far
And end in horror. The hawks are more heroic but man has a steeper mind,
Huge pits of darkness, high peaks of light,
You may calculate a comet's orbit or the dive of a hawk, not a man's mind. (BE, 10)

> It's true without exaggeration that I wouldn't drive over to Monterey to meet William Shakespeare; this doesn't imply lack of admiration, or anything more foolish than contentment at home.
>
> — RJ to A. Bender, June 1927

In *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* Orestes, who has overcome humanity, inscribes the human form in the circle of the nonhuman. The philosophy of ego is then developed in two steps first step dislodges man from his privileged position by setting him against non-human forms (animals, minerals), the second move undoes the previous juxtoposition by calling forth powers which preceded the articulation of particular life forms. The first stage marks the end of both the knowledge of myself in time and the recognition of my being as fully determined by time. The human ego is discernible neither in itself (self-knowledge) nor in other forms (empirical knowledge).

...I remembered
The knife in the stalk of my humanity; I drew and it broke;
I entered the life of the brown forest
And the great life of the ancient peaks, the patience of stone,
I felt the changes in the veins
In the throat of the mountain, a grain in many centuries, we have our own time, not yours; and I was the stream
Draining the mountain wood; and I the stag drinking; and I was the stars,
Boiling with light, wandering alone, each one the lord of his own summit; and I was the darkness
Outside the stars, I included them, they were a part of me... (SP, 139)

The movement towards the non-human involves a series of changing identities limited however to either biological or geological formations. The purpose of such a sequence is inherently ethical: to cure man's self-centeredness.

What a pleasure it is to mix one's mind with geological
Time, or with astronomical relax it.
There is nothing like astronomy to pull the stuff out of man.
His stupid dreams and red-rooster importance: let him count the star-swirls. (BE, 18)

What is at stake in the transition from the human to non-human is a gathering of what can be saved from the human self and re-naming

it with other terms (animalistic, geological, astronomical). As a result of such a strategy man regains the support of things

> ...the beauty of transhuman things,
> Without which we are all lost. (BE, 60)

The second stage takes us to the realm of the pre-human, i.e. to the domain where both human and non-human are questioned in the mute gesture of silence. Orestes tries to describe this location as "the darkness outside the stars", but the pre-human is necessarily pre-linguistic. To go beyond things (i.e. beyond the non-human) must mean leaving behind all man-made denominations as well as erasing all kinds of temporal categories.

> ...they have not made words
> for it, to go beyond things, beyond hours and ages,
> And be all things in all time, in their returns and passages,
> in the motionless and timeless center,
> In the white of the fire...how can I express the excellence
> I have found, that has no color but clearness... (SP, 139)

Similarly, this atemporal structure of the pre-human is responsible for the bracketing of the spatial categories:

> I wander in the air
> Touch you and Asia
> At the same moment... (SP, 480)

The way towards the pre-human leads through a necessary and radical break with humanity. This transition is not an act of abstract reflection but active participation: "I entered the life of the brown forest". The participation Jeffers is talking about inevitably invites he problematics of desire: to participate is to take part, voluntarily or not, in an event that poses itself before me as a challenge. It is with the question of desire that Orestes approaches Electra in the final scene of *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* where he presents his vision of men trapped in the mortal snare of desire:

> ...the net of desire
> Had every nerve drawn to the center, so that they writhed like a
> full draught of fishes, all matted
> In the one mesh... (SP, 138)

The center which appears in this quotation is not the "motionless and timeless center" of which Orestes speaks later in his invective. The malaise of desire which is the inherent feature of man is a disease of dissipation. On the one hand, desire recognizes the difference between the subject and object, between the subjectivity of self and objectivity of the Same. This is a traditional Cartesian line of thinking according to which

> ...the Self belongs to the subjective, the Same to the objective ...the Self is the core of the experiencing subject which persists through the multiplicity of that experience. The Same is the substance of the object...It is the principle of the identity of the object.[4]

On the other hand, however, desire aims at what cannot be achieved: at overcoming the difference by appropriating the other, dominating it. This paradox of desire inherent in the civilized man did not escape Rousseau's attention. According to the philosopher a primitive man knows nothing of

> ...the ardent impetuous passion which defies all dangers, overthrows all obstacles and, in its fury, seems suited to destroy the human race which it is meant to preserve.[5]

Desire "overthrows all obstacles", i.e. it removes the other from my perspecive by opening him/her to the never-ending play of appropriation.

At the end of desire there seems to be only more self, as the mechanism of desire allows me to appropriate the other in order to look at myself.

> ..the man pursued the woman, the woman
> clung to the man, warriors and kings
> Strained at each other in the darkness, all loved or fought
> inward,
> each one of the lost people
> Sought the eyes of another that another should praise him;
> sought
> never his own but another's... (SP, 138)

If desire is the extension of self through the act of seemingly total appropriation of the other then the metaphor of a net shows its usefulness: the ego is the net of desire which ensnares the other thus becoming a center which attracts and draws all the "nerves". The narrative of desire is a story of a false center which, unlike the "motionless center", dispenses darkness. Orestes repeatedly accuses Electra of her preference for darkness over what he chooses to call "the white of the fire":

> ...I saw a vision of us move in the dark
> ...
> Didn't I say this would be dark to you? (SP, 138)

If the vision of humanity is circumscribed by darkness, then the light of a new perspective must necessarily be a transvaluation of and a trans-

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[4] J. Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972), p. 71.

[5] J. J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Bibliotheque de la Pleiade, 1959—1970), vol. 3, p. 157; English translation in R. Grimley, *Jean Jacques Rousseau* Sussex; The Harvester Press, 1985, p. 30.

gression against humanity. Orestes claims he has been awakened because he

> ...will not waste inward
> Upon humanity, having found a fairer object. (SP, 137)

The attack upon inwardness is an assault against man as the origin of sense and order, whereas the human being shows himself as a false, dark center pulsating with throbs of desire. Thus, the light which is to replace the darkness of inwardness is an explosion which allows us to see as an active force what has previously been merely assimilable as a "stream", "stag", or "stars". The explosion is, on the one hand, a revelation of astronomical processes beyond description:

> ...there
> is no way to express that explosion; all that exists
> Roars into flame, the tortured fragments rush away from
> each other into all the sky, new universes
> Jewel the black breast of night; and far off the outer nebulae like charging spearmen again
> Invade emptiness. (BE, 3)

On the other hand, however, it is also an unconcealment of God "who does not care and will never cease" (BE, 4). From the human we are carried to the non-human (animal, mineral, cosmic forms) only to continue towards the pre-human which defies all the qualifications except the one familiar from mystical texts: "the motionless and timeless center. To reappear on the other side of humanity signifies the recognition of man's participation in the "universal awareness" (WPS, 107) where our humanity "slipped off lie on the rock like a skin, like a cast shirt" (WPS, 107).

Jeffers realizes that the pre-human transcends the restrictions of language, hence his "great explosion"

> ...is probably only a metaphor — I know
> not — of faceless violence, the root of all things. (BE, 4)

In the same way, the vanities of human desire are transmuted to become free of its man-appointed destinations and fulfilments:

> ...I and my love are one; no desire but
> fulfilled; no passion but peace,
> The pure flame and the white, fierer than any passion... (SP, 139)

To reach the pre-human is to understand the action of *physis*, to grasp the generation of forms which in itself is formless, to discern

> That there is one power, you may call it God to the vulgar,
> Exists from eternity into eternity, all the protean phenomena, all forms, all faces of things,
> And all the negligible lightnings of consciousness,
> Are made of that power... (WPS, 100)

In this domain where, as Reverend Barclay obsessively repeats in 7th Canto of *Women at Point Sur*, "there is no distinction of persons" human desire becomes "fierer than any passion" as it participates in the "never done" process of exchanging energies between the sun and the earth. In an early poem "Moral Beauty" Jeffers gives us a more extensive explanation of what Orestes concisely described as "falling in love outward":

> And you, live planet, you
> That pasture us all, and while our days endure
> Endure us all, and welcome home at length;
> Brown opulent breast men plow
> A baby's way, with kneading fingers' strength
> And flowerlike lips its mother's; you most pure
> Bride of the powerful fountains of the sun,
> Our father, whose insupportable desire
> Burns on the godlike body nor ever is done
> Flooding with creative fire
> The giantess veins: is passion mighty as yours
> Not of its nature a strict law? (AC, 10)

A movement towards the pre-human is inevitably a drive towards the law exceeding the restrictions of the man-made regulations and human truth which is shown as an unrecognized error. The human truth fails because it is an extrapolation of a part over the whole, a domination of a form over the formless. Hence, we can justifiedly speak of the imperialism of the human truth:

> ...when they look backward they see only a man
> standing at the beginning,
> Or forward, a man at the end; or if upward, men in the shining
> bitter sky striding and feasting,
> Whom you call Gods... (SP, 138)

But this transvaluation of the human form does not result in its subjugation to other forms; Jeffers's anthropology carefully avoids the danger of instituting new gods and new hierarchies. What the poet aims at is the unmaking of both the human and non-human forms and, as we have seen several times, words which are seen as "made" cannot do justice to this process. Words are born out of dispersion: this Derridean reflection holds not only because it refers to the necessity of mediation between separated individuals but, first of all, because language always reflects the incommunicability of its own forms scattered over the space of discourse. Language never simply says things, but it saturates them with various possible meanings and countermeanings. The tone of discourse is in the very act of speaking taken over by under- and overtones. Thus, Orestes claims that his mystical vision has

> ...no undertone
> nor silvery second murmur
> That rings in love's voice... (SP, 139)

The motionless and timeless center paralyzes this tendency of language towards multivocality and self-perpetuation. Once the state of unity has been achieved, once the dispersion has been liquidated, there is no need for language which adds its own duplicity to the scatteredness of the human society. So far this anthropology seems to endorse Brophy's synthesis of Irestes' philosophy as another reading of the mythical and mystical nostalgia:

> The "motionless and timeless" center is the objects of all mystics. By it one leaves the circumference of life, exchanging the exterior for the interior, multiplicity for unity, space for spacelessness, time for timelessness. At the center one learns identity with the supreme principle of the universe... It is a place of the coming together of opposites and therefore neutralization... There is perfect unity, instantaneous communication... simultaneous and total possession... where one is permeated by indifference, seeking no end but contemplation...[6]

However, the mystical nostalgia does not appear to be as complete as the critic would wish it to be. Its surface is scratched and fissured by the pen, the stylus of language and desire. Man subjugated to the formlessness of the pre-human ceaselessly emerges from the eternal recurrence of changeable forms at the sharp point of his desire and, as there is no way out of the net of desire, the dispersion can be reduced, but it can never be totally eliminated. In the phenomenology of human desire we see the same movement towards the minimal difference (appropriation of the other) which we have detected previously in other areas of Jeffers's thought.

Thus, unity is never "perfect", as Brophy claims, because it is always marred by the notions like "desire", "fulfillment" which concepts also markedly disagree with Brophy's qualification of Orestes's speech as describing the place of "neutralization". Significantly, the relationship outside/inside is certainly refashioned, but not so much as a triumph of the interior over the exterior, but as a redefinition of both notions. Orsetes begins by "entering the life of the brown forest", i.e. by becoming a part of the outside only to later reverse this movement. A long enumeration "I was the stream... the stag... the stars..." still leaves us uncertain as to the relationship between the interior and exterior, and only at the close of the sentence does Orestes speak of "including them", things becoming "a part of" him. The redefinition of inside and outside does not then remove the gap between the two categories but, rather, reinstates it by making it problematic. The main stress is laid not so much upon how to accomodate the world within man's ego as Brophy suggests but, just the opposite — how to avoid this danger of inwardness.

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[6] R. J. Brophy, *Robinson Jeffers...*, p. 147.

> All the waste time of picking quarrels and looking for praise ...making war, politics ...making laws and making love ...—writing books!— of course all these things are necessary, but don't you think too much human energy goes back in to humanity; and the farmers who subdue the earth, the scientists who widen horizons, even the merely contemplative person admiring mountains have chosen a better way? They live outward.
>
> — RJ to G. West, January 22, 1926

Orestes has fallen in love outward, having found "a fairer object" he "will not waste inward upon humanity". The question which silently asks itself among the lines of Jeffers's poetry is to what extent man can succeed in overcoming his own form of truth, to what extent this truth of human form can be recognized as fettering and immobilizing the pattern of recurrence which existence has established as its main mechanism. The answer that the way leads through the expansion of ego is certainly false; but a hastened conclusion that the annihilation of self is salutary is equally unjustified. Man lives on the border line between inside and outside, and thus is inevitably caught in the play of desire, contrast between the sexes, center and marginality, focus and periphery. In a passage from "Margrave" Jeffers puts in the limelight these problems as essentially human but also, more importantly, comments upon the necessary marginality of the power of existence itself which mocks the notion of "center" as a purely human invention. Existence, *physis*, is a force which defies classifications and divisions:

> ...We that have the honor and hardship
> of being human
> Are one flesh with the beasts, and the beasts with the
> plants
> One streaming sap, and certainly the plants and algae
> and the earth they spring from
> Are one flesh with the stars. The classifications
> Are mostly a kind of *memoria technica*, use it but don't
> be fooled. (BE, 25)

The very problematics of form and formlessness is possible only on the ground of human consciousness as an already articulated form:

> But man is conscious,
> He brings the world to focus in a feeling brain,
> In a net of nerves catches the splendor of things,
> Breaks the somnambulism of nature... (SP, 365)

The making of man's consciousness is inherently linked with the question of the relationship between inside and outside. The first step in reflection is a traditionally humanist attitude:

> The earth was the world and man was its measure... (SP, 365)

Then comes a controversy between the insignificance of man in the universe and man's consciousness which perpetuates its entaglement in the inside/outside cleft. Hence the fact that

> ...the earth is a particle of dust by a sand-grain sun, lost in a nameless cove of the shores of a continent (SP, 365),

and the discovery of Copernicus

> ...who first
> pushed man
> Out of his insane self-importance and the world's navel,
> and taught him his place (DA, 72),

is countered by Margrave's contention that

> ...the more developed the brain the greater
> the agony. (SP, 369)

As we can see, man is locked in a paradoxical situation: the more he tries to lose his subjectivity the more conscious he becomes, but this turns him back towards his subjective being. If man "brings the world to focus", i.e. forms a place where things meet, gives them the sharpest outline and adjusts them to his vision, then such a focusing consciousness is false as by performing all three operations it alienates things from existence, sees them as estragend from physis, gives them particular differences where, as Barclay claimed, there are no distinctions of persons.

Focusing is also rooted in the visual. While man brings to focus, exercises an authoritarian act of grouping in order to know, to see, nature is "somnambulist", its eyes are closed, its movements do not differentiate between waking and dreaming states, inside and outside. Jeffers attempts at creating a model of cognition in which human loneliness would be cured by participation, in other words as a poet of solitude he tries to alleviate the griefs of human condition by organizing the knowing subject in such a way so that it could join nature in its somnambulism. What is at stake in Jeffers's philosophy is not so much making but the unmaking of man who is to be redeemed by the nonhuman.

> Solitude that unmakes me one of men
> In snow-white hands brings singular recompense,
> Evening me with kindlier natures when
> On the needled pinewood the cold dews condense
> ...
> ...even in humanity beauty and good
> Show, from the mountainside of solitude. (BSW, 84)

This process of "evening with kindlier natures" is disturbed by the appearance of consciousness which Jeffers describes in a slightly Derri-

dean way as "something else" (BSW, 87). Consciousness is shown to be an excessive feature of being, a luxury futile from the point of view of the economy of existence.

> Then what is this unreasonable excess,
> Our needless quality, this unrequiered
> Exception in the world, this consciousness? (BSW, 87)

Consciousness is also a late comer to the realm of creation, as it is a product of "the other god" who approaches "all visible things" and singles man out saying

> "I crown or damn, I have different fire to add.
> These forms shall feel, ache, love, grieve and be glad." (BSW, 87)

If Jeffers's philosophy deserves the name of inhumanism we could claim that it does only because precisely it preserves and shelters the dearest of all humanist beliefs that man is the measure of all things. But while the traditional humanism would hold it as man's glory, Jeffers suggests that it is "hardly his advantage" (SP, 365), and the other, consciousness bringing god is "the troubler of men" (BSW, 88). Man as the measure of the universe necessarily reduces all knowledge to his form; man is at the beginning and end of man's episteme thus inflating the ego as a false center hopelessly involved in "the net of desire".

Humanism is a philosophy of man's ineradicable loneliness. Inhumanism tries to think of man and universe as twisted together in a difficult partnership. It is inhumanism that unearthes the inherent loneliness deeply embedded in humanism but which humanism always concealed under the guise of the centrality of man's position. In short, inhumanism is an advanced form of humanist reflection, of humanism reflecting upon itself.

While humanism tried to cheat its loneliness (*tromper sa solitude*, as Levinas calls it), Jeffers recognizes the fact that cognition is always man-based. If we turn towards philosophy we will find that it looks at consciousness and knowledge as a form of loneliness:

> [la connaissance] est par essence une relation avec ce qu'on égale et englobe, avec ce dont on suspend l'altérité, avec ce qui devient immanent, parce que c'est à ma mesure et à mon échelle.... La connaissance est toujours une adéquation entre la pensée et ce qu'elle pense. Il y a dans la connaissance, en fin de compte, une impossibilité de sortir de soi...[7]

Thus, whether inspecting his own subjectivity (inside) or objectivity of the external world man is unable to leave categories prepared by his own reflection. The telescopic vision of Jeffers can concentrate either on man's body and mind

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[7] E. Levinas, *Ethique et infini* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), p. 61.

...He saw clearly in his mind the little
Adrenal glands perched on the red-brown kidneys, as if all his doomed tissues become transparent,
Pouring in these passions their violent secretion
Into his blood-stream, raising the tension unbearably. (SP, 367)

or on the cosmic phenomena measured in light years

Galaxy on galaxy, innumerable swirls of innumerable stars, endured as it were forever and humanity
Came into being, its two or three million years a moment, in a moment it will certainly cease out from being
And galaxy on galaxy endure after that as it were forever. (SP, 365)

Man lives between inside and outside and forms his knowledge trying to balance the two spheres, but this knowledge is always made to man's measure. At the beginning and end of knowledge there is not only man but, first of all, man's loneliness. Jeffers's conclusion in "Apology for Bad Dreams"

Unmeasured power, incredible passion, enormous craft: no thought apparent but burns darkly
Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault: no thought outside... (SP, 177)

not only juxtaposes inside and outside but also deals with thought in terms of light which, however, is far from dazzling brightness: it "smethers" and "burns darkly". It is also this chiaroscuro of human thinking that enables man to conceive of the universe as free of man. In the end it is a thoughtful act that brings us to a suspension of thinking, and a movement from the human to the pre-human is a road to the thoughtful invalidation of thinking. If there is no "thought outside" then thinking must inevitably be another name of loneliness. It takes a human subject withdrawn towards the utmost limits of his loneliness to see

The fountains of the boiling stars, the flowers on the foreland, the ever-returning roses of dawn. (SP, 177)

Levinas holds that

La connaissance la plus audacieuse et lointaine ne nous met pas en communion avec le véritablement autre; elle ne remplace pas la socialité; elle est encore et toujours une solitude.[8]

Thus, consciousness, detecting and denying a chance of reaching unity with the "faceless violence" of existence, is a form of minimal difference, of being aware of what one could be but, by the very awareness of the fact, what one is not. The human is synonymous with malaise. Jeffers's reading of enthropy is a part of his anthropology: stars try to escape the disease of consciousness. Man is a sick animal of the universe:

[8] Ibidem, p. 62.

So, I thought, the rumor
Of human consciousness has gone abroad in the world,
The sane uninfected far-outer universes
Flee it in a panic of escape, as men flee the plague
Taking a city... (SP, 366)

Consciousness is viewed as a disease because it introduces a first fissure in the original unity which, hypothetically, nature was before the emergence of a human individual. This again introduces a theme of desire:

...you itched for a woman, you had to fetch me out of the
happy hill of not-being. Pfah, to hug a woman
And make this I. That's the evil in the world, that letter. I-I. (SP,370)

La paradox logique de la fécondité, as Levinas calls it: by the logic of parenthood I create what is me and not me at the same time. At the very heart of sexual desire and fatherly care there lies a secret layer of the minimal difference. What I recognize as my own betrays me at the moment of the ultimate pleasure: i generate what will not only resemble me but deny me. In the 17th episode of *The Inhumanist* the old man does not recognize his own daughter, and when he eventually accepts her it is with full awareness that she comes to deny him:

He looked attentively and said:
"Your eyes, Sea-gull, have lamps in 'em. It's not
for love
Of your father's old bones." (DA, 62)

The symptoms of minimal difference are traced everywhere. In the structure of human thinking (a division into inside and outside), in the nature of desire, by politics and social life ("The state is a blackmailer... with whom we make our accomodations", DA, 142). What aggravates the situation is the claim that consciousness posits its own ideals as models of truth; as a result man has lost sight of the fact that by accomodating man-made truth as regulatory he imposed a set of alien values upon phenomena totally outside their range. Similarly, Kierkegaard views the predicament of an "objective philosopher" as a problem of illusion and inauthenticity.

> When an individual becomes a philosopher... he becomes a member of a community; and he assumes the community's mode of existence. But if an individual becomes so accustomed to the community's mode of existence that he begins to think of its properties as his own; if he loses sight of the fact that his own existence is characterized by a sharply different set of properties, then he has begun to forget what it means to exist.[9]

[9] R. H. Johnson, *The Concept of Existence in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1972), p. 143.

Jeffers diagnoses a similar process of forgetfulness in his vision of man. The first stage of this forgetfulness is the denaturalization of man, the second — positing this fallacy and inauthenticity as true and natural.

> There is only one animal that hates himself. Truly the
> Sweating toad and poison-gorged pit-viper
> Are content with their nature. I'll be a stone at the bot-
> tom of the sea, or any bush on the mountain,
> But not this ghost-ridden blood-and-bone thing, civil war
> on two legs and the stars' contempt, this walking farce
> This ape, this — denatured ape, this — citizen —... (DA, 82)

Man is represented as not content with his own nature, and thus the imagery is constistently that of strife and conflict: death vs. life (man is "ghost-ridden" nad "blood-and-bone" at the same time), political divisionism ("civil war"), cosmic discord ("stars' contempt"), confrontation of the noble and ignoble literary genres (tragedy pertains only to the non-human: "This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places", SP, 175), whereas man is a "walking farce"). *The Inhumanist* develops this theme of alienation as one of its main subjects. Man is not only divorced from nature (i.e. natural phenomena) but, first of all, is exiled from the nature (i.e. the essence) of being. By the very insistence on the centrality of his truth man locates himself on the margins of existence.

> ...The yellow puma, the flighty mourning-
> -dove and flecked hawk, yes, and the rattlesnake
> Are in the nature of things... (DA, 89)

The question which must be asked now is: what it means to be "in the nature of things"? A part of the answer is suggested in the continuation of the same fragment: "things" are "noble and beautiful as the rocks and the grass". Thus, the nature of things specifies a kind of existence that is qualified as "noble" and "beautiful". To be estranged from the nature of things is to live on the margins of beauty. But the term "beauty" brings in the element of aestheticism which Jeffers is consciously trying to defy. The aesthetic--laden terminology uncovers the ontological and ethical preoccupations. The aesthetics of landscape, so seminal for Jeffers, is primarily a revelation of his metaphysical stance. In this he resembles Heidegger who found a way out of the finitude of world precisely through the transcendence of the earth. As Joseph Sadzik puts it in his book on Heidegger's aesthetics:

> I am set here like a stone in cement... A natural lover of mankind... can meet many people and enjoy it, but for me to see more than two or three in an evening would mean a month's quarrel with the whole race.
>
> — RJ to A. Bender, April 21, 1927

> Heidegger a écrit son esthétique moins pour elle-même qu'en vue d'une metaphysique. Nous pensons que son esthétique était le prétexte à une nouvelle thèses metaphysique.[10]

This methaphysical background is evident in the very notion of the "thing" which appears in Jeffers's quotation. A "puma", "dove" or a "hawk" are not, strictly speaking, things; they would be, by most people, classified as "animate objects". Still, they are referred to as resting "in the nature of things". They are "as noble and beautiful as the rocks and the grass". In this simile we encounter the same problem: a rock and a leaf of grass do not seem to belong to the same order of being, still they are placed in the immediate vicinity of each other.

Man's tragedy appears to consist in his inability to be a thing. This inability is twofold: first, man is divided internally, second — he distances himself from other things. What is at stake in Jeffers's metaphysics is the regaining of the thingly character of man. The problem is to understand man as a thing, to divorce him from the infrastructure of his culture devised concepts which lock him outside nature and the nature of things, and to unconceal what Heidegger calls *dingliche Unterbau*, the material support scheme which makes man and his culture possible. It is not a coincidence that Jeffers's texts abound in physiological and anatomical details emphasizing the materiality of man's being. The way towards this *Unterbau* leads through a rethinking of the temporal structure of man.

> ...the grass being permanent and humanity only a poignant episode.
>
> — RJ to H. Monroe, June 2, 1926

[10] J. Sadzik, *Esthetique de Martin Heidegger* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1963), p. 154.

8. Man & Time

Like Heidegger, Jeffers inscribes man in the circle of time, and even the very absence of time can be represented only in temporal designations.

> Yesterday morning enormous the moon hung
> low on the ocean...
> Today
> Black is the ocean, black and sulphur the sky...
> ...I honestly do not know which day is more beautiful.
> I know that tomorrow or next year or in twenty years
> I shall not see these things — and it does not matter, it
> does not hurt;
> They will be here. (DA, 120)

Man opens the temporality of existence. It is only after the temporal qualification "yesterday" and "today" that aesthetic problems become possible (the day is "more beautiful") and death is seen in the human perspective. Things matter or not only **in** time, but the meaning measurable in time is not the meaning **of** time.

The past and present are a stage upon which what defies such distinctions is shown: things "will still be here" when human presence has been "rubbed out". This lets us see a double structure of the human time: first, it organizes and classifies reality, second, like in Nietzsche's critique of the notions like "truth", "good", or "evil", time shows reality as constructed, i.e. becomes one of conceptual traps of cognition. Time describes **world**, but *earth* remains closed to it. In such a situation cognition is severely limited, and man is locked in a fundamental incertitude ("I do not know") as his categories are all of a sudden revealed as hardly homological with reality. If the beauty of things "has more meaning than the whole human race" then man's indecision as to which phenomenon is "more beautiful" becomes absurdly insignificant. "Huma-

nity is needless" (WPS, 9) because the ambitions of its time are shown to be ridiculous by the enduring presence of cosmos:

> ...but presently come the stars, and
> we are too small.
> Man's world puffs up his mind, as a toad
> Puffs himself up; the billion light-years cause a serene
> and whole some deflation. (BE, 71)

Hence, the accuracy and precision of human mind needs to be liberated by a meditation upon the temporality different from man's.

> What a pleasure it is to mix one's mind with geological
> Time, or with astronomical relax it. (BE, 18)

The problem seems to be, then, not so much to avoid time but to rethink it. Jeffers clearly realizes that the temporality of man is radical, and even what "relaxes" human mind is also subsumed under the category of time: geological time or billion light-years are also temporal designations are temporal dreams of what defies temporality. Time is the element of language and metaphor. If "culture's outlived" then it

> ...remains to invent the language
> to tell it. Match-ends of burnt experience
> Human enough to be understood,
> Scraps and metaphors will serve. (WPS, 10)

Time remains, for Jeffers, a metaphor beyond which we cannot go, and even in concepts originally meant to deiy time, the temporal lining of language inevitably shows.

> —Words, theological words— eternal, infinite,— we dream
> too much. (BE, 71)

Thus, the philosopher, like Nietzsche's Einsiedler, is aware that his thinking must be grounded in two reflections: on the provisional character of speech, and on the inexactitude of man's perception of time. If life, as Jeffers claims,

> has no name — and that's lucky, for names
> Foul in the mouthing. The human race is bound to defile
> ...
> Whatever they can reach or name, they'd shit on the
> morning star
> If they could reach. (DA, 57),

then, necessarily, the philosopher must ignore or see through the illusion of man-made qualifications of time. In the 31 episode of *The Inhumanist* the philosopher has a vision of two crowds heading in two opposite directions.

> ..."We are going into
> the past, into the past, we have no place

In the great age." Therefore he turned to the others and
said,
"Where are you going?" "Into the future with the dawn
on our faces. Come along with us." "No", he said. (DA, 84)

The philosopher does not seem to be concerned either with the past or with the future. Speaking about the past, I am fixing an event as what came to pass **then** and **there**. A past event is, thus, somehow owned by me, I rule it from a distance and call it from the present moment bringing it to my vicinity. The past also relies on my power to visualize a past event in the presence, as the past is what I can bring to sight from the domain where human time does not make any sense. This ambiguity of the past is clearly implied in Heidegger's terminology where *sich ereignet*, "come to pass", plays a significant role.

> ...Heidegger points to the fact that *Ereignis*, and with it necessarily *sich ereignen*, embodies the meanings of the two verbs, *eignen* (to be one's own, to suit, to belong to), and the archaic *eräugnen* (to bring before the eyes, to bring to sight).[1]

With the future I am denied such luxuries. As Thomas Langan puts it,

> Behind us there is the richness of a historical destiny. Ahead of us, there is simply Nothing.[2]

While past and present are associated with light and knowledge, future means ultimately blindness: if I see and thus own the past, I am owned by the future which turns out to be the domain of the pre-human. This is the problem Jeffers discusses in "Their Beauty Has More Meaning":

I know that tomorrow or next year or in twenty years
I shall not see these things — and it does not matter, it
does not hurt;
They will be here... (DA, 120)

The ultimate blindness of death which goes beyond the individualizing human experience ("I shall not see... and it does not hurt") is preceded by the anxiety which is grounded in the basic indecision and indefiniteness of the future ("tomorrow or next year or in twenty years"). It is this anxiety concerning the future that brings about the awareness of Being. When the line "they will still be there" calls forth the moon and the ocean, the sky and the earth, it can do it only in the language saturated in a particularly intense way with time. The future without man, i.e. the only possible future ("humanity will be rubbed out") is a proper revelation of time in its particular intensity. I am heading

[1] Translator's note in M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology...*, p. 38.

[2] T. Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger. A Critical Study of an Existentialist Phenomenology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 214.

toward a world without me, and a true reflection on temporality is always rooted in absence, or in what Langan calls the Nothing.

The human language does not have a grammatical category that could render what supersedes future. A certain future is exhausted with my death, another future is terminated by the decline of humanity, and what is left is only what "is" and cannot be named, something that is "like" ("Which is *like* beauty. It is *like* nobility", DA, 56). Thus, things "will be" when I am not, although my absence invalidates time, things "will be" when mankind devolves from the stage of creation despite the fact that it is humanity that makes both "is" and its grammatical modalities possible.

> To be sure, it is not absolutely necessary that we should be. There is the pure possibility that man might not be at all. After all there was a time when man was not. But strictly speaking we cannot say: There was a time when man **was** not. At all times man was and is and will be, because time produces itself only insofar as man is. There is no time when man was not, not because man was from all eternity and will be for all eternity but because time is not eternity and time fashions itself into a time only as a human, historical being-there.[3]

"They will still be there". It is not so much the obviousness of the future tense that draws our attention here but a quiet strength of "still". This power is, as we have said, "quiet" because in it resides the adjectival meaning of the same word, and it is with this pensive and consistent force that time reinscribes itself in the line. "Still" means "even then", "even at that time", i.e. in our context "at the time when there is no time". At such a moment things are "still", surprisingly there and surprisingly peaceful and undisturbed. We could rewrite Jeffers's line to the effect that not only things will still be there, but also that things will be there (as) still. To experience earth is to become aware of the stillness of things. To do it implies understanding of things as satisfied with their nature, as residing **in** nature, unlike man who has successfully "denatured" himself. The stillness which lies at the heart of Jeffers's analysis is a peculiar form of tem-

> If anyone was ever bored... let him get five acres and grow a wood on them, and produce a stone house and twins and a book of verses... Somebody has a nice story about passing along the road below here, on evening in 1921 or so. They looked up in the twilight and saw a stump of a tower, and me on top rolling a stone into place. They went to China, returned to America, went to Italy, returned. In 1924 they were here again and looked up from the sea-road in the twilight to the same stump of a tower... and me on top carefully rolling a stone into place. They thought there was something bewitched about my stones — but that is how it is with me.
>
> — RJ to A. Ficke, April 1929

[3] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 71.

porality in which movement and future-orientedness ("Things will be") is associated with a certain fixity ("They will still be"). In this we come to the very kernel of temporality: how to, recognizing the significance of time, transcend its limitations, how to, in the face of temporal bondage, dream of timelessness. In Heidegger's terminology: is an atemporal experience thinkable within the structure of being. The answer to these questions is strictly Nietzschean: Jeffers presents a vision of time based on circularity and eternal return. In 31 episode of *The Inhumanist* the philosopher claims that

> ...time is a ring:
> what's future?
> And when again you meet the beasts on this pleasant hill,
> the fox yaps in your faces, your harps are hushed,
> future is past —
> I shall be there." (DA, 85)

What is at stake in the theory of recurrence is that it offers a possibility to answer a question of how to describe the way in which things are while they continually, although unobservedly, change and become. If Jeffers wants to "turn humanity outward from its obsession in humanity" (DA, 124), it is to make us aware that the human history is "only a hare-brained episode in the life of the planet" (DA, 124), and thus human, linear time must lose its significance in the situation where "gray stones" "will survive civilization" (DA, 121). Like for Jeffers whose future is already past for Nietzsche

> ...the moment must be at once present and past, as well as present and yet to come, in order for it to pass... The present would have to coexist with itself as past and future; it is the synthetic self-relation of present, past, and future that in turn grounds the relation between this moment and other moments.[4]

Nietzsche himself talks about it in the third part of *Zarathustra* where he, for the first time, unveils the thought of eternal recurrence:

> Muss nicht, was laufen kann von allen Dingen, schon einmal diesse Gasse gelaufen sein? Muss nicht, was geschehen kann von allen Dingen, schon einmal geschehn, getan, vorübergelaufen sein?
> ...
> Denn, was laufen kann von allen Dingen: auch in dieser langen Gasse hinaus — muss es einmal noch laufen! —[5]

The return is a doctrine which describes cosmological processes as well as human history. In the early poem "The Cycle" we read:

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[4] G. Deleuze, "Active and Reactive", in *The New Nietzsche; Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, p. 86.

[5] F. Nietzsche, *Also Sprach...*, p. 174.

...
now all day long the steamers
Smudge the opal's rim; often a sea-plane troubles
The seawind with its throbbing heart. These will increase,
the others diminish; and later
These will diminish; our Pacific have pastured
The Mediterranean torch and passed it west across the
fountains of the morning... (BSW, 110)

In a 1940 poem "Battle" the repetitiveness of time is seen as a remedy against the disease of civilization:

It is all in the whirling circles of time.
If millions are born millions will die;
In bed or in battle is no great matter
In the long orbits of time.
If England goes down and Germany up
The stronger dog will still be on top,
All in the turning of time.
If civilization goes down — that
Would be an event to contemplate.
It will not be in our time, alas, my dear,
It will not be in our time. (BAS, 131)

In *Women at Point Sur* recurrence is the machinery of human passion and desire:

...The explosion, the pas-
sion, repeated
Eternally: what if they rot after, you and they shall
return again. The bride and the bridegroom: the
unions of fire
Like jewels on a closed neklace burn holes through ex-
tinction. (WPS, 103)

If the cosmic and physical descriptions of the eternal return seem to link Jeffers with Nietzsche, there is a certain lacuna in Jeffers's version of the concept which could be, according to Deleuze, qualified as a lack of ethical interpretation of this notion. In the final analysis, Nietzsche's *Wiederkunft* transmutes itself into affirmation of the ability to will. As Deleuze puts it,

> As an ethical thought, the Eternal Return is a new formulation of the practical synthesis: Whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its Eternal Return.[6]

Thus, ahumanism of Nietzsche aims not so much against man as such but against a certain model of man. If the author of *Zarathustra* speaks of the surfeit of men (*Überdruss am Menschen*) then it refers to the concept of man that dominated European culture for many centuries

[6] G. Deleuze. "Active and Reactive", in *The New Nietzsche...*, p. 100.

and which Nietzsche himself describes as "little man" (*der kleine Mensch*)[7].

Jeffers is much more implacable in his critique of man which is not limited to a culture created model of man but, first of all, refers to the physical and biological structure of man. Hence, if Eternal Return is a concept which enables Nietzsche to support strong will and praise the individual life by uniting being and becoming, for Jeffers the circle of time is a final determination of the pain of existence and thus has no positive connotations attached to it. In short, there is no possibility of an ethical reading of *Wiederkunft* in Jeffers's work where it performs a function of a mere mechanism of renewal. In Nietzsche Eternal Return overcomes disgust, in Jeffers it strengthens it. Hence, while in *Zarathustra* there is a chapter called "The Convalescent" (*Der Genesende*), Jeffers consistently remains in the circle of disease. The acceptance of life, *amor fati*, turns into a fundamental critique and refusal of the individual human will and existence. The power to will and become is transformed into the tendency to not will and disappear.

> To be ended and sleep, not to be renewed... (WPS, 104)

In "The Silent Shepherds" Jeffers would return to the ancient literature and as an answer to the question "What's the best life for a man?" will say

> — Never to have been born, sings the chorus, and the
> next best
> Is to die young. (BE, 47)

In *Women at Point Sur* Jeffers repeatedly would speak of "the horror of birth" (146), "the monstrous birth-pangs" (130), and the aim of Reverend Barclay's attempts is to achieve the state of "the embryo before conception" (135), and "to find out a way of getting unborn" (140). The only will is one towards not willing, the will to unwill:

> "But I will be unborn and be still in the darkness,
> Unbirth, to lie down with death, lie with death... (WPS, 146)

If then we can endorse the critic's view that for Nietzsche eternal return "is a weapon that deals death to what hates life, a weapon that slays what has mastered the world until now"[8], Jeffers's concept of life is based on the geological rather than human foundations and thus makes it impossible to affirm individual life of a human being which is shown as a disturbance of the stillness of things. Thus, eternal return or renewal engenders two reflections. First, that human life ought to minimize itself, reduce its manifestations to the domain closest to the earth (in the sense of this term established in one of the former chapters):

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[7] F. Nietzsche, *Also Sprach...*, p. 243.

[8] L. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching. An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Yale University Press, 1986), p. 165.

What's the best life for a man? To ride in the wind. To
ride horses and herd cattle
In solitary places above the ocean on the beautiful moun-
tain, and come home hungry in the evening
And eat and sleep. He will live in the wild wind and
quick rain, he will not ruin his eyes with reading,
Nor think too much. (BE, 47)

The other consideration would hold that "the next age lives on not--human beauty" (BAS, 100) and thus would wish to eliminate individual human life as fundamentally incompatible and unable to understand the "inhuman beauty of things". Even the very concept of life seems to be inadequate in terms of eternal return and Jeffers either rendeders it as "it" or "God". If eternal return is a defence of life what it defends is not individual being but cosmic becoming which in Jeffers, unlike in Nietzsche, is not to be grasped or experienced by a "denatured" man.

What a man can do is to try to express a future beyond future, past and present, a future which will not belong to men and human images of temporality.

The future is a misted landscape,
no man sees clearly... (BAS, 101)

To grasp the experience of timelessness in time (as human being is inherently temporal in his structure) must necessarily imply a reduction of the man-made perceptions and categories of time, "burning off at least the top layer of the time's uncleanliness" (BAS, 102) and bears a strong resemblance to the phenomenon of *Augenblick* prominently present in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* where it functions as a hint towards a future transcending the limitations of the standart time categories.

> Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factical "there" by shattering itself against death — i.e., only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of *having-been* [*Gewesenheit*] can... take over its own thrownness and be in the *Augenblick* for "its time". Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate, i.e. authentic historicality.[9]

Futurality that Heidegger is talking about is marked by the openness towards death, that is to say by the readiness to accept a time which is not purely human and for which the word "future" is only a conventional denomination. In both Heidegger and Jeffers, unlike in Nietzsche, death figures as a key term in the analysis of temporality. In "Their Beauty Has More Meaning" today and yesterday are, paradoxically, the domain of ignorance ("I do not know which day is more beautiful"). Paradoxically, because the intellectual routine locates know-

[9] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 437.

ledge precisely in the past and present turning the future into backwaters of uncertainty which functions as a mortal enemy to a factual knowledge. But such knowledge is not authentic, as it mercilessly limits man to his vision of the world. If

> the human sense
> Of beauty is our metaphor of their excellence, their divine nature (DA, 57),

then the human cognition remains locked in the insurmountible rhetoric of human language. What we defined previously as **world** is the realm of factual knowledge, i.e. of the idolatry of the past and present. What we see (now) is what we are prepared to see (by the past), hence death is the only element that can shatter the mock certainty of human knowledge with its dark, blind power which prevents us from seeing.

> "We get the picture" concerning something does not mean only that what is, is set before us, is represented to us..., but that what is stands before us... as a system... Where the world becomes picture what is, in its entirety, is juxtaposed as that for which man is prepared and which... he therefore intends to bring before himself... What is... is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set-up by man, who represents and sets forth.[10]

Death signifies man's openness to darkness, blindness, and thus terminates the concept of knowledge as vision or view of the world. By pondering his death ("I shall not see these things", DA, 120) man can achieve, in the experience of *Augenblick*, the sense of the there-ness of things, i.e. divorce them from human perception. In this act "things will still be there" but also, through a particularly dense time structure of this uterance, "I am still there". I can realize what I am by getting insight into what things will be when I am not. Jeffers's word for it is **still (ness)**.

> ...a Chinese desire to be buried in my own place. You were quite mistaken — it wasn't to be buried, but for the pleasure of dying there. When we made the house we made a very sweet little panelled bed-room quest room... with a little fire-place, and the rocks and sea in the window, and wrote Spenser's verses on a beam over the bed:
>
> "Peace after war, port after stormie seas,
> Ease after toil, death after life, do greatly please".
>
> I announced then that I wanted the luxury of dying in that bed.
>
> — RJ to A. Ficke, October 7, 1929

Death is the entrance to the authentic knowledge of things. It eludes the play of desire and subjectivity by presenting itself as a power underlying *earth*. Jeffers looks at his deathbed

[10] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 129—130.

> With neither dislike nor desire; rather with both, so equalled
> That they kill each other and a crystalline interest
> Remains alone. We are safe to finish what we have to finish;
> And then it will sound rather like music
> When the patient daemon behind the screen of sea-rock and sky
> Thumps with his staff, and calls thrice: "Come, Jeffers." (SP, 362)

Death is saturated with the fullness of time; it is not so much an interruption but fulfilment: "We are safe to finish what we have to finish". Death, as present in and constitutive of human thinking, is a measure of time but not for biological reasons (as the end of one's time), but as the coming of time which appropriates me as its own. In death my being acquires "its time", and time is absolved from its human sins.

This purification of time ("burning off the top layer of time's uncleanliness") is also evident in the fact that death cancels or sublates desire and opens the disinterestedness of man's thinking. Such *Aufhebung* purifies perception as it leaves us with "a crystalline interest" in what "is" in its entirety, as Heidegger puts it, rather than in what we have prepared for ourselves. If death is the moment when time stops belonging to me as a mere category of perception, then it is a reflection upon this moment that can bring man to authenticity which consists in the awareness that my historical being participates in the timelessness of becoming that Jeffers describes as "the great explosion" "that we were born from" (BE, 3). This allows us to see the notions of *kairos* and *Augenblick* as directly related with Heidegger's "authentic temporality".

> *Kairos* means fulfilled time, the concrete historical moment of vision (*Augenblick*), and in the prophetic sense "time of fulfilment", the breaking in of the eternal into time. *Kairos*... is time in so far as time is fulfilled in it the utterly meaningful, in so far as time is fate. To consider time as *kairos* means to consider it in the spirit of the prophets.[11]

When time is rethought as *kairos* it will reveal the meaning of things ("Their beauty has more meaning"), and man will necessarily have to accept this revelation as his fate (this beauty has more meaning "than the whole human race"). This fate reads: time will appropriate you, and what you are is what things will still be while you are absent. The fate of man is that future which is no longer his ("The future is a misted landscape no man sees clearly").

Kairos in Jeffers, unlike in Tillich for example, is less theological and more historical. *Kairos* is not referred to the moment of the appearing of Christ who is shown as subjected to the mechanism of temporality:

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[11] P. Tillich, *Kairos II. Ideas for the Spiritual Situation of the Present*, in M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*..., p. 146.

...church and state
Depend on more peculiarly impossible myths:
That all men are born free and equal: consider that!
And that a wandering Hebrew poet named Jesus
Is the God of the universe. Consider that! (BE, 12)

Instead, *kairos* relates to these moments in which a major social or individual turning accurs transforming our sense of time:

...at cyclic turns
There is a change felt in the rhythm of events, as when an exhausted horse
Falters and recovers, then the rhythm of the running hoof-beats is changed... (BAS, 101)

It means that, unlike *chronos* which measures my time and time of things separately, *kairos* allows us to see that they both are perpetuated by the "older fountain" (SP, 88). On the one hand, such an interpretation brings us to, as Tillich suggested in his *Interpretation of History*, the recognition of the presence of eternity in finite objects which recognition must take into consideration a dangerously dynamic and disruptive character of this event. In this way *kairos*, as Tillich emphasizes[12], "shakes" the time rather than, as Blake would hold it, is "in love with the productions of time". On the other hand, however, by recognizing "the older fountain" I become aware of things' time and my time as **timed**, i.e. occurring precisely at the moment, place and rhythm where they are. Jeffers's experience of time is, ideally, that of time as timing which implies a movement from a purely quantitative to qualitative reading of time.

> *Chronos* est l'aspect quantitative du temps, tandis que *kairos* souligne une qualité du temps, que l'anglais traduit approximativement par *timing*.[13]

Such an interpretation of *kairos* and *Augenblick* enables us to see better why, according to Jeffers, natural phenomena are "in the nature of things", and it also helps us to understand that man is "denatured' precisely because of the type of his reflection upon time. To be "in the nature of things" calls for a rejection of the human systematization of time which now must be viewed as a collision of various aspects of temporality normally segregated as "past, present, and future". It is this awareness of man's position as a battleground of time that evokes

> I wish to be cremated as cheaply, quickly and quietly as possible, no speech nor meeting nor music, no more coffin than may be necessary, no embalming, no flowers. A funeral is only a sanitary measure. Put the ashes a few inches deep in the courtyard near our little daughter's ashes — certainly no gravestone nor tablet.
>
> — RJ to Una Jeffers, Easter 1938

[12] P. Tillich, *Interpretation of History* (New York, 1936), p. 174.

[13] C. J. Armbuster, *La Vision de Paul Tillich*, (Paris: Ambier, 1971), p. 253.

Reverend Barclay's desire to move outside the circle of renewal and live/die in the darkness "before conception". Similarly dramatic reading of *Augenblick* is provided by Heidegger in his comments upon Nietzsche:

> As *Augenblick,* we determine that time in which future and past meet head-on, in which they... get empowered and executed by man himself, since man stands in the place of this hitting together, indeed is this place himself.[14]

The same description of man as a place where time tries to find its own identity and man himself regains his being through absence ("Where I? Not anywhere.") and coming to terms with future ("This woman cannot live more than one year") and relived past ("Now she talks as if she were newly born") informs Jeffers's "Where I?".

> This woman cannot live more than one year.
> Her growing death is hidden in a hopeless place,
> Her death is like a child growing in her,
> And she knows it, you see it shine in her face.
> She looks at her own hands and thinks "In a year
> These will be burnt like rags in the crematory.
> I shall not feel it. Where I? Where? Not anywhere."
> It is strange, it gives to her face a kind of glory.
> Her mind used to be lazy and heavy her face,
> Now she talks all in haste, looks young and lean
> And eager, her eyes glitter with eagerness,
> As if she were newly born and had never seen
> The beauty of things, the terror, pain, joy, the song.
> — Or is it better to live at ease, dully and long? (SP, 575)

Death figures so prominently in Jeffers's reflection not because human life span is limited, but because unless we make death present in our thinking we will be doomed to the inauthentic existence of "toys" and other "luxuries". It is a dangerous path: to find "I" I must ask "Where I?" to answer "not anywhere". My fate ("cannot live more than one year") opens the paradox of man's time which lies at the root of freedom. Jeffers rejects suicide ("you know you will never untimely attempt the tomb", SP, 587) not on moral basis but as a major disloyalty and betrayal of time on man's part. Man's freedom is to let time mature till the moment when "my time" becomes "its time". The point from which we see both the subjective and obejctive, where we are locked between man as "I" and man as "it" is the moment of *kairos:*

> Here the subject has no possibility of an absolute position... cannot move from out of the sphere of decision. On every side of its essence, [the subject] stands in the "between" (*Zwiespalt*).[15]

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[14] M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol. 50, (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1961), p. 356.
[15] Quoted in M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of Self...*, p. 146.

9. The Moment of Destruction

This betweenness, however, is the domain of violence. The very term *Augenblick* already presupposes a sudden movement present also in its French *(clin d'oeil)* and Polish *(rzut oka)* varieties. Sören Kierkegaard notices that eternity is far from pastoral quietness and has more to do with a violent intervention:

> On trouve dans le Nouveau Testament une poétique description de l'instant. Paul dit que le monde passera "en atomo kai en ripe ophtalmon". Il exprime aussi par là que l'instant de la ruine exprime en meme temps l'eternite.[1]

"L'instant de la ruine" as the opening of eternity is a constant motif in Jeffers. The decay could be purely personal (as in "The Bed by the Window"), but frequently the non-human time where the edge of future receives a killing sharpness is of the cosmic character.

> ...these tall
> Greentrees would become a moment's torches and vanish, the
> oceans would explode into invisible steam,
> ...
> the six miles
> Hollows of the Pacific sea-bed might smoke for a moment. Then
> the earth would be like the pale proud moon,
> Nothing but vitrified sand and rock would be left on earth. (SP, 597)

The temporal structure of man is such that its meaning is revealed only after the non- and pre-human have intervened with a penetrating power. Man can be saved then not by avoiding this danger (because by doing it he would remain bound by his inauthentic temporality), but by its direct experience. A similar thought is again seminal in Heidegger who,

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[1] Quoted in A. Clair, *Pseudonymie et paradoxe. La Pensée dialectique de Kierkegaard* (Paris: Librarie philosophique J. Vrin, 1976), p. 110.

in his essay on *die Kehre*, displays with full force the meaning of danger for the human. He approaches the subject via a reference to a Hölderlin poem:

> But where danger is, grows
> The saving power also.
> If now we think these words still more essentially than the poet sang them... they say: where the danger is as the danger, there the saving power is already thriving also. The latter does not appear incidentally. The selfsame danger is, when it is as the danger, the saving power. The danger is the saving power, inasmuch as it brings the saving power out of its — the danger's-concealed essence...[2]

The danger that Heidegger and Jeffers are talking about is, on the one hand, a common experience of everyday life. "To be sure, men are at all times oppressed by dangers and exigencies" says the philosopher in the early part of the essay. In the 1930s dangers were also tangible for the California poet:

> ...He read: "Spain battle. Rebels kill captives. City
> bombed. Reds kill hostages. Prepare
> For war Stalin warns troops." (SP, 582)

Yet it is not these dangers that constitute a real threat, and in the same poem Jeffers ridicules a philosophy which tries to see the world as comprehensible in terms of politics, society, history. There must be a danger more significant, more deadly and difficult to trace than threats coming from these directions.

The way towards a definition of this superior peril is through a critique of culture. We have already seen how Jeffers accuses man of alienation and "denaturedness" and defines man as a being which constructs a complicated edifice of culture to forget its rootedness in the "rich, unplanned life on earth" (SP, 596). This forgetfulness occasioned the interest in "toys" and "luxuries" and falsified the fundamental question from "what is life?" to "how to adjust to the economics of the new abundance?" In other words, Jeffers's philosophy aims at restoring the significance of *Seinsfrage* which Heidegger posited as the main purpose of his philosophy.

> To philosophize is to ask "Why are there essents rather than nothing?" Really to ask the question signifies: a daring attempt to fathom this unfathomable question by dislocating what it summons us to ask, to push our questioning to the very end. Where such an attempt occurs there is philosophy.[3]

The necessity of questioning is precisely what has been discarded by the society. The main line of the development of the human seems to

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[2] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 42.

[3] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 6—7.

lead from the questioning individual to the unquestioning, indifferent masses of followers. Not to question is never to be awakened and ever dependent upon whatever is served and offered, i.e. to live the inauthentic existence. This is a hallmark of the history of the human time:

> The proletariat for your Messiah, the poor and many are to
> seize power and make the world new.
> They cannot even conduct a strike without cunning leaders... (SP, 592)

The questioning is not performed in the name of the individual against the mass; what is at stake in Jeffers's insistence upon questioning is that it can make us alert to the betrayal inherent in man and, thus, will turn us carefully and concernfully towards things. If the world of non--questioning may be called as "superhuman", questioning brings us back towards the non-human.

> Nietzsche or Jesus, hermit, martyr, starved prophet,
> Were you honest while you lived? You are not now.
> You have found your following and it corrupts you; all
> greatness
> Involves betrayal, of the people by a man
> Or of a man by the people. Better to have stood
> Forever alone. Better been mute as a fish,
> Or an old stone on the mountain, where no man comes... (BAS, 127)

It is the non-questioning of ideology coupled with man's alienation from "things" that prevents man from recognizing his own essence. If, through *kairos*, man can be situated again among things, regain "la convenance par rapport à la situation"[4], this experience must remain devoid of any social uses. If for Tillich *kairos* could also spell certain hope associated with an ideology (like in the German socialist revolution of 1918), Jeffers implacably bares history as a series of *coups*, a story of group terrorism exercised upon an individual:

> How many turn back towards dream and magic, how many children
> Run home to Mother Church, Father State,
> To find in their arms the delicious warmth and folding of
> souls.
> The age weakens and settles home toward old ways.
> An age of renascent faith: Christ said, Marx wrote, Hitler says,
> And though it seems absurd we believe.
> Sad children, yes. It is lonely to be adult, you need a father. (SP, 593)

There are no social uses of *kairos* and, like Nietzsche's "Overman", Jeffers's man "does not have instrumental value for the maintenance of the society: he is valuable in himself because he embodies the state

[4] E. Przywara quoted in C. J. Armbuster, *La Vision de Paul Tillich*, p. 266.

of being for which all of us long... and society is censured in so far as it insists on conformity."[5]

The danger underlying all specific threats of history is a dominating tendency to take ideology for truth, conformity for virtue, what we are in our "denatured" state for what we are. Not to be able to overcome the logical thought, i.e. not to be able to break with anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism:

> ...Qu'il parle de l'etre, de Dieu ou de l'Esprit, l'homme en parle toujours à partir et en vue de soi; la pensée "logique" est inséparable d'un antropocentrisme d'autant plus dangereux qu'il se masque sous des apparences plus élevées.[6]

What needs to be done is to recognize the danger for what it is, to penetrate through the mask, to get insight into "things" and remain in relationship with them. Without such operations man will remain forgetful of Being and will be pleased and satisfied with "toys: motors, music-boxes, paper, fine clothes, leisure, diversion" (SP, 569).

> ...finally it became clear to me that the misdirection of speculative philosophy and its... justification for reducing faith to the status of a relative moment could not be anything accidental, but must be rooted deeply in the entire tendency of the age. It must... be rooted in the fact that on account of our vastly increased knowledge, men had forgotten what it means to exist.[7]

The paradox of knowledge is grounded in the fact that it operates faultlessly along completely false lines. In the same way as Kierkegaard's speculative philosophy produces wrong results using strictly correct logical operations Jeffers's science is a triumph of efficiency over truthfulness.

> The mathematicians and physics men
> Have their mythology; they work alongside the truth,
> Never touching it; their equations are false
> But the things work. (BE, 11)

We can see now that the danger has two main aspects: one instructs us that we are forgetful of existence, the other points to the causes maintaining that the structure of human knowledge is flawed and stimulates the tendency towards forgetting "what it means to exist". The danger is thus intensified by a recent growth of science and technology but is by no means occasioned by it. One of the steady points of Jeffers's philosophy is that the danger is cosubstantial with man, and all

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[5] W. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 222.

[6] P. M. Pouget, *Heidegger, ou le retour a la voix silencieuse*, (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1975), p. 45.

[7] S. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton, 1941), p. 216.

the developments are only superficial modifications of the same scheme. Hence, in the "Original Sin" which opens with the Swiftian misanthropic presentation of man as

> The man-brained and man-handed ground-ape physically
> The most repulsive of all hot-blooded animals (DA, 145),

he guides us through a cruel scene of primal mammoth hunting to generalize

> These are the people.
> This is human dawn. As for me, I would rather
> Be a worm in a wild apple than a son of man.
> But we are what we are, and we might remember
> Not to hate any person, for all are vicious;
> And not to be astonished at any evil, all are deserved;
> And not fear death; it is the only way to be cleansed.

Human denaturedness is not a result of the punishment for the primal transgression, but it is the original sin itself. This statement has its obvious and important consequences. It erases the myth of the original happiness, a story of the Golden Age, so valid for the tradition of Western thinking. At this point we enter an important circle of arguments: if man's alienation is due to his inability to see through the pretences of culture and reach towards "things", then man is ineradicably immersed in his faulty condition as he will never be able, despite his philosophical claims, to disperse the clouds of ignorance surrounding his alienation. In short, man is alienated because he "cannot see", and he cannot see as he is alienated. Thus, the danger — the heart of which is that we may not be able to bring to light its significance — is not an adjunct to man's being, but it forms the very essence of man. The tragedy of man is that he cannot see its "nature" otherwise as only already scattered, disseminated, already "denatured".

The flamboyancy of the industrial society is only a spectacular manifestation of a more centrally ontological problem: man is not a "shepherd of Being", as Heidegger would like him to be, because he cannot gather and protect the flock being basically unable to preserve his own integrity. If life is hidden and has to be revealed, if truth is measured by the category of *alētheia*, then, in Jeffers, such a concept is made impossible by the very fact that from the very beginning man has been cut off from the sources of his existence, and now he tries to hide this fact from himself. Thus man's denaturedness is the history of man masking and hiding the fact that the truth of his nature has already been hidden from him. This seems to be the heart of

> The story grows rather intimately from the rock of this coast. Someone said to me lately that it is not possible to be quite sane here, many others feel a hostility of the region to common human life.
>
> — RJ to D. Friede, April 24, 1926

the danger we have been trying to define. Like in Heidegger, man is presented as an actor in the drama of disguising:

> ...men are at all times and in all places exceedingly oppressed by dangers and exigencies. But **the** danger, namely Being itself endangering itself in the truth of its coming to presence, remains veiled and disguised. This disguising is what is most dangerous in the danger.[8]

Jeffers's texts would also sympathetically hear its own thoughts in Heidegger's belief that man is not "helplessly delivered over to technology"[9] because it is through the cooperation of man and technology that "the coming to presence of technology will be surmounted in a way that restores it onto its yet concealed truth"[10]. But they will agree on these points for characteristically divergent reasons.

For Jeffers technology, a spectacular manifestation of man's alienation, is basically limited either to entertainment or domination.

> ...What is noble in us, to kindle
> The imagination of a future age? We shall seem a race of cheap
> Fausts, vulgar magicians.
> What men have we to show them? but invention and appliances. (SP, 610)
> ...spear and war-axes, horses and sabres, gaunt battle-elephants
> With towered backs; they became catapults and siege-guns, high-
> -tilted howitzers, long tractors, armored and turreted;
> They became battleships and destroyers, and great fleets of war-
> planes... all the proud instruments
> Of man imposing his will upon weaker men... (SP, 590)

In both senses, either as adornment or threat of political suppresion, technology betrays the same forgetfulness of Being. In the first case because it operates in the sphere removed from the hiddenness of existence, deals with a façade, and hence becomes "not life but amusements" (SP, 610); second, it forgets Being because it occasions the domination of the mass over the individual which, already denatured, now becomes doubly alienated from his essence. First estrangement is existential, since as a man I cannot face the aenigma and thus mask it with a pretence of knowledge; the other alienation is imposed by economy and politics — instead of seeing myself as a gleaner of food in the presence of the tearing power, "faceless violence", of Being, I am domesticated in my inauthenticity which is now given a public, political and social dimension. I am no longer nourished by the sea and meadows but by

> ...powerful bureaucracies
> [which] apportioned food for labor and amusement... (SP, 592)

There is, however, a state of balance or "cooperation" between man and technology:

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[8] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 37.

[9] Ibidem, p. 37.

[10] Ibidem, p. 39.

> Man is indeed needed and used for the restorative surmounting of the essence of technology... man's essence must first open itself to the essence of technology... However, in order that man in his essence may become attentive to the essence of technology... modern man must first of all find his way back into the full breadth of the space proper to his essence.[11]

The "restorative surmouting" (*verwunden*) is not so much a question of getting rid of technology as of getting over it. On the same page of his essay Heidegger speaks of *verwunden* as similar to "what happens when... one gets over grief or pain." When I overcome the grief of technology I stop perceiving it as painful or dangerous and find a territory where both myself and technology can belong. This is the sphere of what Jeffers calls "stillness".

It can be achieved, however, only after I know how to withdraw to my essence, to uncover "the full breadth of space" called "me". It is here that the problem begins. If we believe with Jeffers that man is radically denatured how is he supposed then to regain his essence? Is it possible to reinstitute something that we have never had access to? The answer is both yes and no. No, if by being returned to the space of my essence we mean reinstitution of the original unity, the plenitude of the Garden. Heidegger to a large extent supports such a project and Derrida rightly describes Heidegger's philosophy as "nostalgie heideggerienne"[12].

But, paradoxically, the answer could also be positive, if we concentrated less on the predicate which implies a withdrawal to the mythic plenitude ("man must... find his way back") and more on the term of "coming to presence" *(Wesen)*. This terminological hinge reveals a significant ambiguity: it is usually translated as "essence" or as "coming to presence" which implies that what is can reveal its nature only by becoming present. In another essay Heidegger explains this point referring to phrases the "essence of the house" and the "essence of the state", and he instructs us not to treat them as generic types but rather as

> ...the ways in which house and state hold sway, adminster themselves, develop and decay...[13]

This implies that the notion of essence is to be understood as a certain mode of acceptance, a certain amor fati. This affirmation is not of the Nietzschean type which sees in amor fati a description of the extatic greatness of man:

> My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: That one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not

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[11] Ibidem, p. 39.

[12] J. Derrida, *Positions*, (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit 1972), pp. 16—20, 69—75. See also J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 18—25.

[13] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 30.

merely bears what is necessary, still less conceal it — all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary — but love it.[14]

If Jeffers could still endorse Nietzsche's instruction concerning resignation about things, then he would radically oppose the philosopher's call to love "what is necessary". Jeffers places the stress precisely on acceptance as putting up with (not rejoicing in), and hence what in Nietzsche becomes "joyful wisdom" acquires in Jeffers the character of **endurance.**

Endurance is the ability to support, to carry upward, i.e. to reveal and here we can still see the traces of Nietzsche's postulate asking us not to conceal things. Thus Jeffers speaks of

> ...the stone
> Endurance that is waiting millions of years to carry
> A corner of the house... (SP, 83)

But, first of all, endurance is a corrective measure which ought to bring us to a more just estimate of life as "the ancient wound" (BE, 10). If the endurance of a stone reveals and brings to presence the essence of things as support, human endurance is a reaction to the obliteration of the power to support, the obliteration which is referred to as "life". Endurance is a strategy which, on the one hand, makes up for the fact that we are not "balanced and neutral" like a stone, and on the other hand it is the only way of studying man that can bring him closer to his essence.

Endurance is a strategy which, on the one hand, makes up for the fact that we are not "balanced and neutral" like a stone, and on the other hand it is the only way of studying man that can bring him closer to his essence.

> He [God] would be balanced and neutral
> As a rock on the shore, but the red sunset — waves
> Of life's passions fling over him. He endures them,
> We endure ours. (BE, 10)

Endurance, in short, is what enables us to relate being and not-being, to bear being (we are very far from Nietzsche's postulate to love life's events) as always related to and disturbing not-being. This is voiced adequately by the monologue of the Hanged God in *At the Birth of an Age:*

> If I were quiet and emptied myself of pain
> breaking these bonds,
> Healing these wounds: without strain there is nothing. Without
> pressure, without conditions, without pain,
> Is peace; that's nothing, not-being; the pure night, the perfect
> freedom, the black crystal. I have chosen

[14] F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* trans. W. Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 258.

Being; therefore wounds, bonds, limits and pain; the crowded
mind and the anguished nerves, experience and extasy.
...
I am the nerve, I am the agony,
I am the endurance. I torture myself
To discover myself... (SP, 559)

> So I feel like a stretched Titan, with one foot in the ocean and one in the high mountains. I feel miserable... and am writing nonsense to cover it up. Nothing will ever make up for what we have lost. My business at present is to make verses in the morning and to add a stone or two to the new house-wall... the tasks Una would have wanted me to attend to if she were here.
>
> — RJ to F. Clapp, January 18, 1951

We can be returned to our essence as not to what was originally united before the division (there is no prelapsarian paradise in Jeffers for whom even God exists already in the divided universe flawed by "passions of life"), but as to a constant tension between being and not-being. Man is denatured also because technology does not open his eyes unto the problematic of not-being. Technology which has previously been shown as a mere ornament or a sheer will to power now, through its destructive potential, transcends the limits of civilization and forces us to live in the vicinity of "not-being". Having presented his vision of "The Great Explosion" as the beginning of "new universes" Jeffers draws a parallel between the destructiveness of cosmic processes and the human tendency towards demolishment seeing in both ontologically fundamental fascination with the not-being:

No wonder we are so fascinated with
fire-works
And our huge bombs: it is a kind of homesickness perhaps
for the howling fire-blast that we were born
from. (BE, 3)

If Jeffers claims that

I am not well civilized, really alien here: trust me not.
I can understand the guns and the airplanes,
The other conveniencies leave me cold. (SP, 569),

it is because technology of war, as old as humanity itself, brings to life the immediacy and urgency of not-being. If we want to understand technology we have to unconceal its destructive edge which can initiate a meditation upon the "older fountain" of not-being and also to rething the character of reasons and ends involved in the technological activity. Thus, like Heidegger, Jeffers would endorse a view that civilization cannot be exhausted by a definition which sees it in purely instrumental categories. Man is the only animal that makes tools, the only being who "have hands, not paws" (DJ, 128), and thus the "only animal that turns

 means to an end" (DJ, 123). The point is that the means one the extension and a part of the same inauthenticity which makes a characteristic feature of the human condition. If man, because of his denaturedness and consciousness which Jeffers presents as the "great wound", is

> ...the eventual hell of life, the animal
> Toward which all evolution toiled and was damned
> From the beginning. (DA, 33)

then the means-ends scheme belongs to the same paradigm of damnation. In other words, the ability to turn means to ends is certainly a correct statement of man's relationship with technology but the correctness of such a statement does not have anything to do with truth ("... the merely correct is not yet the true"[15]). If the logic of science secures only the operative order of artificially made things, then it would be a mistake to take if for truth.

> ...Science and mathematics
> Run parallel to reality, they symbolize it, they squint at it,
> They never touch it: consider what an explosion
> Run parallel to reality, they symbolize it, they squint at it,
> Would rock the bones of men into little white fragments
> and unsky the world
> If any mind should for a moment touch truth. (BE, 48)

The ends worked out by science "running parallel to reality" must inevitably be false (although "correct" in the generally accepted scheme of the world):

> "What end? Oh, but what end?"
> It cried under his mind, "Increase the city? subdue the
> earth? Breed slaves and cattle, and one's own
> Off-shots, fed and secure? Ah, fruitful-fruitless
> Generations forever and ever..." (DJ, 122)

The illusiveness of ends is matched by the unawareness of reasons. To understand technology, for Jeffers, means to uncover its annihilating power, but also to question the very categories which, like those of cause and effect, are seminal for the development of technological thinking and demonstrate their corrupted character. Technology holds sway over men and thus remains ununderstood because it mistifies and veils its own foundations. To surmount technology would mean to analyse its basic concepts and only such an analysis would open the way towards a true knowledge. For the time being, however,

> ...they have a new breed of men
> ...Obedient, intelligent, trained technicians
> like trained seals, tell them to do something
> And they can do it. But never ask them their reasons,
> For they know nothing. They would break up into neo-
> Christian jargon like Einstein. (BE, 28)

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[15] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, p. 6.

The analysis of the ends and reasons involved in technological thinking points at two important aspects. First is the total subjugation of the earth subdued and brought under man's control. The earth is now "worn and weak with too much humanity" (SP, 483). As a result of such an attitude the earth is shown as totally orderable and through this orderability it acquires the status of the "standing reserve", Heidegger's *Bestand,* which means that "things" lose their "inhuman beauty" and cease to be objects. As Heidegger's critic notices:" *Bestand* contrasts with *Gegenstand* (object; that which stand over against). Objects indeed lose their characters as objects when they are caught up in the "standing reserve" "[16].

The other aspect illuminates human history. The transformation of a paw into a hand had an extraordinary effect of starting man upon a way towards the humanized vision of his own future. Man saw suddenly that, by producing tools and using them to achieve specific results, he could create categories of his fate. Thus man became the originator of history which is, in his understanding, the ability to gather objects of the external world which have their own and unfathomable fate and subject them to not only a mechanical domination of technology but, first of all, to the spiritual domination of man. Hence, objects thus gathered stop being objects and become once again the "standing reserve", as they are exhausted now in the categories of the human destiny. History is a gathering of things which lose their status of objects and become dominated by the human fate. In other words, history is a form of human imperialism and an anthropocentric fallacy. King Pentheus from "The Humanist's Tragedy" faced by the raging passion of the bacchantes and considering the ends of human activities specifies the perpetuation of the human history as a central problem of life.

> Had I forgotten a moment the end
> Of being? To increase the power, collectedness and dignity
> of man. (DJ, 124)

The way towards understanding technology leads through the awareness that the real is never "touched" and, what is more, that it is covered up by human history. To comprehend technology is to grasp the imperialism of human fate. Martin Heidegger approaches this problem in his "Question Concerning Technology":

> The essence of modern technology starts man upon the way that revealing through which the real everywhere... becomes standing reserve. "To start upon a way" means "to send" in our ordinary language. We shall call that sending-that-gathers *(versammelde Schicken)* which first starts man upon a way of revealing, destining *(Geschick).* It is from out of this destining that the essence of all history is determined.[17]

[16] Ibidem, p. 17.

[17] Ibidem, p. 24.

We could read Jeffers's apocalyptic visions not as escapist or even fashist, but as basically ontological accusation of technology which is charged with the inability to reawaken man to see his essence. The war, so frequently exhorted in Jeffers's texts, is less a physical conflict and more an appeal to bring to light the contrast between **world** which sees everything as a part of the human fate and *earth* that inscribes that fate into the scheme of the "rich, unplanned life". Such a reading implies a shift from history (where time has necessarily a human dimension) to geology (i.e. to a time outside the human scale). Hence Jeffers's "inhumanism" is a critique of a certain misinterpretation of technology which centering upon the major evolutional move from a paw to a hand treated it as a signal for a privileged position of man and the authorisation to turn everything into "standing reserve". In other words, the destructive potential of modern technology serves the ontological purpose: by hovering on the edge of apocalypse it could bring about the awareness of what IS by pointing to what IS not. This implies the cancelling of the status or "standing reserve" which man imposed upon on objects and himself by forgetting his nature. This could not have been prevented. The evolution of the inanimate nature towards consciousness dictated this particular and unfortunate move. What can and should be removed, however, is a sanction of priority and distinction that this purely biological phenomenon has acquired in the human history. Man can be "in nature with things" again only when he ceases to be, but while alive he ought to minimalize his presence. What is needed is the awareness of the provisionality of man in terms of geological time. Denatured by evolution, "damned from the beginning", and protectively veiled in his non-truth by culture, philosophy and civilization man writes history of earth as his own, composes a history of earth as a story of world. It is precisely a movement from history to geology that will be a purifying experience.

> Before the first man
> Here were the stones, the ocean, the cypresses,
> And the pallid region in the stone-rough dome of fog where
> the moon
> Falls on the west. Here is reality.
> The other is a spectral episode: after the inquisitive animal's
> Amusements are quiet: the dark glory. (DJ, 129)

Man, who has been swept into instrumentality and became an instrument himself, can become aware of his position as "standing reserve", and can thus initiate the process of rediscovering his essence only having rethought and repositioned death.

> Pure action would make a good life, let it be sharp-
> Set between the throat and the knife.
> A man who knows death by heart
> Is the man for that life. (SP, 562)

The apparatus of destruction, "our means and mastery of warfare" (SP, 610), has the power to awaken the sense of danger necessary for the awareness of one's inauthenticity. As Jeffers maintains in the same poem

> In pleasant peace and security
> How suddenly the soul in man begins to die.

In Jeffers's claim that he can understand "the guns and airplanes" we can hear the voice of the danger that must speak to man, if man is to see his denaturedness. We hear the same thunderous voice in Heidegger who believed that although technology

> ...threatens to sweep man away into ordering as the supposed single way of revealing... it is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belongingness of man within granting may come to life, provided that we... begin to pay heed to the coming to presence of technology.[18]

Technology can be surmounted if we allow for its "coming to presence", i.e. when we disperse the cloud of illusion which wants us to place technological and scientific development as an integral part of the myth of human domination and centrality.

In "The Humanist's Tragedy" Jeffers sketches a picture of a king--philosopher who, suddenly exposed to the pressure of passion, tries to rationalize human lot. According to the tradition of Greek rationalism he extols man as "the only self-commanding animal" and supports his view with the critique of the Bacchantes whom he charges with the forgetfulness of "all the dignity of man". Pentheus's vision of life shows it as "the slight collectible pleasure, surplas to pain" (DJ, 123), and it is the adjective "collectible" that attracts our attention. Not only is culture described by a form of "collecting" but also by its purpose which is to "increase the power, collectedness and dignity of man". Man himself figures in Pentheus's scheme of thought as "a more collected and dignified creature" (DJ, 124).

The raging choir of the Bacchantes momentarily weakens his belief in the "collectedness of man" and Pentheus reproaches himself for having forgotten "the end of being". This movement from power to weakness and back to the power of self-control is a gesture which itself belongs to the mechanisms of collectedness carefully sheltered by memory.

> Then recollecting all his dignity as
> human being, a king and a Greek,
> He heard with hostile ears the hoarse and beastlike choir
> of the worshippers... (DJ, 124)

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[18] Ibidem, p. 32.

106 We see then that the "collectedness of man" is not of a permanent and enduring character, that it can suffer from momentary lapses and that, in the final analysis, it is revealed as a memorized behaviour, a myth at the disposal of the archives of human consciousness. When reading "Point Joe" we noticed that gathering and gleaning against the tearing power of the earth was also a kind of collectedness. But, significantly enough, in the earlier poem Jeffers speaks primarily of nourishment, of collecting what has not been mechanically produced by man but what has been left by the earth for the human use. In other words, in that collectedness there is no imminent danger of challenging nature to yield its goods and materials. Like in Heidegger's analysis of technology, collectedness of "Point Joe" is close to the traditional art, techne, husbandry rather than to the challenging power of the sophisticated civilization of the machine.

> My theory... is that poetry should be a blending of fire and earth, should be made of solid and immediate things, of the earth earthy, which are set on fire by human passion.
>
> — RJ to Una Kuster, December 21, 1912

> ...a tract of land is challenged into the putting out of coal and ore. The earth now reveals itself as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit. The field that the peasant formerly cultivated and set in order appears differently than it did when to set in order still meant to take care of and to maintain.[19]

The collectedness of Pentheus's philosophy has little to do with humility of gleaning. It is no longer to be understood in terms of cultivation, but instead it becomes a metaphorical field of power. The rhetoric of the text is ocertly that of mastery and domination. Pentheus collects and re-collects "dignity", royal power, "hard selfmastery", and the very phrase in which dignity is always qualified as belonging to "human being, a king and a Greek" (in itself a significant combination of anthropocentrism, nationalism and political oppresion) is repeated three times in the poem. The collectedness promoted by Pentheus if of a purely cerebral character, it is an ideology imposed upon a living organism. The king is a collector, that is to say someone who gathers objects not for their essences but for their value which has been extraneously established. The collectedness of Pentheus's philosophy is a collectedness not so much of essences but of a front, of what we can look (appreciatively) at, a collectedness which does not allow any room for establishing a relationship with what "is-not", with "not-being". It is the collectedness of the human hermetic closure (has not Pentheus spoken about "housing"

[19] Ibidem, p. 14.

his emotions). In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger speaks of gathering in the context of appearing *(Scheinen).* In his definition

> Appearing means first: that which gathers itself, which brings-itself-to--stand in its togetherness and so stands. But second it means: that which, already standing-there, presents a front, a surface, offers an appearance to be looked at.[20]

It is distinctly the latter type of collectedness that Pentheus speaks of in his philosophical discourse on the self-gatheredness of the human which is manifest in the king's incessant emphasis upon his kingship and national identity. Man, in his false collectedness, is a victim to his own theorizing which presents him as a self-supporting, self-sufficient being with no need of connectedness with Being. Humanity thrives upon fictions, and the philosophy of humanism finds it ultimate critique in the attack on the central notion of human dignity.

> A lion has dignity,
> So has a hawk; even a barnyard bull or common whipped
> horse has a kind of grace: but these
> Peeled apes teetering on their back legs,
> Male and female,
> Snickering with little shames, pleasure and wisecracks,
> Or howling terror: and two billion of them
> As for that, no. And take notice, their minds are so ludicrous
> As their bodies and societies. Human dignity? How about
> it, Hake? (DA, 32)

It is understandable that a chief postulate of Jeffers's philosophy would be to try to find an opening in the closed shell of the false human collectedness. Thus, the Bacchantes rejoice:

> O sisters, we have found an opening,
> We have hewn in the stone and mortar
> A wild strait gateway,
> Slit eyes in the mask, sisters,
> Entered the mountain. (DJ, 124)

Hence, humanity is seen as a "mould" from which Being has to break:

> Humanity is the mould to break away from, the crust to break
> through, the coal to break into fire, the atom to be split (SP, 149),

or a "doll" which is but another name for the mask mentioned in "The Humanist's Tragedy". A turn from man towards things, from **world** toward *earth*, from disserved "made" life towards Being in its entirety becomes an imperative of Jeffers's thought.

> Turn outward, love things, not men, turn right away from humanity,
> Let that doll lie. Consider if you like how the lilies grow,

[20] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 153.

Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity,
Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars, let your eyes
Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself and men. (SP, 574)

A call outward so fundamentally present in Orestes's philosophy in *The Tower Beyond Tragedy* is then a call towards a collectedness which is not human. To go outward, to be outward directed, is to leave the obsession with the human, to "slit eyes in the mask".

> We have builded us a little house on the sea-cliff here; it is just a year since we came to live here in it. A delightful place we think, cormorants on the sea-rocks in front of us, and pelicans drifting overhead; a most graceful hill-range to the south across a neck of water; — it is a promontory, with water on three sides of us. The house and garage and walls are gray granite-sea-boulders, like the natural outcrop of the hill.
>
> — RJ to L. Stookey, August 21, 1920

10. The Dark Glory

The act of "turning outward" is steeped in cruelty predicated by verbs like "hew", "slit" and "enter". As Jeffers puts it, a "wild strait gateway" is "hewn" "in the stone and mortar". The call for the escape from the false collectedness in which a human being is neutralized seems evident now, what remains is the question of the utensil. Why "mortar", a tool associated both with culinary and alchemical skills and also, through its homonym, with stones and the art of building? The purpose of this instrument is to reveal what is hidden and, not an unimportant factor, to turn something into a more easily assimilable ingredient. By crashing a substance in a mortar we make it reveal its concealed qualities as nourishment or its secret powers to combine with other substances to create a more powerful mixture till it, ultimately, leads us to the *lapis philosophorum*. We may put some seeds of pepper in a mortar to get a more distinct aroma; we may also subject some sulphur to the beating of a pestle to pulverize it, and then add to other substances and hence turn it into a part of the transformational operation. In both cases we reveal, for culinary or philosophical purposes, what has been previously hidden and unapproachable to others. The use of a mortar is of a most primeval character: a substance is confronted with the rough surfaces which wear of layers of less essential materials to unconceal what has been long hidden. Interestingly enough both these features — unconcealment of the essence and primeval hardness of implements — are evoked again in one of Jeffers's most significant poems. The last section of "Apology for Bad Dreams" opens with the same alchemical-culinary overtone:

> He brays humanity in a mortar to bring the savor
> From the bruised root.. (SP, 176)

Here the allusion to the essence liberating acivity is even more substantial: in its result the root, a hidden part of a being normally not associated with savour, lets its smell into the open. As we can see, to find the opening is necessarily a violent and rough operation, and although God claims that "contemplation will do it" (DJ, 125), this contemplative seems to be less available to men. And even if it were, its effects would not be essentially different: whether by simple hewing or time consuming wearing out the objective is to produce a fissure in the shell, to "thin our humanity".

The question to ask would be: what happens in the process of producing an opening (either by hewing or thinning by meditation)? We have already said that in this way we are getting to the revelation of the essence whose "savor" is now let into the open. In the fourth section of "Apology for Bad Dreams" the spirit (the essence in both philosophical and alchemical sense) "flies out and stands naked" and is taken "in the naked ecstasy" (SP, 176). The liberation of spirit comes as an effect of a long processing involving washing, calcination and deformation. All these measure are of a distinctly purifying nature; cleansening by water and fire is completed by an estrangement from a conventional form. To open the shell of humanity is to **de-form** it, i.e. not to see it as distorted but as de-nuded of its form that man has prepared for himself. To de-form then is, like to de-tract, a mode of taking away from man what he himself has falsely added to his being, and what has been mistakenly considered since as the essence of humanity. To de-form signifies going beyond the routine measures of perception, perceiving more than we have ourselves allowed to perceive, to see a rock, for example,

> ...as if I were
> Seeing rock for the first time. As if I were seeing through the
> flame-lit surface into the real and bodily
> And living rock. (SP, 605)

The final result of the de-formation — man bared of his man-created form — will necessarily be shown as participating in a larger will to power, i.e. cosmic life, rather, than a being which tried to perpetuate his own willing and impose it upon the external reality. The experience of de-formation is bound to be shocking as it inscribes man back to the area from where he has permanently attempted to alienate himself. The human bereft of its conventional form is "horrible to itself" (SP, 176):

> ...the atom
> is broken, the power that massed it
> Cries to the power that moves the stars, "I have come home to
> myself, behold me.
> I bruised myself in the flint mortar and burnt me

In the red shell, I tortured myself, I flew forth,
Stood naked of myself and broke me in fragments,
And here am I moving the stars that are me. (SP, 176)

The self-annihilating edge of this passage is unquestionable, but there is also, paradoxically, a strong sense of security in these lines. By crashing the form of the human, by opening a fissure, man revindicated his right to his own place. He not only comes home but, first of all, comes home to "himself". This security has nothing to do with a trivial sense of at-homeness where the same routines of form are promulgated. The security in question has been made possible precisely by uprooting what has always been considered as the source of certainty: integrity, man's separateness and identity, protective sheltering of the home. The rhetoric again speaks with violent verbs: "bruise", "burn", "torture". This could also function as a philosophical explanation of an insistent emphasis in Jeffers's life placed on the necessity of building one's own house rather than living in a construction erected by somebody else. The homecoming of man can be effectuated only when man's reliability on civilization is reduced to the barest minimum, and even man-made constructions evolve towards natural forms. The security of my being is now no more a security of a calculating thinking with which I approach the phenomena and facts of existence, but it originates from the security of Being which is, on the one hand, the power that "moves the stars", but it also resides in the skills of hands. I can achieve true security only "suis manibus" which stresses at the same time independence of man "bared of himself" and also experiential character of the relationship between man and Being. Man's security and certainty is founded upon the certainty of Being which is the essence of things.

„Pro Christi et ecclesia" reminds me of the Latin we had just cut in marble to set in the parapet of the granite tower I'm building here — RJ suis manibus me turrem falconis fecit — we call it the Hawk's Tower for the sake of a sparrow-hawk that has used to perch daily on my scaffolding, so we have hawk-gargoyles and a key-stone with a hawk carved on it.

— RJ to G. Stirling, 1924

If Jeffers emphasizes the instrumentality and handiness which seem to characterize the way towards security, he does it in opposition to the overrating intellectualisation and rationalization which are compromised as stemming from their very antitheses.

The fire threw up figures
And symbols meanwhile, racial myths formed and dissolved in
it, 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... (SP, 153)

 Jeffers's postulate of finding the opening compromises the history of man's rationalism as of the "phantom" character, the master scheme to plot against uncertainty and superstition turns out to be bred by the darkest forces of "racial myths". What Jeffers demonstrates in his philosophy of man is that unless man "turns outward" towards the security of things, he will remain subject to a double ontological uncertainty. On the one hand, man is the maker of history, of things which **are**, but at the same time all the history making is upheld by "phantoms". If history is real, it is so to the extent to which it is recognized as a figment of imagination. Thus Jeffers would agree with Heidegger in emphasizing the unknown as the driving force of becoming and in radically reducing, and eventually compromising, the belief that man has mastered the reality.

> There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the product of our minds, as it might all too easy seem.[1]

Jeffers claims that even things which are of "our making" (states, churches, heroes) have not been mastered by man, but are subject to the phantom rule of shadows. History is unquestionable as dynasties can be traced back to times immemorial and gods have died thousands of deaths, but it is precisely this purely factual existence of historical facts which we grasp with our calculating thinking that betrays its lack of any relationship with the sphere of Being. The logic of Western history is directed towards the oblivion of what IS, and hence towards the domination of the human history over the only history that reveals the power of Being — the history of things, geological formations, the history of earth. Jeffers can hold that the forms of Western history are real although, at the same time, without Being; Western history is a ghost of history, forgetful about its own mechanisms.

> 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 dedicated:
> Out of the fire in the small round stone that black moss covered,
> a crucified man writhed up in anguish... (SP, 153)

The fire of Being reveals "racial", i.e. particular, scattered myths in their claim to a general validity. Like in Plato, man is locked in a cave ("the human brain-vault", SP, 177) and doomed to life among shadows, but unlike in Plato and like in Nietzsche, man is cut off from the sphere of the ultimate values which throughout the human history have been considered as formative and decisive and which are now

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[1] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 53.

demonstrated to be a form of rhetoric. Hence, God in Jeffers's vision is first of all man made ("a crucified man") and, consequently, has to give up his claim to universality. God belongs now to the periphery of Being.

> And nobody sees good or evil but out of a brain a hundred centuries quieted, some desert
> Prophet's, a man humped like a camel, gone mad between the mud-walled village and the mountain sepulchres. (SP, 202)

If the suprasensory world turns out to be a product of "phantoms", it inevitably loses its power to bestow life and becomes unreal despite the materiality and reality of all the evidences to the contrary (churches, cults, etc.).

> That which formerly conditioned and determined the essence of man in the manner of purpose and norm has lost its unconditional and immediate, above all its ubiquituously and infallibly operative power of effective action. The suprasensory world of purposes and norms no longer quickens and supports life. That world has itself become lifeless, dead... The suprasensory ground... has become unreal.[2]

Humanity, in its closure within cerebral phantasms, produces various versions of death disguised as life which, on the one hand, prevents man from grasping the phenomenon of death and its significance for existence and, on the other hand, seals him in a shell of unreality.

If this is the case then we are beginning to see more clearly why the opening was so important for Jeffers's ontology: it is only through fracturing "the human vault" that man can come to the knowledge of what IS. We have already observed that Jeffers's therapy is based on a simple instruction — "turn outward". The move is towards things which are given ontological priority over man. A Poem speaks of

> The inhuman nobility of things, the ecstatic beauty, the inveterate steadfastness. (SP, 595)

The nobility of things reaches beyond the scope of life and animate nature:

> Nobler than man or bear my sea-mountains
> Pillar the cloud-sky... (DA, 140)

In other words, while life is characterized by the intense power to regenerate, persevere and enhance which is nothing else but Jeffers's rendition of the Nietzschean "will to power", the perfection of Being does not need life as its manifestation. Jeffers's philosophy goes beyong the grounds of *Lebensphilosophie* and evolves towards *Seinsphilosophie.*

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[2] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, pp. 98—99.

It is not likely they can destroy all life: the planet is
capacious. Life would surely grow up again
From grubs in the soil, or the newt and toad level, and be
beautiful again. (DA, 148)

Nevertheless the vision is completed by a further move beyond *Leben* towards *Sein*

But if life even
Had perished utterly, Oh perfect loveliness of earth and heaven. (SP, 596)

Why are natural objects, which Jeffers calls "things", constantly called upon in the philosophical context? First of all because they betray the weakness of human will and demonstrate its narrow range and destructive bend ("The will is the corrupter", DA, 34). Second, things exist in mutual relatedness which gives in effect the phenomenon which we described in this essay as *earth* and the secret of which lies in the mutual mirroring.

> This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four [earth, sky divinities, mortals], appropriates their own presencing into simple belonging to one another.[3]

In "Continent's End" this is given a nuptial metaphor:

At the equinox when the earth was veiled in a late rain, wreathed
with wet poppies, waiting spring,
The ocean swelled for a far storm and beat its boundary, the
ground-swell shook the beds of granite. (SP, 87)

The solid ground is wreathed with water in the accompaniament of the turbulent air which announces a storm, while the ocean thickens its accumulated power. But there is no change of power which would remain unrelated to other elements. Not only does the force reverberate in the air in its preparedness for the storm, but also it hides underground shaking the very foundations of things. No sooner can we appreciate a landscape than we realize the continuity of its production which is never finished. *Earth* is always in the offing, it is "beds of granite" swollen with violent power and "waiting spring".

Thus, in keeping with the matrimonial metaphor, Jeffers can refer to the ocean as to the "mother". He admits that life is "her child" but, at the same time, he recognizes the fact that there is something that outgrows it, something "older and harder than life". We can link this mysterious "something" with Jeffers's steady belief that "even if life perished utterly" earth and heaven would retain their perfect "loveliness". This "loveliness" seems to be conditioned by "something" that is "older than life". In "Continent's End" Jeffers points out that

Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our
tones flow from the older fountain. (SP, 88)

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[3] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 179.

A clearly Heraclitean overtone which positions fire as the *arche* of being here doubles the power of the metaphor: if *earth* is incessant production then, necessarily, it also had to be somehow "produced". It is this looking out for something from which *earth* "stands-out" that constitutes its characteristic features. While man is deprived of any contact with the "older fountain", things still preserve it. The power of the thing is to remind man of the denaturedness which results from the forgetfulness of Being. It is clear that Jeffers can now justifiedly describe man's time as the time of the "inquisitive animals's amusements" (SP, 265), while the time of the thing is qualified as that of the "grave, earnest" being. The call of the "older fountain" reverberates among the toys and amusements and brings man to the edge of attentiveness and earnestness. Third, the concept of the thing and the careful attention which things demand from man is associated with the notion of peace. To begin with, the peace in question is different from the human peace and also cannot be automatically associated with stability and immobility. Jeffers flatly states that the grave and earnest thing is "not passive" (SP, 606). Juxtaposing the human and pre-human peace he will write in "Hooded Night" previously bringing to our attention the dychotomy of the human and geo-onto-logical time:

> I see the heavy granite bodies of the rocks of the headland,
> That were ancient before Egypt had pyramids,
> Bulk on the gray of the sky, and beyond them the jets of young trees
> I planted the year of the Versailles peace.
> But here is the final, unridiculous peace. (SP, 265)

The peace in which things reveal their character is not a passive repose but an active support. It is out of the thingly peace of a rock that a mountain stands out, and a stubborn persistence of the thing makes it unmeasurable in terms of human time.

> ...the energies
> That are its atoms will still be bearing the whole mountain above: packed
> and I, many centuries ago,
> Felt its intense reality with love and wonder, this lonely rock. (SP, 606)

The semantic ambiguity of the verb to "bear" which signifies both the act of supporting and giving birth is particularly illuminating in our discussion. The thing in peace bears, i.e. supports and gives birth. Thus Jeffers can say in an early poem that by collecting rocks he is

> ...heaping the bones of the old mother
> To build us a hold against the host of the air. (SP, 82)

My life was badly shaken last year by my dear wife's death — I haven't been able to write a line of verse since then (if it matters!) — and the only way to become normal again will be to stay at home as quietly as possible and feel the hills and the sea.

— RJ to K. Schapiro, April 1951

The power of the things is beyond comparison not because it defies being set against man made technologies, but because Being ("dark peace") does not tolerate comparing. The thing, a sea for instance, which is revealed in its thingly character can be described only by a tautological reference.

> The sleeping power of the ocean, no more beastlike than manlike,
> Not to be compared; itself and itself. (SP, 265)

The thing unconcealed as "itself and itself" is more than a mere tautology. It is not just "itself" but "itself and itself" which signals the repetition of the Same, a recurrent movement of incessant self-reference.

> This existence, which, while moving, must always move in the same way, returning to the same starting point, is circularly determined because it draws its motive force not from some transcendent scheme for life, but from out its own proper willing, which is always the same.[4]

The power of the sea, i.e. the force of the thing revealed in peace, is not to be compared as it is engulfed in darkness which brings everything into immediate nearness. In the darkness when "all the lights of the shore have died", "no stars dance in heaven", and "no ship's light glances" the thing "moves in the dark" (SP, 265). As we have said before Jeffers is more a *Seins-* than *Lebensphilosoph;* it means that he believes in the uninterrupted production and self-production of forms thus stopping short the postulate of the static Same where all things would be harmoniously united. His definition of the thing as the "dark peace" gets as close at it is possible on the ground of Jeffers's thought to the area of the Same. This sphere, however, is not only far from eternal *statis* but just the opposite it implies a constant self-production, self-creation of the thing which has to detach itself from its own form to remain itself. Things repeatedly create themselves, and are not the effects of a singular fiat. It is only natural than time matters differently in this kind of thinking since, as Heidegger claims in his comments upon Nietzsche:

> For this thinking, history is not the succession of eras, but a unique nearness of the Same...[5]

The thing is "itself and itself" as it is lonely in peace and darkness, and yet precisely because of this belonging it is accompanied by other things. The rock in "Oh, Lovely Rock" is referred to as "lonely", but

[4] T. Langan, *The Meaning of Heidegger...*, p. 188.

[5] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 57.

still it extends towards the mountain it supports. In its loneliness it bears the mountain which, in turn, in its loneliness is gathered in a chain of mountains to form a range. It is this awkward loneliness (itself) pervaded with a strong sense of belonging that is described by Jeffers as "itself and itself". To use the Nietzschean terminology we could say that the thing is the domain of *ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichens.*

The thing resides in the Same where all other entities reside but, since they cannot be seen in the dark, they can only be intuited, "felt", and through this intuited partnership the thing confirms itself. It is "itself" (as a separate thing) and one more "itself" as reflected in and by other entities from which it is different but which it supports. This version of the Same seems to be only a more metaphysical reading of Jeffers's "older fountain" of a mysterious "something" which is "older than life".

> It [the Same] holds sway in the primal relatings of Being and what is, and of Being and man. Thus, the Same is that very difference, that separating between (*Unter-schied*), out of which Being and what is endure as present in their differentiating, which is an indissoluble relating.[6]

The point would be to enter back "the primal relating"' which in the poetic diction of Jeffers would produce a postulate to be "born out of the rock and the air, not of a woman" (SP, 574). The fundamental step, however, involves the act of "breaking prison of yourself" (DJ, 125) but the task is far from simple. For the Bacchantes a crack in the human shell let madness in, but in this context the opening is certainly a revelation, but it does not have any healing qualities. For someone who, like Pentheus of the Inhumanist, assumes the stance of a detached observer, it is a diagnostic procedure bereft of any curatory power. In the face of the opening, man becomes aware of his fragmented personality:

> No man has ever known himself nor surpassed himself until he has killed
> Half of himself. (DA, 103)

The story of king Pentheus is of double importance here. First, because in this narrative of one's mother's madness reason is left orphaned and for ever motherless. Second, because it brings us in this way back to the motive of the "older fountain" which has to be found in order to replace the human mother. Man has to be born out of the rock, not out of the woman. This is precisely what paralyzes Pentheus who from a hiding watches the ravings of the Dionyssian priestesses led by his mother:

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[6] Ibidem, p. 57.

His own mother Agave singing. Endure a little. If one
could understand their fountain
of mandness. Her shame tomorrow: not punishment
enough: prison in the house. "O sisters, we have found
an opening."
What opening? (DJ, 124)

Pentheus's endurance keeps him hopelessly locked in his status of "a human being, a king and a Greek". He wants to bear with pain not to be reconciled with it, but to break it and reinscribe what he calls "madness" in the realm of limiting reason. He speaks of "punishment" and "shame", while the Bacchantes claim to have found the "opening" he wants to exercise his power to detain them in a prison-house. The priestesses do not look beyond the present moment, the king cannot speak of his power in categories other than perpetuation and enhancement: the human "tomorrow" is of a manifestly repressive nature with regard to the God's "now".

But the madness which breaks open the human collectedness ("How should one caught in the stone of his own person dare tell/the people anything but relative to that?", SP, 202) does not seem to be a legitimate countersuggestion to Pentheus's reason. It lets the light into the "prison of yourself" but, contrary to God's promise, it does not allow us to "enter the nature of things". When put into practice, madness turns out to be no more than another version of blind repressionism. Agave, inspired by the light of the opening, will kill her own son not in the act of Abraham's sacrificial resignation, but in the ignorant myopia of superstition.

She leading eagerly,
Full of the courage that the God had taught them, rushed
on her son not known, and the others raging
Joined her... (DJ, 125)

Thus, instead of leading to the real, essential endurance, the opening is no more than a parody of what it was to replace; madness repeats the faults of reason and false human collectedness is restored by what promised to overthrow it. God is a deceiver and ensnares man in the net of his theological propaganda: a promised experience of enlightenment finishes in a scene of slaughter committed by a crowd in the name of false courage motivated by God ("the courage that God has taught them"). The end of "The Humanist's Tragedy" turns into a critique of politics well known from other texts of Jeffers:

Wagging their hoary heads, glaring through
their bright spectacles,
The old gentlemen shout for war, while youth,
Amazed, unwilling, submissive, watches them. This is not
normal
But really ominous. (DA, 155)

The opening of the Bacchantes is one of the pseudodoctrines advanced towards mass illusion and deception. It leaves man betrayed both by reason and madness. As the Inhumanist puts it succinctly

> ...that's
> the condition of being human: to betray reason
> And deny instinct. (DA, 98)

Nevertheless, that does not invalidate the problematic of the opening. The followers of Dionyssios declared

> To-day in the forest
> We are fire and have found an opening. (DJ, 124)

This quotation links the opening with the imagery of light: we are brought into the open once we become fire. In "Roan Stallion" humanity is referred to as "the atom to be split" and "the coal to break into fire" (SP, 149). It becomes clearer now that the true opening, if possible at all, would have to be such a breaking of the "human mould" which first — releases fierce energy and, second, transforms us into fire, i.e. relates us again to the arche of the Heraclitean allusions in such Jeffers's phrases as "tides of fire" or "the older fountain". Let us define the opening as a place where the human form is cracked (man is de-formed), the fire of the "older fountain" revealed, and the thingly nature of man announced. In other words, the opening not only lets the light in, but also allows it to radiate out. The opening is then a certain shining.

> We had a decent rain this month and warm spring weather, so that the country is ablaze with flowers and green grass and very fragrant. I wish you were here. We hope eagerly to see you. Yours always, Robinson Jeffers.
>
> — RJ to A. Ficke, April 19, 1930

Like Heidegger, Jeffers can say that "the Open brings beings to shine and ring out"[7] and that "the being comes into steadiness of its shining[8] and this constitutes the power that Jeffers hinted at in his images of atom splitting. The thing unconcealed in its shining is the source of unimaginable energy which is the power of Being. California's rendition of the Immaculate Conception makes it explicitly evident:

> ...only the shining and the power. The power, the terror,
> the burning fire covered her over...
> ...She was so good and lovely, she
> was the mother of the little Jesus. (SP, 148)

Similarly, Mary in *Dear Judas* speaks of her son as of "the shining that came forth from between my thighs" (DJ, 12), and a mysterious God of ecstasy in "The Humanist's Tragedy" has "the shining head and the blond shoulders" (DJ, 125).

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[7] M. Heidegger, *Poetry...*, p. 72.

[8] Ibidem, p. 36.

Yet there is more to shining than glow and glimmer. Sometimes it is precisely this interpretation of shining that turns it into a false glow. sickly and seductive light of the city. In "The Purse-Seine" luminosity is that of a deadly glamour:

> Lately I was looking from a night mountain-top
> On a wide city, the colored splendor, galaxies of light: how
> could I help but recall the seine-net
> Gathering the luminous fish? (SP, 588)

No wonder then that when Jesus is lured into the trap of the city which "shines by itself in the morning clearness" (DJ, 14) Judas penetrates through the veil of luminosity:

> I dread the shining like the shining of
> paradise. (DJ, 14)

Although shining must inevitably be associated with light, it is far from being mere luminosity. It is the "dark glory" (SP, 265) described further in an early poem "Night":

> Over the dark mountain, over the dark pinewood,
> Down the long dark valley along the shrunken river,
> Returns the splendor without rays, the shining of shadow,
> Peace-bringer, the matrix of all shining and quieter of shining.
> ...
> The son-lovers have a blond favorite,
> A father of lights and noises, wars, weeping and laughter,
> Hot labor, lust and delight and the other blemishes. Quietness
> Flows from her deeper fountain; and he will die; and she is
> immortal. (SP, 158)

The text deals with two kinds of shining: one which is measured by light, and the other which is its source and defies being qualified as mere iridiscence. This essential shining, the shining of the essence of things, is referred to as "the matrix of all shining" and the "deeper fountain". The division is matched by the gender qualifications: if a traditional set of male roles involved providing for the family and surrounding it with sheltering walls of a building, then a "wide city", a synonim of civilization as a place of dispatching goods would definitely be a male domain. The shining of the city and the glamour of civilization will be, as Jeffers puts it in *Women at Point Sur*, "outlived" (WPS, 10) by the female shining sedimented in "quietness".

If humanity is a mould from which we should break away then the true shining, "the shining of shadow", the "dark glory", reveals the realm where the reality of our existence takes its origin. The false "mould is crashed and removed to be replaced by the original mint which gives birth to a new man. The semantics of the noun "matrix" harmoniously emphasizes both aspects: a matrix is a mould "into which hot metal in a soft or liquid condition is poured" (OED), but in the

very word we can also hear the sound of "mater", the "quietness of the womb and the egg, the primal and the latter silences" (SP, 159). Shining is the first contour of being as it emerges from the opening, as it leaves the mould, as it is born from between the thighs of the woman.

What turns shining into the "dark power" is its constant retrogressive force of reaching back towards the "older fountain" which also makes shining a poetic description of the minimum power of difference with which the Same can be revealed to man through its eternal recurrence. The shining in question in that of a "shadow", i.e. it signals other, invisible presences which are more original and which the shadow is a repetition of. Thus, shining must necessary reject man-made models of being as useless and responsible for the denaturedess of man.

> While men moulding themselves to the anthill have choked
> Their natures until their souls die in them;
> They have sold themselves for toys and protection... (SP, 259)

Inevitably, shining must bring about a change of moulds, as it is the awareness of the thingly nature of man.

> It is only to form in stone the mould of some ideal humanity
> that might be worthy to *be*
> Under that lightning. (SP, 193)

If shining is the reemergence of the forgotten residue of the prehuman in man it is not surprising that it is the earth, not the man, that shines. Man's involvement in glamour is reduced to a false glimmer of the mind like Natalia's who, in the estimate of her husband, is "high-bred, shining with mind, my ideal queen" (WPS, 125). "Men don't shine, God does" (BAS, 27) is Jeffers's succinct formula.

All the three notions (shining, God, and earth) have already been put in conjunction by early Greek philosophy which looked at earth as a god but referred to it as *Hestia* (hearth). Hence in a passage from Anatolius (3rd century A. D.) we read:

> Pythagoreans said that at the centre of the four elements there lies a fiery monadic cube... they say that the unitary substance is situated in the middle like a hearth and maintains the same position on account of its even balance. Euripides, too, like the disciple of Anaxagoras which he had become, refers to the earth in these terms: 'Wise mortals deem thee hearth'.[9]

The power of shining is only peripherally available to words. Jeffers transforms the "primal silences" of his early poem in the silence of death which "is no evil" (SP, 160), and in *Women at Point Sur* the silence of the tongue is made synonymous with the dark shining of the thing. In XII chapter which significantly introduces some confusion as to

[9] In W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 292—293.

 weather the text speaks of the noumenal experience of the Reverend Barclay or the scriptural sensation of the write who, in his power of a minor demiurg, calls "glass puppets" and make them vocal we read:

> But my tongue is stone how could I speak of him? My blood
> in my veins is seawater how could it catch fire?
> The rock shining dark rays and the rounded
> Crystal the ocean his beam of blackness and silence
> Edged with azure, bordered with voices;
> ...
> There is nothing but shines though it shine darkness. (WPS, 72)

To recapitulate: shining is the coming to the Open of the essence which is not simply revealed once and for all but preserves its secrets in the repetitive process of self-formation and coming to stand. That is why shining is qualified as "dark", or as the "shining of shadow": it makes beings visible (like a child which "shines" from between its mother's thighs) but, at the same time, it is grounding them in the secret presences of the "matrix" or "older fountain".

These aspects of shining bring us close to Heidegger's analysis of appearing in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The philosopher develops there a convincing theory of a double meaning of appearing *(Scheinen)* which runs parallel to Jeffers's division of shining into the glimmer of culture ("the dragging whirlpools of London, the screaming haste of New York", SP, 613) and the "dark glory" of Being. Toward the end of his text Heidegger formulates a principal difference between two kinds of appearing:

> ...appearing in the first and authentic sense as bringing-itself-to-stand in togetherness involves space, which it first conquers; as it stands there, it creates space for itself... Appearing in the second sense emerges from an already finished space; it is situated in the rigid measures of this space, and we see it by looking toward it. The vision makes the thing. Now the vision becomes decisive, instead of the thing itself.[10]

Shining is far from being a purely visual phenomenon; on the contrary, its visual substance is created by the power to discover what has **not** been seen before. Jeffers renders this power by speaking of inspecting a rock and seeing it "as if for the first time" (SP, 605). As Heidegger's rhetoric is steeped in violence, and the force of shining does not mildly inscribe itself in the ready made space but "wrenches" it from what has not been before ("the older fountain"), "conquers" and appropriates it and, hence necessarily stays in a close relationship with it, so Jeffers's descriptions of natural phenomena (things) also expose their violent character:

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[10] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Meatphysics*, p. 153.

Cataracts of rock
Rain down the mountain from cliff to cliff and torment the
stream-bed... the laurels are wounded,
Redwoods go down with their earth and lie thwart the gorge.
I hear the torrent boulders battering each other... (SP, 609)

In both Heidegger and Jeffers shining/appearing is a matter of ultimate violence, of breaking the "rigid measures of this space" for the philosopher, and of breaking the "human mould" for the poet. The domesticated lustre of the mind of which Jeffers speaks in *The Women at Point Sur* must be questioned in the name of the wild, incomprehensible and always dangerous shining of Being through the opening of the thing. This also implies that we must constantly probe into things viewing them as more than a mere stage in the human cognition.

> Is science... nothing but a fabrication of man that has been elevated to this dominance in such a way so as to allow us to assume that one day it can also be demolished again by the will of man? Or does a greater destiny rule here? Is there, ruling in science, still something other than a mere wanting to know on the part of man? Thus it is, in fact, Something other reigns.[11]

"Something other reigns". Since, despite his immense veneration for poetry, Heidegger claims that the source speaks in the speechless voice, since, after Jeffers, our tongue turns to stone in the face of this "something other", this force will have to remain nameless. What is to be done is to approximate this "something" through various concepts one of which is a concept of God.

In a rare moment of sanity Reverend Barclay experiences, "in the solid dark", a dark night of his soul in which he learns that

There is one power, you may call it God to the vulgar,
Exists from eternity into eternity, all the protean phenomena,
all forms, all faces of things,
And all the negligible lightnings of consciousness,
are made of that power... (WSP, 100)

Shining is the only name we can give to the power which "exists from eternity into eternity" "outside communication, not touchable" (WPS, 100), the power which is "older than life" and which remains concealed ("This other conceals itself from us..." continues Heidegger in his analysis). No wonder, then, that it is thought of less in terms of light which is a characteristic metaphor of the human rational thinking but, rather, in terms of what remains hidden to the light, i.e. in terms of darkness. Heidegger encounters this problem in his essay on "The Age of the World Picture":

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[11] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 156.

> Everyday opinion sees in the shadow only the lack of light, if not light's complete denial. In truth, however, the shadow is a manifest, though impenetrable, testimony to the concealed emitting of light. In keeping with this concept of shadow, we experience the incalculable as that which, withdrawn from representation, is nevertheless manifest in whatever is, pointing to Being, which remains concealed.[12]

This quotation helps us to understand Jeffers's phrases which propound the theory of "dark glory" and "the shining of shadow". The shadow shines because, by refering to Being, it allows us to see the opening and brings us to its light; nevertheless it simultaneously remains a shadow because it can only point at, and never name, Being. The shadow is not an opposition of light but only its modality. Only through the shadow, through appearance (i.e. contours, shapes, figures) can the "tides of fire of the older fountain" make themselves manifest.

Gaston Bachelard can justly quote Auguste Rodin in his apotheosis of fire

> Toute chose n'est que la limite de la flamme à laquelle elle doit son existence.[13]

Thus, the night is not a sheer effacement, but just the opposite — it brings beings to their proper form by de-forming them, by surrounding them with shadow. Of this night which is a modality of shining we can say what Andre Malraux said about Georges La Tour's art of light which does not separate but links and relates:

> La lumière des caravagesque tend d'abord à séparer leur personnages de obscurité; mais ce n'est pas l'obscurité que peint Latour: c'est la nuit. La nuit étendue sur la terre, la forme séculaire du mystère pacifie.[14]

The sense of the silenced mystery which defines night in reference to light corresponds to fire and the role it played for the Greek philosophers.

In antiquity the foundation of fire's luminiscence was looked for in a dark power hidden in its center. For the Pythagoreans fire is separated from shining which constitutes an additional element of fire's "dark glory" deposited in it by the air. Hence, Pythagoras claimed that fire *(pyr)* is

> ...a dark heat-stuff, while the shining is due to the air set in the vehement vibrations by the heat of the dark *pyr*.[15]

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[12] Ibidem, p. 154.

[13] G. Bachelard, *La psychanalyse du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 94.

[14] A. Malraux, *Les voix du silence* (Paris, 1951), p. 388.

[15] F.M. Cleve, *The Giants of Presocratic Greek Philosophy* vol. 1, (the Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1973), p. 39.

Shining is a manifestation, an appearing of fire whose power resides in darkness. There is no shining without darkness from which luminiscence could grow. The Greek philosophy meant by fire "something not only hot, but also shining"[16], and from this point only a short and logical step needs to be taken to state that for Heraclitus — the philosopher in whose thought fire acquires a particularly strong articulation — fire is not restricted to flames but becomes *pyr aeizoon* — the body of Logos.

> *Pyr aeizoon* — the primordial and ultimate power that is neither shining in the glow, *haptomenon*, nor extinguished in coldness, but life-warm, invisible ether.[17]

As if in the wake of Heraclitus in Jeffers's "Night" the seascape is followed by a commentary:

> O passionately at peace when will that tide draw shoreward?
> Truly the spouting fountains of light, Antares, Arcturus,
> Tire of their flow, they sing one song but they think silence.
> The striding winter giant Orion shines, and dreams darkness.
> And life, the flicker of men and moths and the wolf on the hill,
> Though furious for continuance, passionately feeding, passionately
> Remaking itself upon its mates, remembers deep inward
> The calm monther, the quietness of the womb and the egg,
> The primal and the latter silences... (SP, 159)

There are two varieties of fire in this passage. First is a cosmic fire of stars (Antares, Arcturus, Orion) accompanied in an earlier fragment by the "lamp in my tower" and "fretfulness of cities". The other fire, far from the ostentatiousness of the former which was the "fountains of light", is but a "flicker", it flashes and dies. The cosmic fire is parallel to Heraclitus's *pyr haptomenon* which referred to the glowing of stars and earthly fires. Both stars and human fire, however, look back towards another flame, another splendour represented by the ocean, the "deep, dark-shining Pacific". Not only is shadow central in this fire, but it is accompanied by another interesting feature. The text instructs us that the ocean "leans on the land feeling his cold strength to the utmost margins" (SP, 159). This shining is not only "dark", but it is also "cold", and in this paradoxical composition it gets even closer to the nature of *pyr aeizoon*, the Heraclitean name for Logos. One of the possible transformations of fire in Heraclitus's philosophy was *pyr aposbennymenon* — the celestial ether "in the process of changing into its further dark and cold transformations: the air, the ocean, and the earth"[18].

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[16] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 39.
[17] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 44.
[18] Ibidem, vol. 1, p. 45.

As Martin Heidegger demonstrates in his analyses of presocratic philosophers this paradoxical nature of celestial ether links it with thinking itself. According to Heidegger,

> To think is surely a peculiar affair. The word of thinkers has no authority. The word of thinkers knows no authors, in the sense of writers... it is without charm... Just the same, thinking changes the world. It changes it in the ever darker depth of a riddle, depths which as they grow darker offer promise of a greater brightness.[19]

Thus interpreted fire ceases to be simply an element which acquires the dominating position over competing elements, but it is a metaphorical naming of the power which precedens and foregrounds all the elements. Fire preserves the ability to hide and reveal, it insists on the precision of contour and necessary erasure of all contours. Fire is the way in which voiceless determination of language can come to pass. It is the "unlimited *(apeiron)* which is both principle *(archè)* and element *(stoicheion)* of the things that exist", as Simplicius puts it in the first known fragment of Greek philosophy[20].

But the center of fire understood as *archè*, nature and essence of Being, is also cold. The coldness is not only a physical quality, but also a description of man's overcoming psychological dichotomies on behalf of ontological authenticity. Cold is not only the center, but, first of all, it is a hidden center. Jeffers refers to it as the concealed interior of fire ("purgatory fires were hot although they always had a heart something like ice", SP, 72), the "white of fire" (SP, 139), a residue of essence more internal than the soul itself ("That ice wit in the soul", SP, 75), the power that strips things of their everyday usefulness and brings to the open their ontological status ("The ice core of things", SP, 49).

Nature is hidden and needs to be unconcealed. "Nature is fond of hiding itself", this thought taken from Heraclitus's code is also an apt description of Jeffers's ontology provided we assume, after Cleve, that nature in this fragment means "true essence", also "the stuff a thing is made of, therefore here: Logos and *Pyr Aeizoon*"[21]. Cold, the white of fire, is then the essence which is unconcealed, but by the very fact of being lit and brought to the open it becomes hidden again.

In Jeffers's writings cold and ice are in conjunction with peace which overcomes dichotomies and regresses towards the primal relating.

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[19] M. Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. D. Krell and F. Capuzzi (New York: Harper, 1975), p. 78.

[20] In J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* vol. 1, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 29.

[21] F. M. Cleve, *The Giants...*, vol. 1, p. 97.

Peace now, though purgatory fires were hot
They always had a heart something like ice
That coldly peered and wondered, suffering not
Nor pleased in any park, nor paradise
Of slightly swelling breasts and beautiful arms
And throat engorged with very carnal blood.
It coldly peered and wondered... (BSW, 69)

Although the peace in the passage is a mere worldly cessation of hostilities (the peace treaty signed at Compiegne in November 1918), its "heart" contains the cold truth of the inner peace. Even the hot fires of politics and history comprise, although are oblivious of, the cold of the essence which, so far qualified as "dark" now must be completed by an important modification — the peace is no longer dark but also "cold".

Peace to the world in time or in a year,
In the inner world I have touched the instant peace. (BSW, 70)

Thus, the "instant peace" of the cold and dark essence is not to be actualized in time. This is in accordance with the instruction which we hear in another text: "to disfigure time as timelessness" (SP, 195). The disfigurement in question is more than a mere negative gesture of erasing time. In the adjective "instant" we hear several meanings. First of all, it describes a phenomenon which overcomes time by coming to pass "at once", i.e. both suddenly (here we are reminded of the principle of seeing "as if for the first time") and momentarily (this could help to explain Jeffers's reluctunt acceptation of history which is no more that "the old whirligig, the old runaround, the old up-and-down... the haggard whore's trail, the rouged-up, disease-blown and lipsticked queen", (DA, 39).

But "instant" remembers also the aspect of urgency. Something that is "urgent" calls for our immediate action, cannot be relegated and postponed to some "other time", but must be attended to "immediately". An "urgent" thing, and each thing once its thingly character has been revealed is "urgent", defies time as it makes us concentrate exclusively on itself, and its only time is "now". What can be put off till some "other time" is not urgent, and thus is at the mercy of time. The thing calls and demands our attention and is persistent in making this demand upon us. Hence the "instant peace" is not a kind of peace which we make, but a peace which claims us from the very essence of the thing, i.e. from Being. In such an understanding of the adjective "instant" peace remains in conjunction with ice and cold. The "instant peace" reveals the soul as

...a flawless crystal coldly clear,
A cold white mansion that he yields in lease
To tenant dreams and tyrants from the brain
And riotous burnings of the lovelier flesh. (BSW, 70)

A rethinking of human time is, however, only one step towards the "cold crystal" It must be completed by a reinterpretation of human history as a mere projection of man's psyche: it is the "tyrants from the brain" which call for a "tribal... anthropoid God... a ridiculous projection of human fears, needs, dreams, justice and love-dust" (DA, 53). If this step is taken then we will be able to get to the "ice-core of things" (SP, 49) which, necessarily, involves going beyond standard ethical concepts towards the ethics of indifference. In "The Truce and Peace" we read:

That ice within the soul, the admonisher
of Madness when we're wildest, the unwinking eye
That measures all things with indifferent stare,
Choosing far stars to check near objects by
...
Being so tranguil seems the presence of death,
Being so central seems the essence of life. (BSW, 79)

A major substitution has been effected in these lines, a replacement which, together with Nietzsche's angry astonishment at the impertinence which allows man to place himself together with the world by means of an innocently looking word "and", attacks the vital and venerable tradition of humanism. Jeffers seems to be thinking along the Nietzschean lines:

> Die ganze Attitüde "Mensch gegen Welt", der Mensch als "Weltverneindes" Princip, der Mensch als Werthmaass der Dinge, als Welten-Richter, der zuletzt das Dasein selbst auf seine Wagschalen legt und zu leicht befindet — die ungeheuerliche Abgeschmacktheit dieser Attitüde ist uns als solche zum Bewusstsein gekommen and verleidet — wir lachen schon, wen wir "Mensch und Welt" neben einander gestellt finden, getrennt durch die sublime Anmaassung des Wörtchens "und"![22]

For Jeffers, as for Nietzsche, the world is fundamentally "ungottlich, unmoralisch, unmenschlich"[23], and the poet shuns the dillemma of nihilism that so preoccupied the philosopher by rediscovering the "ice within the soul". Jeffers's philosophy of things is in this respect a variety of Nietzsche's "transvaluation of all values", as it reverses the usual order and holds that **it is the thing which is the measure of all men.** This certainly questions the order of familiarity with which we have

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[22] F. Nietzsche, *Frohliche Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Kroner, 1921), p. 279—280.
[23] Ibidem, p. 279.

encountered the world so far: what has been "thrown to the surface of things" (SP, 188) now must be viewed from the perspective of Being. But if such is the nature of the "instant peace" then why, if it brings us back to the primal relating, is it qualified in a hesitant and tentative way? Why this most uncertain of all predicates, "seem"? The answer is suggested by the following lines:

> There is an old woman here in Carmel — eighty years old and swollen with dropsy — who has lived most of her life in wild places hereabout. Once her husband captured a fawn while she was nursing a baby. She had an uncomfortable excess of milk; the fawn shared with the child and both grew up happily, muzzling the same breasts.
>
> — RJ to E. Bishop, July 31, 1917

> Is it perhaps that death and life make truce
> In neutral zone while their old feud beyond
> Fired the towered city?

The "ice within the soul" seems to be the essence because as originating in the realm beyond all distinctions (like the most fundamental dichotomy between life and death) it cannot be predicated with any verb that entails a very decisive mode of being "this" or "that". Because all words referring to the sphere of Being blur it immediately, obfuscate it and render defensless thus, in the final analysis, Being is not open to the predicate "is" but only to much more tentative "seems". As we have seen, Jeffers continues Nietzschean mistrust of words which are considered as "superstitions" and therefore marked with the stigma of false belief and misinterpretation.

> I see you are superstitious... you believe in words.
> But words are like women: they are made to lie with... (DA, 71)

If we want to speak about Being, about the thingly nature of man, we have to speak tentatively and circumspectively as if questioning our own answers, not only because "questioning is the piety of thought"[24], but because by questioning our answers we bring to the open the limitations of language. Circumspection is still more necessary to see through what Jeffers describes as the "false earnestness of passionate life" (CM, 43) which extends from the realm of private desire to the domain of dramatic historical processes involving nations and continents. The point of Jeffers's philosophy is to bring us to realize that the quiet indifference of Being underlies the hysteria of history. Even at the times of frenzy there is the "unwinking eye that measures all things with indifferent stare" (BSW, 79).

Thus, the essence of man gives itself only to a paradoxical formulation as the "white of fire": the white signifies both the intensity of a flame,

[24] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 35.

 its highest tension and density, but also — as a colour of ice and snow — it suggests the very opposite of fire. While the flame burns and is — at least potentially — destructive, the white of fire refers to the indifferent essence, to the sphere where the pre-human shows itself to be the cornerstone upon which man constructs "certain fictions called good and evil" (SP, 480). As Charles Kahn puts it in his new translation of Heraclitus's fragments:

> ...there must be some distinction between celestial fire or light, as the highest destiny of the soul, and terrestrial flame here below. They are both forms of fire, but the status of the fiery element in our immediate vicinity is ambivalent, since it may (like wrath and hybris) manifest itself in a raging, destructive conflagration.[25]

The celestial fire which is the destiny of the soul is what in Jeffers's questioning of man is signified by the power that chooses "far stars to check near objects by". This detachment is not merely spatial but, first of all, it alerts man to the dangers of desire and excitement: grave earnestness of the thing (see "Oh. This Lovely Rock") is far different from the "false earnestness of passionate life" subjected to criticism in *Cawdor* and many other poems of the Californian poet. The celestial power which, in the Heideggerian way, destins man is a "neutral zone" where "life and death are sister and brother and lovers" (BSW, 79). It is the sphere which defies the fundamental taboo concerning incest (a constant motive in Jeffers's long narrative poems) thus dramatically redifining the structure of human desire and turning into the sphere of "eternal living" (SP, 76) of the "life inhuman and cold" (SP, 465) where man is

> ...superior to death and fortune, unmoved by success
> or failure. Pity can make him weep still,
> Or pain convulse him, but not to the center, and he can conquer
> them... (SP, 584)

The neutral zone of the "white of fire" marks not only the end of human superiority and transcends norms and taboos of the society, but it also erases the basic sex differences in the act of relocating the sex division to a much later ontological phase. In the early long poem *The Coast-Range Christ* the light of dawn embodying divine presence is shown as

> neither man nor woman,
> He was higher and lovelier than the pine tops, and human
> and not human.
> He was shining out of the east before the star that kills
> the night,
> Like a walking tower on the ridge between the hilltops, a
> tower of light. (BSW, 56)

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[25] Ch. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 250.

The "ice within the soul" is the essence of man as the thing, but it also, like Heraclitus's fire, has a cosmic and geological significance. Ice is the immediate predecessor of life of each specific organism which stood out from the in-different formation of ice. In *The Tower beyond Tragedy* Cassandra sees the drama of the human life as surrounded by ice:

> ...the column of the ice that was before on one side
> flanks it,
> The column of the ice to come closes it up on the other. (SP, 115)

The fire of Being is different from the terrestrial fire in that its function is less to burn and heat and more to shine and gleam. This certainly enhances the sense of distance: shining is life giving only when a comfortable distance has been secured. Too powerful light will dazzle instead of bringing an object to its contour and form. Already the Pythagoreans insisted on the coldness of the cosmic fire:

> Lustre and light in themselves are cold. If, therefore, the air movement away from a fire is transmitted over a great distance, a remote object can shine and sparkle without being hot.[26]

Similarly, Heidegger in the seminar he gave with Eugen Fink on Heraclitus persistently emphasizes that fire is not a mere burning and mainly is more than just a source of heat. Life only superficially can be explained away as warmth; ontologically, as Being, life ought to be described by shining and shimmering which distances ourselves radically from it. Only from a distance can the proximity of Being be recognized and acknowledged. Heidegger endorses the view that fire as the *pyr aeizoon* has deposited its power in brightness rather than in burning.

> ...dans le pyr aeizoon c'est surtout le moment de la splendeour (*Schein*) qui est important.[27]

It is through the shining power of fire that things are brought to stand as things, and Fink correctly remarks that fire is what brings to appearance (*das zum Vorschein Bringende*) which concept is not only etymologically related to splendour, brilliance or shining.

Similarly, Gaston Bachelard presents fire in terms of its originary power to draw phenomena to the sphere of our eyesight ("le feu est le premier facteur du phénomène"[28]) where

> Le premier phénomène, c'est non seulement le phénomène de feu contemplé, en une heure visive, dans sa vie et dans son éclat, c'est le phénomène par le feu. Le phénomène par le feu est le plus sensible de tous...[29]

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[26] F. M. Cleve, *The Ginats...*, vol. 2, p. 475.

[27] M. Heidegger, E. Fink, *Seminaire du semestre d'hiver 1966—67*, trans. J. Launay et P. Levy (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), p. 86.

[28] G. Bachelard, *La psychanalyse...*, p. 95.

[29] Ibidem, p. 96.

In his comments upon Heraclitus's statement that "A wisest and best psyche is a dry lustre" Kahn notices that the original Greek lexis is very capacious. What is rendered as a "lustre" is as a matter of fact not limiting to the burning activity of fire but refers to a gleam of light which in a Greek word *augē*

> ...is used for the rays of the sun, the flesh of lightning, the glare of fire, the sheen of gold or brass, or even the rays or brilliance of the eyes.[30]

Also Jeffers, having considered the "ice within soul" as the stellar shimmering ("star by star/Winter Orion pursues the Pleiades/In pale and huge parade", SP, 75) turns towards the ophtalmological metaphor. The neutral zone of Being which calls for our attention, the "instant peace", is the "eyes of flawless diamond":

> ...Surely for a strange use
> He sphered that eye of flawless diamond.
> It does not serve him but with line and rod
> Measures him, how indeed should God serve God? (SP, 75)

God is defined in Jeffers's philosophy as the shining of Being, the "ice-core of things", and since "cold" is what unconceals the thingly character of man then God manifests itself in man in his essence as the thing. Hence, the alienated man trying to remove his own inessentiality must turn toward things. This is what the tourist unconsciously looks for:

> These tourists...
> Pilgrims from civilization, anxiously seeking beauty, religion,
> poetry; pilgrims for the vacuum.
> People from cities, anxious to be human again. (SP, 363)

All the objectives of "tourists", here specified as "beauty, religion, poetry", are actualized in God who is a descriptive term for the "neutral zone", or the "white of fire". God in Jeffers's vision belongs to the realm of the pre-human, and thus the question of God's existence is, like for Nietzsche, "pas une théodicee, mains une cosmodicée"[31].

> Yourself, if you had not encountered and loved
> Our unkindly all but inhuman God,
> Who is very beautiful and too secure to want worshippers,
>
> And includes ideed the sheep with the wolves...
> He includes the flaming stars and pitiable flesh,
> And what we call things and what we call nothing.
> He is very beautiful. (SP, 458)

God, who is the in-different power, can hardly be a patriarchal figure of Christianity. "Jew-beak is dead" (WPS, 17) is Jeffers's rephrasing of

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[30] Ch. Kahn, *The Art and Thought...*, p. 246.

[31] G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et philosophie* (Paris: Les Editions du Minuit, 1962, p. 29.

Nietzsche's statement of the death of God in the 125 aphorism of *The Joyful Wisdom*. God is not so much *physas*, a father and procreator, but *physis* — the power to grow, "the emerging and arising, the spontaneous unfolding that lingers"[32]. If life originally grows and emerges, then the standard, anthropoid version of God-creator who in a unique gesture forms things as ready made must appear to Jeffers as tinged by a major heresy: the heresy of inauthenticity. Since Jeffers begins with the statement that "life grows, life is not made", to wind up in the self-perpetuation of Being which always regresses towards the original source without ever reaching it (life "grows from what grew before", DA, 166), then God loses his personal characteristics to become "very beautiful, but hardly a friend of humanity" (SP, 459), "the original world--making power"[33]. In a dramatic gesture the Christian soteriology is relegated to the status of one of the possible reading of history, not **the** scenarion but only a tentative script of the story of Being ("When the animals Christ was rumored to have died for drew in..., WPS, 9), and God's action turns out to be totally self-referential ("God is a great poet: / Whom can he praise but himself?", BE, 51).

> When we were in Galway... we went out to the Aran Islands in a small steamer... When we landed we got into a jaunting car and drove 6 miles at a hard trot... to Dun Aengus, a great prehistoric fortress on a high sea-cliff. Awe--inspiring place, protected on one side by the three hundred foot cliff, and from the other hand by the three crescents of high stone walls... Nobody has any idea who built the place or why... The islands are all bare and wind-swept, wild rock, hardly any soil.
>
> — UJ to U. Schoonover, January 11, 1938

How are we to understand, then, the "eye" which appears, in the iconographical agreement with tradition, as a synonym of God's presence in man? Some instruction as to this matter comes from another text in which Jeffers, referring to the ocean, regresses towards what preceded the life of an individual being:

> ...but there is in me
> Older and harder than life and more impartial, the eye that watched before there was an ocean. (SP, 87)

The "older eye" is impartial and in-different, but also alien to any formal, ritualistic organization of cult. As we have learnt before, God does not need worshippers, i.e. it cannot be subject to a strict and rigidly regulated hierarchy in which God is served to the believers. This serving has a double quality. First, God is served as an object of veneration; second, and more importantly, it is dispensed to people by a separate

[32] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 51.
[33] Ibidem, p. 52.

 group claiming a priviliged position with regard to God. Heidegger's comments upon the difference between Christianity and Christiandom[34] and his errata to the meaning of Logos assumed in the New Testament follow basically the same line of criticism which the philosopher presents concisely in *An Introduction to Metaphysics:* the New Testament God is a mediator and an "anthropoid" intermediary between God and people.

> ...logos in the New Testament does not, as in Heraclitus, mean the being of the essent, the gathering together of the conflicting; it means *one* [Heidegger's emphasis] particular essent, namely the son of God. And specifically it refers to him in the role of mediator between God and men. This New Testament notion of the logos is that of the Jewish philosophy of religion developed by Philo whose doctrine of creation attributes to the logos the function of *mesitēs,* the mediator.[35]

What Heidegger calls the "gathering together of the conflicting" is the "neutral zone" or the "ice-core of things" of the poet. The eye combines dichotomies and is the core of man:

> And death and life within that Eye combine,
> Within that only untorturable nerve
> Of those that make a man, within that shrine
> Which there is nothing ever can profane... (SP, 75)

The eye is, in a hidden centrality of its position, the eye of a vision, not a mere eyesight; the eye looks but does not look at. Together with its previously established qualifications (the eye as God and the thingly essence of man) the simplest definition of Jeffers's eye would read: the eye is that which is. In Heidegger we encounter a similar visionary optics:

> That which is does not come into being at all through the fact that man first looks upon it... Rather, man is the one who is looked upon by that which is...[36]

The eye is my essence, something which cannot be dispensed with and which, although forgotten and even cultured away, still originally resides in man. Thus, it is understandable that the eye is synonymous with God and the state of balance where controversies are overcome: "this Eye, this God, this Peace", as Jeffers's text describes it (SP, 75).

It is at this moment when the phonetics brings an interesting insight to our interpretation of Jeffers's philosophy. The "eye" is not only close accoustically to the "ice" which, as we have seen, is the core of things, but is also a homophone of the first person singular pronoun. The cold

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[34] See M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 62—65.

[35] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics,* p. 113.

[36] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 131.

eye that looks with in-difference and impartiality, for which good and evil are "certain fictions", is the essential I:

> I found this wisdom on the wonderful road,
> The essential Me cannot be given away,
> The single Eye, God cased in blood-shot clay. (SP, 76)

We notice that what constitutes man ("the essential Me") is what dissolves him in his thingly nature. Man is the product of the Eye to the extent to which he is removed as a mere substance to be seen. Looking at an object will not do as a means to perceive it; what is necessary is a penetrative glance to reveal its "core of ice". Michel de Certeau in an essay on Nicolas de Cusa makes a useful distinction between "gazing" and "seeing" concluding that

> The experience of the gaze is a surprise without an object. The gaze of the other excludes the possession of an image. It deprives of sight... to perceive an object is thus to defend oneself against one's capacity for looking...[37]

The visionary optics defies mere seeing, and man can be returned to his essence only if he defends himself against the repeatibility of the image mistakenly taken for the thing. God's gazing is that of the "eyes like blue ice" (DJ, 122), and what Jeffers calls a "wonderful road" to wisdom is gazing to see "as if it were for the first time", before the object degenerates "into a prototype to be copied and immitated"[38]. The eye signifies — via its transformations from shining, shimmering and cold brightness of gazing — "the original emergence and standing of energies, the *phainesthai*, or appearance in the great sense of a world epiphany" which, through a false earnestness of culture, man will turn to a mere "visibility of things that are already-there and can be pointed out. The eye the vision, which originally projected the project into the potency, becomes a mere looking over or gaping at"[39]. As we can see, the eye, opening, fire, cold, shining and peace belong to the same philosophical paradigm. But the eye stands in opposition to a mere eye sight, shining is more than lighting, peace is not a wordly truce, and cold resides at the core of fire. Also the opening is not a simple break in the continuum. When the worshippers of Dionyssius sing of the opening the text immediately senses the ambiguity of this notion and asks carefully "What opening?" (DJ, 124). An identical interrogations is to be found in Heidegger who, speaking of *alētheia* — the Greek word for truth, precedes his analysis with an important question: "Where does the opening come

> My wife is as mad about rocks as I am, fortunately, or rather I as she.
>
> — RJ to M. van Doren, March 14, 1930

[37] M. de Certeau, "The Gaze. Nicolas of Cusa", in *Diacritics* (Fall 1987), p. 18.
[38] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 52.
[39] Ibidem, p. 52.

 from and how is it given?"[40]. The opening is not a mere negation of closure; rather, it is an interplay of the two. Pentheus and Agave do not contradict each other but, like Nietzsche's Apollo and Dionyssius, they resolve the contradiction. According to Deleuze Dionyssius and Apollo

> ne s'opposent pas comme les terms d'une contradiction, mais plutôt comme deux facon antithétique de la résoudre...[41]

As Dionyssius is objectified only in the Appolonian form of the drama, so the opening, a sudden appearing of the thing, is possible only through a careful observation of appearances, of closed outlines, of the closure. Thus, both closure and opening can be approached as theoretical issues, while Pentheus and Agave take them as hints for decisive action. When we say "theoretical", we refer to the old Greek sense of "theory" in which, as Heidegger has reminded us, we hear both *thea*, i.e. what shows itself externally, appearance, and *horaō* describing the action of looking at something with attention. Hence,

> ...*theōrein* is *thean horan*, to look attentively on the outward appearance wherein what presences becomes visible and, through such sight-seeing — to linger with it *(verweilen)*.[42]

The opening and closure are "theoretical" problems because they deal less with actual action and committment and more with attentive looking at something that necessarily has to be veiled over, recognized but concealed, open and closed to our eyes. Jeffers's life, detached from action and productivity which was by the modern epoch distorted as — to use Nietzsche's words — mere haste *(unanständigen und schwitzenden Eilfetigkeit)* aiming at careless finishing things *(fertig machen)*[43], was a life where the opening and closure were under a constant and watchful observation. It was a *bios theōrētikos*

> ...the way of life of the beholder, the one who looks upon the pure shining-forth of that which presences.[44]

The opening and closure are the two edges from between which we can see shining. Neither Pentheus nor Agave can see it dedicated, as they are, to the firm establishing of one or the other, whereas both concepts remain bound not as an alternative but as a conjunction. But shining again needs darkness because, as we have said so many times after Jeffers, true shining is "dark glory". Even shining is not the ultimate

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[40] M. Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking", in *M. Heidegger, On Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 73.

[41] G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et...*, p. 13.

[42] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 163.

[43] F. Nietzsche, *Morgenrothe* (Stuttgart: Korner, 1921), p. 202.

[44] M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning...*, p. 164.

stage of the retrogressive movement as Jeffers knew it, since he was constantly stressing the need and obligation to try to discover the still "older fountain". The interplay of the opening and closure is an endless series and absolutizing one of the two, like privileging light over darkness, is a serious philosophical mistake of which Heidegger accused Plato

> [Plato] regarded understanding as "seeing" and realized that "seeing" requires light, [but] he failed to grasp that light in turn needs the opening in order to illuminate entities and thus let them show themselves in their being.[45]

And if, as in a strangely old-fashioned way Jeffers believed, "a poet is one who listens to nature and his own heart" (BE, 35), what remains for him to do is "a little longer write, and see what comes forth from a dead hand" (BE, 65).

> Did you ever hear of the great (and beautiful) Hindu-Buddhist temple of Angkor that stands in the deep jungle in Cambodia, and no one knows where the people who built it have gone to nor where they came from? An enormous affair of sandstone, and the architecture as if it came from another planet. Someone has given us a little stone head of a wall-carving from there, and I cemented it into the tower the other day. Someone else has given us a stone from the great pyramid, and one from the Chinese wall. Then there is a cuneiform tablet in the tower from Babylonia, from a temple of Ishtar. Imagine us gathering old stones in Italy or Ireland. It should be an amusing pilgrimage. Love from us both to you and Bio. Yours always, Robinson Jeffers.
>
> — RJ to B. de Casseres, November 10, 1927

[45] H. Wolz, *Plato and Heidegger. In Search of Selfhood* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981), p. 13.

11. The Sense of En-DING

What follows death is the scene of mourning and consolation. Jeffers himself would endorse Jean Jacques Rousseau's view concerning "primitive" (i.e. "true") men who contended to accept Nature's law and

> died without anyone noticing that they seased to exist, and almost without noticing it themselves.[1]

Still there is mourning and consolation undertaken on behalf of all of us, since man cannot live with an unmourned death. In the obituary published in *Queens Quarterly* Louis Dudek referred to Robinson Jeffers as to a "radical revisionist" placing him in the company of Blake, Whitman, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Cummings, Pound, Lawrence, Gide, and Camus[2]. This book did not purport to study, not even to suggest, the relationships between Jeffers and other poets or philosophers, nevertheless Dudek's phrase seems to adequately describe the outcome of our analysis.

Jeffers's radicalism lies in his turning away from the humanist tradition which has led arts and philosophy to a false position where human thinking remains unrelated to its essential element. Anthropocentric humanism spells thus the end of thinking and the beginning of a modern market of public opinion demanding ever-new "-isms". As Martin Heidegger puts it:

> Thinking comes to an end when it slips out of its element.[3]

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[1] J. J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres...*, vol. 3, p. 137; English translation in R. Grimsley, *Jean Jacques Rousseau*, p. 29.

[2] L. Dudek, "Art, Entertainment and Religion", *Queens Quarterly*, LXX, (Autumn 1963).

[3] M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. D. Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 196.

It is with this slippage that Jeffers is concerned and it is through the meditation upon landscape and time that he tries to bring human thinking back to its element. What is this element and where shall we look for it, seem to be most urgent questions asked in this essay. The element of thinking is, for Jeffers, revealed in the non-human and prehuman. In other words, to regain the vision we must withdraw from exclusively human categories, as it is precisely these categories that turn humanism into in-humanism, i.e. in the stance where man is deprived of his essence and exists without any relationship with what makes his life possible. Thus, even mourning and consolation will not remain human, if they are to perform their sanitary function:

> There
> is no consolation in humanity —
>
> Only the acts and glory of unhuman
> nature or immortal God
> Can ever give our hearts peace. (H, 16)

Later on in the same book Jeffers will amplify the same point:

> As for us:
> We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
> We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
> As the rock and ocean that we were made from. (H, 97)

"Uncentering" and "unhumanizing" are necessary steps on the way towards reclaiming of the element of thinking.

The vision of thinking must then be a re-vision of the already determined interpretations and readings of history, literature, philosophy, and politics. This task is to be carried out by uncovering what Martin Heidegger calls *dingliche Unterbau*, the material scheme of man's existence (we have just seen how Jeffers presents man as made of rock and ocean). It is a popular mistake to think of Jeffers as an antihuman philosopher, "right wing nationalist, the lunatic fringe, and the most ardent Roosevelt hater"[4], but this error has accompanied the poet since the beginning of his literary career. An early review in *Bookman* speaks of Jeffers' "misanthropy equalled only by Jonathan Swift"[5], and a 1963 obituary continues along the same line modifying misanthropy by love:

> He was the closest America has yet produced to that other great Nay-Sayer, Jonathan Swift. But, like Swift, he hated profoundly because he loved profoundly.[6]

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[4] R. J. Brigham, "Bitter and Skillful Treatise in Verse", in *Post-Dispatch* [St. Louis] (August 1, 1948).

[5] E. Eisenberg, "A Not So Celestial Choir", in *Bookman*, 66 (Sept. 1927)

[6] Ch. Angoff, "Three Towering Figures: Reflections upon the Passing of Robert Frost, Robinson Jeffers, William Carlos Williams", in *Literary Review* (Summer 1963).

One of the purposes of this book has been to argue that Jeffers's stance is less a question of temperamental love or hatred and more a result of an evolution of certain philosophy which can be broadly described as ahumanism. Its heart lies in the Nietzschean perspectivism of reflection and the almost phenomenological insistence on the thing and its "thingly character", *ding-liche Unterbau*. The former construes history as *Wiederkunft*, the Nietzschean stammering effort to verbalize the difference between to "be" and to "become".

William Nolte comparing Jeffers and T. S. Eliot claims that "Eliot's philosophy rings hollow when you realize that his view of man extends back only to the birth of Christ"; unlike Eliot, Jeffers finds, the "eternal flow" and since he

> ...possessed a learning in both the sciences and classics which makes Eliot's narrow scholastic training seem paltry by comparison, saw the Christian era as a little more than a moment in man's descent from the primordial past.[7]

But what is at stake here is neither "scholastic training" nor "learning in classics", but the tragic and fundamental conviction which we encounter in Jeffers's poetry of man's deprivation of the comforts of transcendental reassurance. Jeffersian philosophy is an extension of the Nietzschean philosophical metaphors of flight and abyss (*Abgrund*), and Jeffers' vision of history is, like Nietzsche's, deprived of any priviliged moments that could function as provisional centers. Thus, in *Hungerfield* we read:

> God-if-there-is-a-God is neutral... (H, 15),

and God, no longer a dispenser of certainty and shelter as he himself is a part of a conditional clause, like a Heidegger-Hölderlin deity, is a "violent one" in the presence of which man is

> ...cast out of the 'homely', i.e. customary, familiar, secure.
> The unhomely prevents us from making ourselves at home and therein it is overpowering.[8]

This originary violence of being is what Jeffers is trying to recapture in his philosophy of thing. Questioning as superficial Patrick Bridgwater's view that

> Nietzsche was a far less 'measurable' influence on his Jeffers' work than Schopenhauer and Spengler... it seems true to say that what we find in Jeffers' work are not so much echoes of Nietzsche, as occassional parallels

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[7] W. Nolte, "Robinson Jeffers as Didactic Poet", in *Virginia Quarterly Review*. 42 (Spring 1966).

[8] M. Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 127.

with some of Nietzsche's — mainly incidental ideas; basically his view of life is totally different from Nietzsche's[9],

we must concede that it is the Greeks that seem to present the alternative for the modern philosophical predicament. The analysis of thing as "dark shining" or *pyr aeizoon* clearly indicates Jeffers's affinity with the presocratics, the fascination he unknowingly shared with Martin Heidegger. The anonymous early reviewer of Jeffers's work does not exaggerate when he/she claims that the poet "stems from the Greeks"[10].

It is through the rethinking of man's thingly character, through the en- (like in "entrust") DING (if we may allow some space for the interlingual pun) and not through political or ideological manouvers that the "opening in the human husk" Jeffers is talking about in "The Humanist Tragedy" is to be found, and ahumanism, i.e. the attitude of un-humanized man is to be created.

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[9] P. Bridgwater, *Nietzsche in Anglosaxony* (Leicester University Press 1972), p. 161.

[10] Anon., "Robinson Jeffers: Bard", in *Magazine of Sigma Chi*, 50 (May—June 1931).

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Miscellanea

Time & Texts

1887 — Jan. 10 born in Pittsburgh, Penn.
1899—1902 — travels and education in Europe
1912 — *Flagons and Apples*
1913 — Marriage to Una Kuster
1914 — Move to Carmel. Death of infant daughter
1916 — Twin sons Garth and Donnan born
1924 — *Tamar and Other Poems*
1925 — *Roan Stallion*
1927 — *The Women at Point Sur*
1928 — *Cawdor and Other Poems*
1929 — *Dear Judas and Other Poems*. Travel to Great Britain and Ireland
1931 — *Descent to the Dead*
1932 — *Thurso's Landing and Other Poems*
1933 — *Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems*
1935 — *Solstice and Other Poems*
1937 — *Such Counsels You Gave Me and Other Poems*
1941 — *Be Angry at the Sun*
1947 — Oct. 4 Dear Judas opens in New York
Oct. 20 Medea opens in New York
1948 — *The Double Axe and Other Poems*
1950 — Sept. 1, death of Una Jeffers
1954 — *Hungerfield and Other Poems*
1962 — Jan. 21, death of Robinson Jeffers
1963 — *The Beginning and the End*

Words & Critics

"He that comes reverently shall hear the singing of the Morning Star that before was only given to William Blake in his madness to attend."

H. F. C. "Passionate Music". *Columbia Varsity*, 9 (October 1927)

"I find in him the tragic terror of Aeschylus, the divine melancholy and remote spiritual pathos of Chopin, the imaginative insanity of Blake, the lurid grandeur of Coleridge, the hallucinant chiaroscuro of De Quincey, the satanic joy in the hideous of Baudelaire, the psychoanalytical topsy turvyism of Dostoievsky, the beautiful morbidity of d'Annunzio, the horror love of Dante, the eariness and incestuous motives of Wagner, and above all and beyond all, the defiant and aurealed wickedness of Nietzsche's Antichrist and Superman."

Benjamin De Casseres, *The Superman in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Bookstore, 1929)

"Colossal, indelible symphonies of a mad Dante..."

Anon. review in *English Journal*, 19 (Sept. 1930)

"The emergence of Jeffers, and that he is hailed as a major poet and prophet, is a severe commentary upon Whitman's dream of America..."

Anon. review in *Magazine of Sigma Chi*, 50 (May—June 1931)

"In the pantheism, there is a comparison with W. C. Bryant. In the realm of horror Jeffers far surpasses Poe... in his probing into the darker secrets of the mind Jeffers is to be compared with O'Neill. ... As to their use of free verse Jeffers shows much greater skill than Whitman. His philosophy resembles Melville and Hardy. It may be an exaggeration to say that the greatest poetic event in America in the 1920s is the arrival of Robinson Jeffers..."

Ray M. Lawless, "Robinson Jeffers — Poet", *Present Day American Literature*, 4 (March 1931)

"...it is obvious that he towers above all his California predecessors. The intensity of his feeling for the Carmel shore-line does not require emphasis."

C. McWilliams, "The Writers of California", *Bookman*, 72 (Dec. 1930)

"The play [Dear Judas] ran one week in Ogunquit, Maine, was withdrawn under protest from Catholic attorney F. S. Sullivan as 'offensive, dangerous and should not be performed as it would surely damage the faith of the people...'.
The Boston city censor "explained that the showing of the play here would violate the beliefs of many Bostonians in God and might even create trouble by stirring up religious feeling'."

Anon., "Acting Mayor J. B. Hynes of Boston Bans 'Dear Judas', Play based on Jeffers' Poem", *Times* (New York) (August 14, 1947)

"Robinson Jeffers has done an excellent adaptation of the Euripedes original, and his verse is pithy, terse, vivid, and illuminating without extraneous elaboration..."

W. Beyer, "The State of the Theatre: New Blood", *School and Society*, 67 (Febr. 28, 1948)

"...son imagination transpose sur le plan modern des motifs eschyléens dans une langue forte et imagée comme celle de la poesie grecque et où le paysage californien... fournit aux sombres drames de Jeffers un décor idéal."

M. Breton, *Anthologie de la Poesie Americaine Contemporaine* (Paris: Les Editions Denoel, 1948)

"America has produced three great poets in the century which has seen her rise to greatness — Eliot, Frost, and Jeffers."

J. Squires, *The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1956)

"Henry Miller, E. E. Cummings, and Robinson Jeffers were perhaps the three outstanding individualists of the period."

J. Salzman, *Years of Protest: A Collection of American Writings of the 1930's* (New York, 1967)

"No other bard of his time, other than Yeats, approached the power and the glory, the strength and the tenderness, or the prophetic vision of Jeffers."

L. Powell, "California Classics Reread: Give Your Herat to the Hawks", *Westways*, 60 (Nov. 1968)

"Shelley and Robinson Jeffers question the most cherished values of civilization: authority, law, and divine providence."

R. Brophy, "Tamar, The Cenci and Incest", in *American Literature*, 42 (May 1970)

Stones & Trees

"I planted 100 eucalyptuses this week, and 100 cypresses"

— RJ to Benjamin De Casseres, Sept. 26, 1925

"You have been very kind and I should like to have answered more promptly; I work indoors in the morning and lay stones and plant trees in the afternoon, expecting always to write letters at night; comes night and one of my little trees could write a more intelligent letter. I'm sorry."

— RJ to Harriet Monroe, June 2, 1926

I think that one may contribute (ever so slightly) to the beauty of things by making one's own life and environment beautiful... This includes moral beauty, one of the qualities of humanity, though it seems not to appear elsewhere in the universe. But I would have each person realize that his contribution is not important, its success not really a matter for exultation nor its failure for mourning; the beauty of things is sufficient without him.

— Robinson Jeffers to Sister Mary James Power, October 1 1934

Tadeusz Sławek

MROCZNA CHWAŁA
ROBINSON JEFFERS I JEGO FILOZOFIA ZIEMI, CZASU I RZECZY

Streszczenie

Książka podejmuje próbę przedstawienia filozofii zmarłego w 1962 roku kalifornijskiego poety Robinsona Jeffersa. Zaprezentowany jest on jako pisarz kalifornijski (a nie amerykański), bowiem jego życie — a przede wszystkim jego myśl — wyrastają ze swoistej filozofii pejzażu, jego przemian geologicznych, a także z uważnej i troskliwej obserwacji przedmiotów udostępniających się człowiekowi w tymże krajobrazie. Radykalizm myśli Jeffersa polega na dramatycznej krytyce tradycji filozoficznego humanizmu, któremu poeta zarzuca (myśl ukazana w niniejszej pracy w świetle koncepcji Martina Heideggera) pozbawienie człowieka należnego mu miejsca w porządku świata. Jeffersa, podobnie jak wcześniej Nietzschego a równolegle Heideggera, interesuje kwestia wyalienowania ludzkiego myślenia, które nie pozostaje już w żadnym związku z autentycznym Byciem. Próbę rekonstrukcji owego właściwego żywiołu myślenia podejmuje Jeffers za pośrednictwem medytacji nad pejzażem, którego zasadniczym powołaniem jest postawienie człowieka w obliczu tego co nie-człowiecze i przed-człowiecze (*nonhuman* i *prehuman*) po to, by doprowadzić do zdekonstruowania tradycji przyznającej człowiekowi uprzywilejowane (a więc fałszywe) miejsca w planie natury. Mamy zatem do czynienia z dwoma procesami: jeden to przesunięcie ciężaru myśli z człowieka na bycie-w-świecie (*uncentering*), drugi zaś wiedzie ku pozbawieniu myśli jej sztucznego humanistycznego nalotu (*unhumanizing*). Taki obraz myślenia musi skierować poetę ku reinterpretacji historii, literatury, filozofii i polityki; zadanie to zostaje podjęte przez odsłonięcie tego, co Heidegger nazywa *dingliche Unterbau*, a co można oddać jako "materialną podstawę ludzkiej egzystencji". A więc nowa filozofia człowieka musi być nową filozofią przedmiotu.

Jednym z głównych zamierzeń pracy jest wskazanie, iż poglądy Jeffersa nie są wynikiem chwilowych stanów emocjonalnych, lecz przeciwnie — stanowią ogniwo w długiej ewolucji pewnego myślenia filozoficznego, które zostaje tu określ-

lone jako ahumanizm. Jego istota zdaje się spoczywać w Nietzscheańskiej refleksji nad perspektywistycznym charakterem ludzkiego poznania oraz historią jako Wiecznym Powrotem (*Wiederkunft*), a także w fenomenologicznej analizie przedmiotowej podstawy ludzkiego bytu. Jeffers podejmuje więc tak istotne wątki i metafory obecne w pismach Nietzschego, jak 'otchłań', teologia 'śmierci Boga' czy pierwotne okrucieństwo stanowiące warunek jednostkowych bytów (tę myśl dzieli poeta z Heideggerem i jego analizami zawartymi we *Wstępie do metafizyki*). Do niemieckiego filozofa zbliża też Jeffersa koncepcja "mrocznej chwały" czy "mrocznego światła" (*dark shining*) prowadząca z kolei wprost do antycznych antecedensów filozoficznych, zwłaszcza zaś do filozofii presokratejskiej.

Тадеуш Славек

МРАЧНАЯ ХВАЛА
РОБИНЗОН ДЖЕФФЕРС И ЕГО ФИЛОСОФИЯ ЗЕМЛИ, ВРЕМЕНИ И ПРЕДМЕТА

Резюме

В своей книге автор знакомит читателя с философией умершего в 1962 г. калифорнийского поэта Робинзона Джефферса, представленного как калифорнийский писатель (а не американский), так как его жизнь, а прежде всего его мысль берут начало из своеобразной философии пейзажа, его геологических преобразований, а также из внимательного и заботливого наблюдения за предметами, открывающимися человеку в этом же пейзаже. Радикализм мысли Джефферсона состоит в драматической критике традиции философского гуманизма, который поэт упрекает (мысль освещена в настоящей работе через концепцию Мартина Хейдеггера) в лишении человека надлежащего ему места в мировом порядке. Джефферса, подобно как и ранее Ницше, а одновременно Хейдеггера, интересует вопрос отчуждения человеческого мышления, которое уже не остается ни в какой связи с действительным Бытием. Реконструировать эту действительно стихию мышления Джефферс пытается при помощи медитации о пейзаже, главным призванием которого является поставить человека перед лицом того, что не-человеческое и до-человеческое (nonhuman и prehuman) с целью довести до деконструкции традиции, признающей человеку привилегированные (т. е. фальшивые) места в плане природы. Таким образом, мы имеем дело с двумя процессами: один — это перемещение тяжести мысли с человека на бытие-в-мире (uncentering), второй же — это очищение мысли от ее искуственного гуманистического налета (ungumanizing). Такой образ мышления должен направить поэта к реинтерпретации истории, литературы, философии и политики путем открытия того, что Хейдеггер называет dingliche Unterbau, а что можно выразить как "материальная основа человеческого существования". Таким образом, новая философия человека должна быть новой философией предмета.

Одним из основных заданий настоящей работы является указание, что взгляды Джефферса — это не результат временного эмоционального состояния, а наоборот — они составляют звено в длительной эволюции философского мышления, определенного здесь как агуманизм. Думается, что его суть заключается в ницшеанском размышлении о перспективичном характере человеческого познания и истории как Вечном Возвращении (Wiederkunft), а также

в феноменологическом анализе предметной основы человеческого быта. Таким образом, Джефферс рассматривает такие важные мотивы и метафоры, имеющиеся в произведениях Ницше, как 'бездна', теология 'смерти Бога' или же первичная жестокость, составляющая условие единичных бытов (эту мысль поэт разделяет с Хейдеггером и его анализами, содержащимися во Введении в метафизику. С немецким философом сближает Джефферсона также концепция "мрачной хвалы" или же "мрачного света" (dark shining), ведущая, в свою очередь, прямо к античным предшествующим философским событиям, а особенно к пресократовской философии.

Tadeusz Sławek

Robinson Jeffers and His Philosophy of Earth, Time and Things

WYKAZ WAŻNIEJSZYCH BŁĘDÓW DOSTRZEŻONYCH W DRUKU

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