Poet of Stone and Planets:

Counter-Pastoralism, Inhumanism, and Literary Ecology In the Work of Robinson Jeffers

By

Catherine R. Owen
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1999

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Abstract

Robinson Jeffers was a poet who, through both his writing and his philosophy of Inhumanism, subverted the aesthetic and ideological stances of his day. His often-lengthy forms, the resistence of these long poems to the autotelic analysis that was the favoured critical approach of the academic establishment, and his persistent incorporation of a critique of humanism into his verse, negatively affected the reception of his work. As part of an effort to re-configure the significance of his poetry in our contemporary critical terrain, this thesis engages in an exploration of two of his long narratives, "The Loving Shepherdess," and "The Inhumanist," one of his verse dramas, "The Tower beyond Tragedy," and a sampling of his lyrical verse.

First, "The Loving Shepherdess," read through a counter-pastoral framework, is revealed, in its inclusion of temporality, pain and history, as a subversion of the pastoral genre. Secondly, "The Tower beyond Tragedy" and "The Inhumanist" are explored as embodiments of Jeffers' philosophy of Inhumanism, both poems seeking to critique the reduction of word and earth beneath ultra-humanist agendas. Finally, Jeffers' lyrics, examined from an ecocritical viewpoint, are presented as articulations of a mode of relation to the planet which valorizes natural processes over human constructs and seeks, through organic rhythm, the direct image, and defamiliarization, to inscribe an ecologically-oriented perspective.

Jeffers' re-visionings of codified perceptions of the land through the employment of apocalyptic and abject imagery, infused by the radical perspective embodied in his

Inhumanist philosophy, enable us to read his work today as the elaboration of a nascent ecological vision.

It is my position that Jeffers' poetic oeuvre, re-evaluated through counter-pastoral, Inhumanist and eco-critical frameworks, presents us with a complex articulation of the connections and divisions between language and the land. Questing beyond the polemical and poetic strictures posited by Modernism and New Criticism, Jeffers defined a poesis which critiqued human-centred modes of composition in order to celebrate the "anotherness" of the earth.

For Chad Norman, a constant hand in the maelstrom

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Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)

Late in your father's life, you lived.
Never quite child in the new sense of the word
But solitary, polyglot, Wordsworthian wanderer
With a keener hawk-knowledge.
Schooled in unreal cities, it was stone
That taught you form, Carmel's ocean
Strafing the eternal cliffs that claimed a tidal
Repetition for the long breakered rhythms of your lines.
Immured with Una and your sons
Yet wide to the winds and stars,
Your world spun inhuman permanence
In an age whose deities are transient.
In Tor House, alone with Tiresias,
You scrawled in the space between lists
Words on the distance of blindness
Never for an instant indifferent
To the salt and rock that is human
Without the familiarity of comfort.

Introduction: Repositioning Robinson Jeffers

Robinson Jeffers (1887 -1962) is one of twentieth century literature's most enigmatic and controversial figures. Attempts to elucidate his poetry beneath conventional rubrics such as Romanticism or Modernism, as Colin Falck does in "American Romantic?"(Thesing 83) or as Charles Altieri does in a panel discussion entitled, "Jeffers and the Modern(ist) Terrain" (182), often conclude inconclusively, with the sense that Jeffers eludes any neat system of definition. For while he could be considered a late Romantic in his retreat to an isolated locale from which he delivered jeremiads on the fate of the earth, with which he had an intimate, animist connection, rarely present is the rhapsodic tone and the persistent anthropocentrism common to a poet like Wordsworth, as in these well known lines from Tintern Abbey: "Nature never did betray/the heart that lov'd her; tis her privilege /through all the years of this our life, to lead/from joy to joy" (Bate 53). And while he could be deemed a prototypical Modernist in the alienation he experienced due to the gap between his ideological development and society's alternate direction, as was also the case with Wallace Stevens' insistence on the imagination's ontological role, for instance, Jeffers' dismissal of both "the symbolism of Mallarme and the imagism of Ezra Pound"(Thesing 191), as Albert Gelpi points out, and his rejection of the all-important "theme of the city," combined to render him an outcast from the Modernist pantheon. To relegate Jeffers to an "anti-Modernist" position, however, as many critics have done, denies him a place in his own age and reduces his writing to a superficially Romantic categorization: i.e., nostalgic, organicist and emotional. Jeffers' poetry is simply less easily defined than this. While this paper presents Jeffers as, in part at least, a proto-Romantic in his concern for envisaging life as a whole,

rather than in fragments, a concern which directed his energy towards the "meaning and reality extrinsic to the artwork" (Gelpi in Thesing 192), rather than to the autotelic world of the text, this term is also misleading. The age he lived in provided him far fewer certainties concerning the power of the imagination and the attentiveness of audience. The Romantic qualities Jeffers displayed were tempered by his times, the tumultuous span of two world wars when America was "progressing" both in material wealth, and in the decay of social ideals and environmental well being. Those who continued to exalt in the sanctity, and immutability, of the individual imagination, as Whitman once did so confidently in Leaves of Grass - "I celebrate myself and sing myself/ And what I shall assume you shall assume"[49] - were the only true anachronisms. In the time Jeffers was writing there was no inviolable self to sing, nor were there listeners with whom one could easily share assumptions. Therefore his Romantic tendencies were metamorphosed by the age: his prophetic qualities often became, to his critics, a tendentious preachiness, while his pantheism and organicism were transmuted into the harsher, and era- appropriate theory of Inhumanism.

Critical response to Jeffers was, and still is, dramatic. From his first publicly received[1] volume, Roan Stallion, Tamar and other Poems, in 1925, there were supporters such as Mark Van Doren and James Rorty who raved ecstatically about Jeffers as a "poet of genius" (Karman 43), along with an almost equal number of detractors such as Genevieve Taggard who seethed, "If [the world] were sick enough to accept Jeffers, it

[1]Flagons and Apples, self-published in 1912, and Californians, published by Macmillan in 1916, were mostly volumes of imitative verse which garnered little attention.

could hardly live long enough to do so" (66). Titles of reviews ranged from the sympathetic, "Jeffers: The Undeserved Neglect" (171) to the misled, "The Disillusioned Wordsworth of our Age" (166), to the rancorous, "A Grim and Bitter Dose" (163).Those critics who laud Jeffers for his insight, the majesty and beauty of his verse, and his determined polemics, will be enjoined throughout this paper. First, however, two examples of critics, one from the forties and fifties, the Californian poet, Yvor Winters, and one from the late eighties, the esteemed Wallace Stevens critic, Helen Vendler, will be introduced as representatives of common, if perhaps more than usually vitriolic, misreadings of Jeffers.

These critics present us with two typical complaints. First, is the accusation that Jeffers is a misanthropist, and worse, a "sentimental" one, according to Winters, which seems a contradiction in terms. For Vendler, Jeffers' "misanthropy" is caused by "moral timidity" (15) which she believes was caused by the psychological trauma inflicted on him during his "lonely" childhood. Vendler asserts that, due to this apparently maladjusted childhood, Jeffers was so disturbed that he had to create a sadistic poetry, "fixed in youthful self discovery"(16), from a coldly aloof standpoint. This is, first of all, a conflation of the poet with the poetry. From my critical viewpoint, the facts of Jeffers' biography should be of negligible importance when considering the themes and content of his work. Secondly, by the time Jeffers fixed on such themes as incest as a symbol for racial introversion, and the concomitant necessity for an Inhumanist philosophy, he was well into his thirties, hardly a precocious Rimbaud. That these themes are to be found consistently throughout his mature work is a sign of commitment to what Jeffers believed was an honest ideological stance, rather than an occasion for his indictment as a repetitive

bore. Thirdly, as David Copland Morris notes in an insightful rebuttal to Vendler's attack, Vendler is reading Jeffers through "narrow modernist presumptions" (2) in which what is valorized is an attitude of "aesthetic humanism" (Lentricchia 20). What Jeffers conceived of as the most "adult" way of thinking, Vendler's mindset forces her to see as only childish. For Vendler, voicing concern for the non-human world in a consistent, polemical fashion is a sign that the writer is trapped, perhaps, in something akin to Freud's "oceanic feeling," which Morris summarizes as a state associated with "arrested development"(4). Both Vendler and Winters make the same mistake of misreading Jeffers' preoccupation with such acts as incest as simple perversity, and as a metaphorical equating of this perversion with "life." For Jeffers, however, as he explained many times in his letters, the act of incest was not metaphorical, but symbolic, and furthermore, it symbolized a certain kind of "life," not the entirety of life itself. In an early letter to George Sterling in 1925, he described it clearly as representative of "human turned-inwardness" (CL 35) in which our race fornicates with its own material obsessions to the detriment of the health of the whole. It is simplistic to extrapolate from this that he hated life, as another critic, Louis Untermeyer, also claimed. Anyone who truly loathed existence would not bother to create symbols which are, after all, a means of connection to other humans, a way of embodying transmittable visions. Furthermore, one only has to read a sampling of his poetry to realize that it was his overwhelming love of life, and his ire over its reduction in the hands of industrialists and institutions, that caused him to hold such an unrelenting position, the depth of this feeling contained in such lines as "A little too abstract, a little too wise,/ it is time for us to kiss the earth again" (SP 576).

The second typical complaint voiced by Winters and Vendler takes the form of their resistence to his poetics and prosodic values. Winters, basing his critique of Jeffers on the primary, and unsupported, assumption that he is an "anti-intellectualist," describes his poetry as "loose, turgid and careless"(Karman 85). Judging him in stringently lyrical, rather than narrative, terms is part of Winters' problem and indeed, part of the difficulty that the New Critics, whose theories of poetry Winters espouses, had with Jeffers. The New Critics dismissed narrative writing, for the most part because the form did not provide the kind of linguistic laboratory they sought in which to test notions of prosody and semantics. As they "largely concerned [themselves] with the poem's paraphraseable content (ambiguity, paradox etc.)" while ironically claiming at the same time that "poetry is unparaphraseable" (Gross 15), the lyric offered a suitable length in which to undertake these experiments. Additionally, the autotelic lyric was more likely than the architectonic narrative to present the abstract tone and meter, the "severe ontological purity" (169) demanded by New Critics such as John Crowe Ransom. The strictures of New Criticism seem partly to stem from a reaction to the chaos spawned by this century's World Wars, as if by retreating into the contemplation of confined forms, they could enact an erasure on reality. Therefore, in their refusal to connect Jeffers' words with the world, they could only deem him uselessly repetitive and devoid of literary significance because he was unwilling to restrain his "meaning" within their frameworks. For Vendler, the concern was also with Jeffers' alternate theory of prosody in which the emphasis is on a "tidal regularity"(CL 28) of lines established in a narrative structure of "alternate ten and five"(Zaller 22) stresses. As this form took its generative force more from natural

processes than from academic training, Vendler simply rejects it as a "feeble theory" (19). Even more shockingly, she attempts to interpret his "oratorical" style in Freudian terms, as a kind of compensation for his "friendless, freakish... and timid" nature, straddling, in paradoxical fashion, two critical positions, the formalist and the psychoanalytic. Winters and Vendler, among other like-minded critics, fail to read Jeffers on his own terms, wishing to categorize him in ways which enable them to ignore the intricacies and implications of his poetics and his philosophical stance.

Robinson Jeffers was a poet who subverted the humanist ideology, autotelic prosody, and urban preoccupations of his age, both as a means of response to what he saw as "the tendencies of our civilization, which has very evidently turned the corner down hill" (CL 117), and as a condition of his sense of being outside of time, of holding a cosmic vision in which the whole of life, past and present, mattered, not its individual, temporal parts. This thesis will explore the direction that several of these subversions adopted as revealed in two of Jeffers' narrative poems, "The Loving Shepherdess" and The Double Axe, one of his verse dramas, "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," and in a sampling of his lyrical meditations. The first direction is his critique of the American pastoral/frontier mythology through the use of apocalyptic and abject imagery, the second is the development of his philosophy of Inhumanism, and the third, stemming from these two, is his radical re-perception of the human/environment relationship, a re-visioning that has been credited for the formation of many current eco-based poetics. An elaboration of these terms will establish a framework through which Jeffers can be re-positioned as a courageous and unique poet whose poetry and philosophical standpoint is

becoming increasingly essential as the earth, under the pressure of an ultra-humanist agenda, erodes.

The Erupting Country:

a) Counter- Pastoralism

Of all Robinson Jeffers' contemporaries, perhaps the one most closely connected to him in terms of public perception was Robert Frost. After all, both poets, in Kyle Norwood's words, expressed "a contempt for modern America" (Thesing 69), a contempt which they embodied in their desire to live apart from urban centers: Frost resided for much of his life on a New England farm, while Jeffers remained for over forty years an inhabitant of a stone house he built with his own hands on the promontory of the Big Sur coast line. Both were considered to be eccentric, archaic figures, clinging to the past through the forms and content of their poems and philosophical positions. Yet, Frost for all the resistance that met him as a "regional" poet, has enjoyed far more popularity and acceptance in the academy, and with the reading public, than has Jeffers. One reason for this lies in the difference between their usages of the pastoral genre that both, at various points in their oeuvres, explored. For whereas Frost's pastoralism maintained, to a large extent, the genre's classical proportions, depicting acts of husbandry on the land as in "Mowing" or describing nostalgic scenes of boyish communion with nature as in "The Pasture," Jeffers' narratives such as "Give your Heart to the Hawks" and "Thurso's Landing" inscribe a new, uneasy, instantiation of the pastoral in which, as Norwood again notes, the abject and the sublime are interrelated. While Frost's New England landscape

provides a "given" and secured backdrop for the actions of his characters - "the fields were ours/and by the brook our woods were there" (26) - Jeffers' Carmel coast marks a tenuous boundary between the severe and inhuman eternal contained in stone and ocean, and the human mutations enacted on the land by "development." Frost suppresses the sordid and sinister aspects inherent in both humans and the "natural order" of things, while Jeffers finds a strange solace in accessing the "truth" which is often found in paradoxical and multivalent states of being.

In other words, Frost plays into the myth that America would prefer to maintain concerning its status as a pastoral nation, in which even the most brutal forms of technology can be transformed into a means of improving "the waste land" into "a garden" (Marx 183). Like Thoreau, Frost transmuted the pastoral trope into a way of "thinking about real life" (130). He took the conventions of the genre adopted by Americans from a European model and wrote many of his poems as if such an uncomplicated existence were both possible and desirable. Conversely, Jeffers, although he was occasionally given to romanticizing the lives "of men who ride horses, herders of cattle on the mountain pastures" (SP 581), for the most part refused to simplify the rigors of living on the land. Furthermore, while resisting the false passivity of "the middle landscape" (Marx 133), Jeffers also opposed the myth of the frontier in which a rugged individualism was posited as a trait capable of claiming and defining the wilderness. By re-vivifying the land as an untamable locus, a complex nexus of eternal and uncertain forces, through the use of an apocalyptic imagery in which the end of human hegemony over nature was imagined, Jeffers took steps to deconstruct this damaging fantasy of

human dominance and, in doing so, insured that his version of the pastoral would not be the one valorized by the establishment.

The pastoral genre, according to Raymond Williams in his seminal text, The Country and the City, began in the ninth century before Christ, in Hesiod's Works and Days. In this "epic of husbandry"(14), we see a use of the genre consistent with John Ruskin's view of the world of the Greeks in which "mankind took very little interest in anything but what belonged to humans, caring in no wise for the external world, except as it influenced their destiny" (Bate 72). Works and Days detailed the pragmatics of an agricultural existence in which thrift and prudence were highly esteemed, the earth and its species being considered only as they were of monetary value to humans. By Theocritus' time, however, the genre was commencing its primary instantiation as a nostalgia-embodying form. Rural settlement began to be described less often in terms of trade, and more in terms of the pleasure to be derived from the "smell of opulent summer...pears at our feet and apples at our side rolling in plenteousness" (Theocritus in Chambers 15). Perhaps pleasure is emphasized because independent rural living was threatened in Theocritus's, and later Virgil's, time by the eviction of small land owners and the confiscation of their property. The pleasurable pastoral is therefore always sketched in retrospect by one who needs must imagine utopias under the cruel imposition of distance. Even in Wordsworth's day, the poet John Clare was writing this kind of pastoral, a nostalgia-tinged lament from a dispossessed labourer, modeled after himself, whose livelihood on the land, as well as his primal attachment to it, is being violently eroded by acts of enclosure. This form of the pastoral, in terms of its connection to lived

experience, was a precursor of the American instantiation of the genre, which became couched in a more optimistic or apocalyptic tone once transported to the dramatically different conditions of the New World.

The secondary shape the genre took, as literary trope, was composed in tandem with the first. The shape was nicely summarized as to aim and intent by Alexander Pope when he observed that, "we must therefore use some illusion to render a Pastoral delightful; and this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries" (19). Pope's eighteenth-century view encapsulated the aesthetic that had governed the English pastoral from Spenser to Marvell in which shepherds sang courtly love songs to ever-young shepherdesses while nymphs cavorted around elysian streams. Although Wordsworth, in the nineteenth century, believed that he was describing "low and rustic life...in a selection of language really used by men" (Richter 286), quite probably his source for this misconception came less from his actual experience of living among such men, and more from having absorbed pastoral literature in which rustics spoke in aestheticized dialects. Wordsworth even seems to acknowledge such an influence when he acclaims Pope, in the Preface, for being able in his verse to "render the plainest common sense interesting, and even frequently to invest it with the appearance of passion" (296). Writing this form of the pastoral has since been a means of maintaining the myth that there exists a race simple in habits and yet refined in speech, a people steeped in "pure" rustic values who display none of the crudities of real "country folk." As Lawrence Buell sketches in his groundbreaking work, The Environmental Imagination, the pastoral genre, has, and continues to contain the possibility to be, as

with Vergilian examples of the form, "counter-institutional," yet it also has been, as with pastoral romances, "institutionally sponsored" (50). The artificial countryside concocted by courtly pastorals effectively enabled the appropriation of land to continue by performing an act of erasure. "Real" peasants simply no longer existed. They had been appropriated and transformed by the genre into objectifications of the literary gaze. The implications of this in terms of the land's continual eradication at the same time that its existence is being re-codified in cultural production[2] should be more obvious today than ever before.

Raymond Williams' introduction of the term "counter-pastoral"(23) to describe those instantiations of the genre that refuse to participate in this form of erasure, and Leo Marx's delineation of the "complex" versus the "sentimental" pastoral (5), in his valuable text, The Machine in the Garden, will be key concepts in developing a further understanding of the pastoral genre as it came to be written, first in America in general, and secondly, by Robinson Jeffers himself. Williams only briefly addresses the concept of "counter-pastoralism," which he illustrates by using a couplet from Sir Walter Raleigh: "But Time drives flocks from field to fold /When rivers rage and rocks grow cold." Here, instead of the fantasy of endless summer as epitomized by courtly pastorals, we have "the relentless intrusion of time"(23) into the scene, which inevitably forces the inclusion of pain and history into the formerly suspended vista. The concept of "counter-pastoralism" will be fleshed out, through Leo Marx's reading of the complex pastoral, in Chapter

[2]A modern example of this would be nature programs on television which present a virtual notion of nature through the use of various framing devices without addressing how they are, in fact, implicated in the despoiling and obliteration of the nature they claim to be "capturing"and preserving.

One's consideration of Robinson Jeffers' "The Loving Shepherdess," a poem whose incorporation of temporal and spatial demarcations, as well as the destabilizations of pain, into an American pastoral setting, makes it an ideal representative anecdote (in Kenneth Burke's words) for this subversive genre. Complex pastoralism, as elaborated in "The Loving Shepherdess," seeks to inscribe a renewed relationship to the land defined less through politicized mythifications and more through its tangible presence.

b) Apocalyptic and Abject Pastoralism

Although Robinson Jeffers has been deemed an apocalyptic writer by many critics over time, they have often either started from a narrow understanding of the word "apocalyptic" or have interpreted his apocalyptic train of thought in limited terms. Associations of apocalypse with visions of fire and brimstone, death and destruction, have clouded the perception of Jeffers as an apocalyptic poet. For instance, in 1948, reviewer Seldon Rodman sketched a picture of Jeffers as a stark Jeremiah, sitting in his stone tower, "waiting exultantly for the Bomb"(Karman 157), a summative and simplistic assumption of Jeffers' eschatological predictions. Earlier, in 1937, the poet Muriel Rukeyser had also attempted to sum up the elements of Jeffer's apocalyptic vision, concluding more scientifically, but just as partially, that it involves, "Spengler's cyclical decline of cultures, and behind that the final exhaustion of the universe resulting from the second law of thermodynamics." Neither the first critic's reduction of apocalypse to final violence, nor the second critic's assessment of apocalypse as something that confines itself to a scientific sphere, are accurate appraisals of Robinson Jeffers' apocalypticism.

Although neither the violent implications, nor the scientific realities, can be excluded from an exploration of Jeffers' apocalyptic vision, the most crucial aspect of it for the purposes of this study is how Jeffers' version of apocalypse is interwoven with his complex pastoralism, entailing that his eschatological predictions which stem from a rural locus, are effected, as well as affected, by the specificity of place, and thereby become transformative prophecies. Douglas Robinson, in his text American Apocalypses, delineates five kinds of apocalypticism. Among these are the transcendental, which is focused on the creation of a new heaven, as in the Bible's Book of Revelation, and the "annihilative" (26), a type more common to the Modernists for whom the term apocalypse was thought to be the signifier of an "imminent end to history controlled by no God at all and followed by the void." Jeffers apocalypticism, however, is ecologic, concerned with the final establishment of natural interrelatedness. The only one of Robinson's kinds of apocalypse that is pertinent to the parameters of this study is the one he titles "Romantic," the term here implying that the fallen world is imaginatively re-incorporated by the artist in order that it may be "revealed as the paradise it already is." However, for Jeffers, the entire world isn't fallen, but merely the human element, due mainly to the dominance of Christian and humanist ideologies. Furthermore, the paradise always already there is not the "new Eden" of simple pastoralism, but is perhaps akin to what Kirk Glaser in his pertinent essay, "Desire, Death and Domesticity in Jeffers' Pastorals of Apocalypse," refers to as the "geologic sublime" (Brophy 140), in which the only true beauty resides in that remaining in the "context of geologic time."

Utilizing aspects of Glaser's concept of the "geologic sublime," the following chapter will examine "The Loving Shepherdess" in terms of how its apocalypticism is landscape-centered, as well as how this pastoral space works to exclude and elide humans. It will also suggest how apocalyptic imagery is transfigured by this space so that humankind, not natural forces such as fires or whirlwinds, comes more explicitly to represent the end. This end, of course, is reserved for the human race, and not for the earth, whose beauty lies in its participation in the Nietzchean cycles of "eternal recurrence"(Coffin 68), rather than in the illusion of continual progress. Jeffers' counter pastorals are apocalyptic because they trace the movement from a "corruption to a new innocence" (Robinson 3), while innocence is re-configured as a state inclusive of time, pain and history, in which humanity's pre-eminence is negated.

The abject is a crucial characteristic of this passage from corruption to innocence. Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, as elucidated in her seminal essay, "Powers of Horror," presents the abject as an ambivalent presence, an ineradicable force that both assists in the repulsion of waste matter (by providing the gagging reflex, for instance), and desires to draw one towards it into a state of "jouissance" (Oliver 236). For the purposes of this study, the abject will be interpreted as a channel that leads Jeffers, in his work, from the somatic to the "geologic sublime." Clare Walker, the "heroine," of "The Loving Shepherdess," offers a means by which Jeffers can subvert Arcadian tropes and posit an apocalyptic pastoralism. The representation of Clare's bodily functions in the poem, and of her as a "stray...on the territories of animal" (235), present an attention to

the abject which then enables Jeffers to pass beyond it into the "geologic sublime." As an awareness of the abject, in Kristeva's terms, results in "jouissance," so a consciousness of the abject for Jeffers meant an acknowledgement of the phenomenological forces of nature, even in their corrupt, incestuous forms. This awareness, in turn, guides one, in his estimation, to a state of sublimity that resides in the eternal, deep workings of the earth and to an apocalypse that re-establishes the inhuman planet.

Unlike Frost, Jeffers did not shy away from abjection in either form (his excessive lines) or in content (his emphasis on incest, on the visceral). Abjection surfaces in his reaction to the false front of the mythical American Arcadia, and informs his apocalyptic revisioning in which the human abject must always be accessed, then unearthed, before the possibility exists for the new "geologically-sublime" order to re-assert itself among the ruins.

From Man to Not-Man: Jeffers' Philosophy of Inhumanism

Robinson Jeffers' unique perspective on the positioning of humans in a post-Copernican universe has been criticized as pessimistic, misanthropic or nihilistic. It has also been interpreted as everything from "an apocalyptic fiction," (Coffin 6) to a religious "creed" which describes the "experience of meaningfulness" (Messer 12-15) amid the anomie of modern-day society. Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy established itself from a synchresis of sources, although its two main influences were Nietzsche and Emerson. Both philosophers Jeffers read and absorbed at an early age, becoming particularly fascinated with Nietzsche's Thus Spake Zarathustra and Emerson's Nature. Nietzschean concepts that are explored, and critiqued, most fully in Jeffers' work are his notions of "The Will to Power"in which self-mastery is achieved through personal transcendence, and the progeny of this drive, "the Overman" who repudiates conformity by overcoming pettiness and mediocrity. According to Arthur Coffin's study, Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Inhumanism, Nietzsche was the formative influence behind such Jeffersian characters as the Reverend Barclay, Tamar and Fera Martial, all of whom meet the disastrous fate of those who seek to define themselves as entities outside the natural order. In their tragic downfall, they provide ample evidence for the necessity of an Inhumanist philosophy which finds its basis in another Nietzschean theory, that of "Eternal Recurrence"(Coffin 67). Eternal Recurrence is a version of the idea of "Culture Ages" (205). This theory was also elaborated by Spengler, Vico and Petrie to describe a historical continuity in which the pattern of one age is merely repeated by the pattern of a future one. The detrimental possibility of "infinite progress"(68) in terms of the earth's carrying capacity is nullified by this cyclical rhythm. Jeffers took the principle of Eternal Recurrence and applied

it not only to human history, but to the history of the earth, rendering human generation one minute, and tautological, facet of the gigantic cycling of planets and ecosystems. Behind Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy also lurked Nietzsche's admonition, "The poets? The poets lie too much" (61), leading him to resolve that regardless of external pressures or criticism, he would attempt to tell the truth in verse and "not to pretend to believe in optimism or pessimism or irreversible progress; not to say anything because it was popular..." (Shebl 11).

In contrast to Nietzsche's long-term effect on the development of Jeffers' Inhumanism, Emerson's influence seems more of a starting point. For Emerson, perhaps more so than for other Transcendentalists, while Nature is permanent and man transient, man still takes precedence over Nature. Nature is his source for metaphor, his impetus for the creation of art, and, on the whole, an entity "made to serve" (50). Parallels can be drawn between Emerson and Jeffers in terms of their attitude towards the "artificial and curtailed life of cities" (39) and the concomitant necessity for country living. However, for Emerson, the rural scene provided the most potent symbols for his transcendental philosophy while for Jeffers, the country, in its particulars, was phenomenologically significant. And while Emerson likely initiated Jeffers' thought concerning the nature of how "nothing but is beautiful in the whole" (30), Emerson meant by this that it was an artist's responsibility to complete what Nature started by means of his sculpture or symphonies, while Jeffers adapted this philosophy in a geological sense to imply that all parts must be seen as functioning as one, and that no aspect of the entirety should be extrapolated as containing independent significance. Both Nietzsche and Emerson

therefore provided the foundation of Inhumanism, but its real, and enduring source was the landscape that Jeffers was surrounded by and immersed in for most of his writing life.

From his home on the cliffs of the Californian coast line, Jeffers witnessed, in the fertile collisions of nature and humanity, the immense necessity of the earth's recurrent cycles in comparison to the industrious and tragic interruptions caused by man. In a letter to the American Humanist Association in 1951, Jeffers set himself up in fierce opposition to the virtual theologizing of the humanist stance, as found to varying degrees in both Nietzsche and Emerson, as well as in the work of many Modernists. Rather than obsessing on human affairs, which are only eventually a source of "distraction," Jeffers proposes that artists should instead focus their energies on the "beauty of the earth and the outer universe, the divine nature of things" (CL 342). Yet why did Jeffers determine that this shift of perspective was required? The answer is at least two-fold: the first relating to ecological concerns, and the second to the poetic.

Inhumanism forms the philosophical basis for what will later be referred to as Jeffers' nascent eco-awareness. With its tenets of inclusion and deflation, it provides a means by which we can anchor ourselves to the material world with reverence, instead of according only an utilitarian significance, from our hierarchical perch, to non-human entities. These tenets are given voice both throughout Jeffers' letters and in the introductions to his books, as well as, of course, in the poems themselves, particularly in the character of Orestes in "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," and "The Inhumanist" section of The Double Axe, along with many of the lyrics. The necessity for a state of balance,

attained by the combination of these two tenets, is expressed most clearly by Jeffers' usage of the incest symbol. In Tamar's couplings with her brother Lee, the Reverend Barclay's rape of his daughter, April, and Fayne's tryst with her brother-in-law, Michael, we observe the epitome of what Jeffers calls "racial introversion" (CL 291). In such acts, humans become blind to the world, caught in an insatiable desire for images of their own humanness, until that very desire destroys the familial bond with the entirety of creation. This narrowing mode of relation to the planet can also be represented in terms of the vicissitudes of our economic system in which, as David Copland Morris notes, "man has gone beyond the mere use of nature to satisfy basic material needs to the total domination of nature in the pursuit of artificially created wants. Other modes of relation to the environment...respect, awe, wonder...have been forsaken" (Ideology 32). Inclusion and deflation, both of which are briefly summarized in a 1942 letter, seek to re-address this balance. In this letter, Jeffers states that humans must be re-considered as part of the "divine whole" (CL 291) of the universe, as one aspect of the magnificent interplay of natural forces, not their master. All, even insentient beings, as creations of the energy Jeffers called "God," must be included as parts of the complete design, none of which can be designated less necessary than another fragment. To effect this change of perception, the human ego must be deflated so that we realize we are but a minute manifestation of this life energy and not a "miraculous intrusion." Part of this realization, however, is that we are mutable and transient as a species, and that the universe will be here "long after [man] has totally ceased to exist." The Inhumanist perspective therefore requires a challenging shift of emphasis from "man to not-man," not merely acknowledging

the other as with Emerson's belief in nature as "NOT ME" (7), but in accepting the greater necessity and permanence of non-human nature. This does not entail, as Neal Bowers suggests in his comparison of Jeffers and W.S.Merwin, that Jeffers must therefore regard "human beings as creatures outside the natural cycle" (Thesing 13). On the contrary, it is obvious in many of his poems such as "The Shears" and "Monument" that Jeffers does not hold the opinion that humans are "placeless beings" (51) in John A. Livingston's words. Instead, he asserts that we are intimately implicated in these cycles, if not eternally, then at least temporally, and yet, to the earth's detriment, are in the process of putting this knowledge under erasure. In the latter poem, for instance, Jeffers quite poignantly states,

> 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. (CP 419)

While Jeffers here acknowledges the human race as the "beneficiary" of skills and sensory capacities that perhaps other species lack, he refuses to privilege these attributes as in any way necessitating the consideration of humans as apart from, rather than a part of, these ecological cycles. If anything, because all other life forms, outside of humans, are integral to each other (the Dodo's droppings providing the humus for the fertilization of the Calvaria tree, the extinct flower "viola cryana" containing the pollen favoured by a now-endangered species of blue butterfly), it is other species who should take precedence. Perhaps this is one of the key re-visionings of Inhumanism, as Alan Brasher asserts in his study of the connections between Transcendentalism and Jeffers' philosophy, that nature is "the value to be examined and the human a metaphor to express it" (Thesing 149).

Just how Jeffers explores the possibilities inherent in the reversal of the traditional use of nature as a psychological backdrop for human drama is a subject for Chapter Three's discussion of Jeffers as an environmental poet. Chapter Two, however, will be directed to how Jeffers reconfigures the place of humans, as wellas his own poetics, by means of his Inhumanist perspective.

If balance can be deemed the final "goal" of an Inhumanist philosphy, then inclusion and deflation could be viewed as "soft" and "hard" means to attain that level of functioning. A lucid example of Inhumanism's soft side can be found in The Loving Shepherdess when Clare Walker echoes Jeffers' sentiment in the poem "Monument" by detailing how her love has extended far beyond humankind to the

> ...beetle beside my hand in the grass
> and the little brown bird tilted on a stone,
> The short sad grass.... yes the hill though drunk with dear blood (SP 242).

While Jeffers reminds us, in "Monument," to remember our equal role in the perpetuation of "magnificence," Clare has become the epitome of someone who makes no distinctions between life forms but, in effect, wishes so desperately to become a part of natural cycles that she wants to offer her hand to a hawk for meat, and envisions herself as a universe around her never-to-be-born child. Jeffers eloquently expresses this version of Inhumanism in a letter to Sister Mary James Power in 1934, stating: "I believe that the universe is one being, all its parts are all in communication with each other...parts of one organic whole...The parts change and pass, or die, people and races and rocks and stars, none of them seems to me important in itself, but only the whole" (CL 221). This inclusionary side of Inhumanism remains continually valid, in Jeffers'

outlook, for other life forms, but on occasion, often when spurred on by anger towards human acts of desecration towards the environment, during the two World Wars, for instance, or when Highway 1 was built between Carmel and Big Sur (Karman 65), Jeffers' tone shifts into hard Inhumanism. He then belies an eagerness to emphasize the fact that, not only are humans one species among many but that, of all species, we are the ones least required for the planet's smooth functioning and are often little more than unnecessary addendums to an intricately interdependent system. This version of Inhumanism is most prominent in "The Inhumanist"section of The Double Axe, but it's also evident in poems such as "An extinct vertebrate." Here, Jeffers rails against human impact on the earth, whether it be our plundering it with the tools of agriculture, or our aestheticizing it with the tools of art, claiming that "whatever we do to a landscape - even to look - damages it" (CP 438). As in "De Rerum Virtute" where Jeffers refers to humans as "sick microbes" (402), in "An extinct vertebrate" he suggests that we secrete a poisonous "miasma." Finally he determines that, with the passing of time, the negligent human race will vanish, leaving behind only "quaint bulks of concrete" into which nature's elements will have burrowed, blessedly transfiguring our ruins.

While this hard version of Inhumanism is the one that provoked critics' ire and cries of "misanthropist" or "nihilist," upon examination, it proves to be neither. If nihilism entails the repudiation of the entirety of existence, then Jeffers was certainly no nihilist as his skepticism and denial extended only to the human race, not to the earth or cosmos. That he is mistakenly referred to as such pinpoints the nature of what David Ehrenfeld calls, in his book of the same name, "the arrogance of humanism" in which

humans are depicted *as* "the entirety of existence" and the loss of other species, or "resources," as humanists prefer to call them, is no loss at all as "all finite or limited resources have substitutes" (17). Calling Jeffers a nihilist implies that a critique of humanity can be conflated with a dismissal of the earth, and that the planet is a mere appendage to human preeminence, an attitude to which he was violently opposed. As my description of the soft version of Inhumanism argues, Jeffers was no misanthropist either. However, he was often bitterly disappointed in what he saw as the human race's refusal to "grow up" and accept its humble place in the natural order instead of effectively demanding the entirety of the earth's energy and attention for itself. This problem of perspective, and the effect it wreaks on ecosystems, is dubbed by historian Paul Shepard "a failure of self-development" (Livingston 120). Shepherd details the three stages that all humans must pass through on their way to adulthood: first, a bond with the "mother," then to "Nature," and lastly "to the Cosmos" (121). Most humans, he asserts, have been stymied in their outward growth and have, therefore, remained fixated in the first stage, unable to connect to the nature around them, never mind the universe as a whole. This is a further reason why Helen Vendler's aformentioned critique of Jeffers as a writer "fixed in youthful self-discovery" (16) is so misled. Jeffers was quite obviously one of the few who had attained the third stage of development and was thus able to claim an intimacy with the universe. "Nihilist" and "misanthropist" are therefore charges leveled against Jeffers from the basis of what Livingston refers to as "zero-order humanism" (137) in which anyone who criticizes the "ideology of the necessary primacy of the human enterprise" (138) is instantly vilified. His prophetic, multi-layered philosophy is then

reduced to what Mercedes Cunningham Monijian calls his "denial" of human "interests and development" (Shebl 25) and the whole aspect of his admiration for and elevation of the non-human universe is obfuscated. There were certainly qualities Jeffers was opposed to in man, for instance, his propensity for displays of narcissism and his insistence on a form of "progress" that always teleologically positioned him on top. Humanity itself, however, he could consider as beautiful as any other species *if* its views were only "unhumanize[d]" (CP 399) a little, in order to assist its true participation in the "transhuman magnificence" (Morris 33) of things, released from the snare of its all-consuming ego.

Apart from the ecological repercussions of thinking in an Inhumanist strain, there were also the ways in which it entailed, for Jeffers, a re-envisioning of his poetics. When he first started writing and indeed, until he was thirty, Jeffers was mired in antiquated rhyme schemes and forms that refused to fit his developing philosophy, the foment of which was apparent as far back as 1912 when, in a letter to Una, he complained of how "machine-made" English plays are, how they never seem to "grow out of the country" (CL 17). By 1917, Jeffers had launched his opposition to the poetry that was currently being written by the French Symbolist-inspired Modernists. Dismissing it with such epithets as "defeatist...slight and fantastic, abstract, unreal" (Bennett 79), Jeffers determined that he would write a verse grounded in "substance and sense...physical and psychological reality." This would entail a reworking of his technique, rhythm and content to better exemplify his Inhumanist preoccupations.

While Jeffers did engage in elaborate, imaginative myth-ifications of the land in

terms of the sensational activities of many of his characters, with his first full-length narrative, Tamar, he accorded the land an equal, if not a larger presence. In Tamar, he reduces the amount of humanized similes and metaphors, and attempts to present the land through "direct" description as in this passage depicting the end of summer:

> All night the eastwind streamed out of
> the valley seaward, and the stars blazed...
> Stagnant waters decayed, the trickling springs that all the misty-
> hooded summer had fed
> pendulous green under the granite ocean-cliffs dried and turned
> foul, the rock-flowers faded... (SP 22)

Although his work at this time is not immune from instances of the pathetic fallacy, his aim is to expunge from his verse any technique which valorizes human modes of perception. In later work, of course, such as "Love the Wild Swan," he becomes gradually more cognizant of how even the most "direct" description of nature involves human mediation and how using the human construct of language to express an Inhumanist philosophy is problematic at best. His awareness, however, of the need for other modes of linguistic relation to the universe, is revolutionary in itself, regardless of the extent of its success.

The same short passage from Tamar also serves to demonstrate Jeffers other revisions of his poetics. For some time, Jeffers had been determined to "shear the rhyme-tassels" (Karman 82) from his poetry as they seemed to him not only outmoded, but an aspect of the affectation that afflicts those poets whose writing stems from a humanist bias. Rhyme contrives the poem like a manufactured object, not a force emanating organically from the earth itself, Jeffers felt. He began, therefore, with Tamar, to write in

his characteristic form, derived partially from Greek quantitative verse in which the stresses, and not the syllables, are emphasized, but mostly from the sounds and rhythms of the landscape he was surrounded by, and particularly, from the ocean's "tidal recurrence" (Bennett 108). This natural rhythm can be found in the alternation of long, washing-in lines with short, drawing-back lines, reminiscent of the sound of the surf surging onto the edges of the sand, then retreating with a hiss over stones. It can also be heard in the lengthy assonance of "eastwind/streamed/seaward" combined with the curt assonance of "fed/pendulous."

As to content, Jeffers, while writing Tamar, decided that he would waste no further time on subject matter that either pandered to momentary tastes, or expressed transient preoccupations. While he would continue to elaborate examples of human foibles in his poems, as well as including the appearance of such mutable objects as cars, airplanes and lime kilns, they were never his focus, but foils by which he praised the greater beauty and utility of non-human nature, or expressed ire over how humans alter the land, with either their tragedies or their technologies.

Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy permeates his life-work, providing the underlying impetus for his reconsideration of the pastoral genre, as well as acting as the basis for more contemporary eco-critical readings of his poetry, such as will be undertaken in Chapter Three. Inhumanism transformed Jeffers' relationships with his race, with the land and with his own poetics, through its radical shift of emphasis and perspective from a human-centered mode of thought, to one which both considers and celebrates what Patrick D. Murphy refers to as "anotherness" (Kerridge 40).

The Dark Ecologist: Reading Jeffers in the light of eco-criticism

The study of ecology, from the Greek *oikos*, meaning house, a term first coined in 1869 by Ernst Haeckel, was growing rapidly as a discipline during the years when Robinson Jeffers was writing his major works and developing his philosophy of Inhumanism. As a science it is subversive, from its premise of "inter-relatedness" (Glotfelty 92), to its narrative heuristics, in which symbols and metaphors are more likely to be invoked for explanatory purposes than "precise data" (74). Two of its early proponents were the naturalists John Muir and Aldo Leopold.

Muir, who battled all his life to preserve tracts of land such as the Sierra Mountain range (1890's) and Hetch Hetchy Valley (1913), was particularly aware of the detrimental effects of introducing "exotic transplants" (Livingston 36) into the wilderness due to their disruption of the delicate connections inherent in ecosystems. Leopold, author of The Sand County Almanac (1949), and originator of the "land ethic"[3] (Nash 197), was even more attuned to the principles of ecology, conceiving of the concept of an "ecological conscience" (192) in which ethics and aesthetics would prevail over economics once people understood nature's inter-relatedness. The two cultural means to this end, Leopold believed, lay in Darwin's theory of evolution and the development of the study of geology (193), both of which had the result of ousting man from his preeminence over other species and placing him instead in context, in Leopold's words, as only a "fellow-voyageur with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution" (196).

3 Leopold's land ethic philosophy determined that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Nash 197).

While there is no evidence that Jeffers read Muir, Leopold, or even Thoreau, it is evident that he was conscious of the scientific ideas of his day, believed they "widen[ed] horizons" (CL 59), and made efforts to include scientific principles in his poems. This is the case throughout an untitled piece from The Beginning and the End in which he sketches how the earth originated in "nitrogen from ammonia, carbon from methane...heavily built protein molecules/chemically growing" (CP 430). Jeffers' ecological perspective, however, stemmed less from current scientific thoughts and more from his commitment to place. Of course, as Lawrence Buell points out, "place patently does not guarantee ecocentrism" (253). In and of itself, being rooted to a specific locale does not entail an intimate awareness of, or respect for, its ecosystems, as long standing farming or mining communities have proved. Yet, for Jeffers, perhaps because he was not reduced to having a mainly economic relationship with the land, a sense of place provided the foundation for his acknowledgment of the problems of pastoralism, his Inhumanist philosophy and his nascent [4]ecological poetics.

Ecocriticism also stems from place-consciousness. In Chapter Three, Jeffers' current relevance to environmentally-conscious literature will be examined using frameworks from the recent theorizing of this genre. Its earliest, and for the most part, neglected text, was Joseph Meeker's The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary

4 The term "nascent" will be used here, and throughout Chapter Three, to acknowledge that Jeffers' ecological awareness was at an initiatory stage. He had progressed beyond nature poetry, in which nature is used solely as a backdrop, a "mirror" for human actions, but had not quite attained the writing of an eco-poetry in which "cyclic feedback systems" (Scigaj 11) are foregrounded. However, his ecological awareness, nascent though it may be, infuses his environmental writing so that not only the ethical dimensions of human interaction with nature are represented, but also ecological concepts such as seasonal renewal and "interdependency."

Ecology (1974). For the first time, vital questions were being asked concerning literature's relation to, and representation of, the natural world, such as whether the production of language "adapts us better to life on Earth [or]...sometimes estranges us from life" (4). Following Meeker, other critics like Annette Kolodny, Leonard Lutwack and Jonathan Bate, began to examine the validity of land-centered metaphors, how place shapes literature, and the linguistic battles writers launch to preserve the integrity of particular ecosystems. Substantial studies only emerged in the late nineties with Cheryll Glotfelty's and Harold Fromm's The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology (1996), and Buell's The Environmental Imagination (1997). The first is a gathering of essays of the past two decades which experiment with ecocritical techniques such as looking at a poem as an "energy pathway" (Rueckert) and examining how the pathetic fallacy can serve as a mode of connection to the earth (Evernden), while the second focuses more on the linkages between pastoralism and environmental thought. It was not until 1999, however, that the conservative Modern Language Association started taking notice of this "new" theoretical approach by dedicating a section of their PMLA journal to a "Forum on Literatures of the Environment." Ecocriticism has been a slowly accepted approach to the reading of literature. This is most likely because as well as tending to be interdisciplinary, it has the obvious effect of repositioning humans by reducing their minor, temporal concerns in relation to on-going crises such as acid rain, ozone depletion, toxic waste and deforestation, or by depositing them in an antagonist's role in regard to their interactions with the planet. Either way, ecocriticism undermines formerly hermetically-sealed, anthropocentrically-based readings of literature, from New

Criticism's focus on the autotelic world of the text, to post-structuralism's assertion that the "real" is but a linguistic construct. By paying attention to the connections between text and context, ecocriticism takes its place beside post-colonial and feminist readings of literature. However, its main concern resides in how literary production reflects relations with the non-human world of a domineering, domesticated or animistic nature. As with Jeffers' philosophy of Inhumanism, an ecocentric perspective is difficult for many theorists to accept because it refuses to valorize their preoccupation with text, language, or exclusively human-centered hermeneutics.

Ecocriticism takes as its basis the first tenet of ecology: "everything is connected to everything else"(Glotfelty 108). In other words, the proper study of man can't just be man, but the ground, the air, the vegetation, animals, insects and even the solar system must also be considered as they are deeply implicated in human lives, as well as being necessary, sustaining entities in and of themselves. How the author of a text relates to the earth around him or her and what repercussions this will likely produce in readers are therefore prime considerations when critiquing literature from an ecocentric perspective. In William Howarth's words, from his essay "Some Principles of Ecocriticism," "how a civilization regards its natural heritage...[provides] indicators of value that shape form and meaning" (Glotfelty 77). Texts are not created in an aporia - they are formed from the earth and return to the earth. In between these stages, they have the capacity to reflect whether we consider ourselves an aspect of the planet's energy, its "god -given" steward, or its triumphant despoiler. To read literature in an ecocritical light is to foreground the significant role that place, weather, environmental disasters and other tangible forces

have in forming our texts. This then better enables us to gauge whether we are indeed taking responsibility and working to alter our cataclysmic actions, or whether we are blindly skirting such crucial issues in favour of a literature which remains in the realm of mental titillation.

Chapters One and Two concentrate on Jeffers' narratives and verse dramas; Chapter Three will focus more intensively on a sampling of his meditative lyrics as they evoke most cogently his attempt to elaborate what Patrick D. Murphy calls a "dehomocentric philosophy" (Kerridge 40). As a response to such critics as Kenneth Rexroth, who suggested that Jeffers' imagery consists solely of monotonous reiterations of the "pathetic fallacy, elevated to a very system of response" (Karman 205), and Robert Brophy, who reduces Jeffers' incorporation of "vegetative and animal life" (10) to a mere backdrop for human action, Chapter Three will address how Jeffers' lyrics manifest an intimate relationship with place. This process of "earth-embedding" in Jeffers' poetry is not overtly implicated in human history, as compared to, for instance, Wendell Berry's farming poems in which he celebrates the generations that have lived in his Kentucky community in terms of their efforts at conscious stewardship. Jeffers' narratives, and even his lyrics, do tell the stories of those who live around Big Sur, from the man who was trampled to death by a stallion, to the woman who nursed a fawn, recurrences which do suggest the elaboration of a humanized ontology. However, Jeffers' focus is on the land as an entity with its own nisus. From this sense of humans as transient visitors on the planet, sometimes awe-full inhabitants, and sometimes insidious intruders, Jeffers' grounds his ecologically-aware lyrics. This perspective enables him to emphasize

magnitude, interconnectedness, the necessity for a defamiliarization of the landscape, and the environmental context in which we, as humans, act. Lawrence Buell's four criteria for environmentally-conscious texts as laid out in The Environmental Imagination (7-8) - that the non-human environment should be an integral presence, that human interest be deemed not the only legitimate one, that humans should be seen as accountable to the environment, and that nature is viewed more of a process than a constant - will be utilized as a contemporary framework through which to explore Jeffers' ecologically-aware articulations. Jeffers' consciousness of the difficulties inherent in attempting to express his earth-embedded views, the autonomous presence of the non-human other through the slippery, restrictive human construct of language, will also be foregrounded in opposition to Leonard Scigaj's claim, in Sustainable Poetry, that Jeffers never "incorporates into his poems self-reflexivity [or] responses to the problematics of representation and referentiality in language" (43).

To fault Jeffers' poetry for not overtly including a scientific awareness of the organic nature of the biosphere, or the knowledge of nature as "a series of interdependent feedback systems" (Scigaj 43), and in this light refusing to acknowledge him as an ecologically-sensitive poet, is a misled approach.This thesis asserts that Jeffers' experiments in counter-pastoralism and the development of his Inhumanist philosophy combine to render his poetry a fertile space for the employment of current eco-critical frameworks. No other poet of his time was so radically committed to the re-positioning of

humanity and the attendant vivification of the land. Much of the ecologically-aware poetry written over the past thirty years by Gary Snyder, Loren Eiseley, Denise Levertov, W.S.Merwin, and many others, owes much of its clarity of vision to Jeffers' own unrelenting, and sometimes extreme, mode of seeing the land as it is impacted by, and in many ways transcends, the technological and psychological misrepresentations of the human race.

One people, the stars and the people, one structure

You said the stars were flesh
founded
on faith
yet not in God (too conforming a gesture)

this silence
one edifice the face of a woman
grown cataract with sirens
the splintering of seasons

this silence

By saying the stars were flesh
you did not imply
transience
or *take & eat for this is my body* (a bleating of sheep)

this silence
one building
the limbs of a man
grown numb with steel,
the twisting of daytime
this silence

When you say the stars
are flesh
your eyes light upon your own
as if willing it to become
as stars (pure & hard, at a distance)

this silence
one structure
Pigeon Park & Hawk Tower
a galaxy
recurrent & tender

this silence

Chapter One: The Erupting Country

In The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx sketches out his notion of the complex pastoral through an examination of how pastoralism as a genre, and as an ideology, was imported into America in the eighteenth century. Due to the fact that Marx, unlike William Empson in his wide-ranging text, Some Versions of Pastoral, or Thomas Rosenmeyer in his rigidly historical study, The Green Cabinet, deals specifically with the unique conditions of the pastoral in its American instantiation, his approach is much more suited to a discussion of Jeffers' particular response to the pervasiveness and insidiousness of the pastoral myth in America.

Marx's discussion of the pastoral's revised significance in the New World spans two chapters, "The Garden" and "The Machine." In the first chapter, he delineates how, back in eighteenth century Europe, the fervor for a "new Eden" commenced from three sources: a renewed vogue for aesthetically-pleasing landscapes, an agricultural craze in which farm ownership became a common goal, and most importantly, the predominance of the "middle state ethic"(100) in which humans, configured as belonging in the center of The Great Chain of Being, were deemed to most healthfully reside in a state between wild and urban vistas. "Doctrines of perfectibility and progress"(88) abounded, such as those touted by Hugh Blair, in 1783 in his Lectures, when he easily conflated the requirements for pastoral poetry with the requirements for living the ideal life in which a person should "form to himself the idea of a rural state... a middle station" (103). The implied suggestion was that such a condition was indeed possible and worth striving for, in both poetry and in reality. In America, however, through the aegis of the Puritans and

other millenarian religious factions, the myth of the garden was less an aesthetic myth, as was manifested later in Europe, and more a Utopian "mode of belief" (143). Such fantasies of reclaiming a pure pastoral Utopia were perfectly suited to early visions of America as a desolate, godless wasteland. The wide scale clearing of forests was easily justified as part of God's plan of human dominion as unfolded in the Book of Genesis : "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it...be masters" (Jones 6). One seventeenth century writer even reported confidently that man is,"now but just entering on that dominion over the earth, which was assigned to him at the beginning. No longer, as once, does he stand trembling amid the forces of nature"(Marx 194). Industrialization, coming so quickly as it did on the heels of America's "discovery" then became, curiously enough, an embedded aspect of the pastoral myth, enabling technology to be viewed, in America, as the potent and positivist force that it still remains today.

In 1789, generally considered the start of industry in America (166), technology was not thought of as an agent of change, but was conceived of as something that could co-exist peaceably with ancient agricultural methods. This attitude to technology was utilized by the merchant, Tench Coxe, among others, as the basis for a propagandist platform. According to Marx, Coxe invoked the discourse of the pastoral ideal to reinforce the belief that industry would not only cause no harm to agriculture, and therefore, to America's attachment to its image as the last Eden, but that industry, and all its sordid, imported connotations, would actually be purified by the New World's "clear air and powerful sun" (158). With such rhetoric, Coxe contributed to the transformation of technology in America from its European association with decay and death (Blake's

"dark satanic mills") to a model in which even belching smokestacks were part and parcel of a "return to primal innocence" (Robinson 2). Artists of the day, such as George Inness, appropriated this propaganda in paintings like "The Lackawanna Valley" with its perfect fusion of pastoral and industrial tropes: the lounging country boy and his grazing sheep gazing wistfully, perhaps, at the puffing train curving through their field as, in the distance, the church and the factory each emit equal curls of smoke. By 1831, shortly after the railway had begun its takeover of the mass imagination, many thinkers, like the lawyer, Timothy Walker, had already started to envision an Automated Utopia in which Americans would be able to enjoy a leisurely pastoral existence while machinery performed all their menial tasks. From this vision developed the notion of the "technological sublime" (Marx 195) in which machinery's ability to "make pig and bar iron...card, spin and weave"(153, 154), and even, as in the case of the railroad, seem to annihilate "space and time" (194), was worshiped in the same way the Romantics venerated mountains and chasms. What little conception existed of the potentially deleterious effects of this blind obsession with technology was kept hidden away in the back pages of magazines with mainly elite circulations. Because technology, in America, seemed almost to have been developed as a sanctioned by-product of the agricultural colonization process, it, for the most part, escaped the vilification it warranted in Europe. The immense scope of the land, along with its apparently unalterable edenic image, allowed for a combination of the two ideologies: the pastoral and the technological, as never before known in history.

The crux of Marx's argument, however, is that from the collusion of the

pastoral myth and technological ideology in American history, two kinds of conceptions of pastoralism have emerged, the first "popular and sentimental" and the second "imaginative and complex" (5). The differences between Robert Frost and Robinson Jeffers will help to illustrate these approaches to ideas of nature in American thought. While Frost is not averse to being critical of encroachments upon his pastoral ideal, as in "A Brook in the City" in which he laments how "the brook was thrown/deep in a sewer dungeon under stone/in fetid darkness" (285), this is an exception to the general permanence rurality enjoys in Frost's work. Although, as Kyle Norwood points out, the human-created rural scene in Frost's poems may be "a process [that] is only provisional" (73), it is a remarkably enduring provisionality. Thus, in the piece, "A serious step lightly taken,"Frost contrasts the consistency of the farming life to the changeable nature of history in which "half a dozen major wars/and forty-five presidents" (190) will come and go while he and his family till the eternal soil. But perhaps the poem that demonstrates most clearly Frost's "popular and sentimental" pastoralism is a patriotic piece read first as a Phi Beta Kappa poem in 1942, "The Gift Outright." In this lyric, he encompasses the rhetoric of business men like Coxe, along with the early colonizers, when he claims confidently,

> The land was ours before we were the land's
> She was our land more than a hundred years
> Before we were her people (467),

in one stroke eliding not only indigenous populations, but also the autonomy of the earth itself, outside of human ownership. He also simultaneously invokes the prophecy of the New Eden in which the land was effectively appropriated ideologically before it was

"conquered" in actuality, a violent act that, in Frost's poem, is configured as a necessary, and blessed, "surrender." The last three lines of the piece evoke the paradox of those trapped in simplistic pastoralism. When Frost must describe humanity's impact upon the earth as populations invariably expand, he chooses to put the subject under erasure in order to depict the land as "vaguely realizing westward"of its own accord, a feminized entity that though "unstoried, artless, [and] unenhanced" will soon partake of these nebulous qualities, whose connotations are never elaborated upon. The illusion is maintained that human "enhancement" to the land, in whatever shape that may take, can indeed coexist with the Arcadian vision of an "undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness" (Marx 6). In Norwood's term, Frost continually erects "sheltering constructions" (73) such as metaphor, dialogue and humor, to avoid the abject apparent in both his rural scene, and in the technology that encroaches upon it.

With Jeffers' poetry, however, there is no attempt to fabricate a "popular and sentimental" pastoralism. While, unlike Thoreau, Whitman or Crane, for instance, Jeffers rarely mentions an overt technological presence in a landscape, such as trains or factories, he is continually concerned with the damaging manifestations of human intrusion, how it alters the actual land as well as how it deconstructs the myth of pastoral immunity. According to Marx, the second version of pastoralism is "imaginative and complex" (6) because it grapples with the mutability of the pastoral ideology in the face of industrialization and technology, or questions whether, in fact, such an idyll ever existed. It, therefore, refuses to blindly incorporate the two paradigmatic American

"moments" into one sylvan vision, but addresses their point of intersection, the origins of their construction, and their impact upon not merely humans, but often upon the earth itself. Two of Jeffers' lyrics, "Science" and "Praise Life," demonstrate his quest to articulate such a complex pastoralism.

In the first piece, Jeffers depicts humans in a way that is wholly antithetical to the popular pastoralists for whom man is the bold explorer, the hardy hewer or the patriotic tiller. To Jeffers, man is "introverted...taken up/like a maniac with self-love and inward conflicts" (SP 173). He may have crossed this continent a great distance spatially, but in terms of traversing the passage to an understanding of "the nature of things" he has barely shifted an inch. Here, Jeffers explicitly confronts the harm of the myth of the frontier in its configuration as an endlessly remote boundary marker between human acts of "conquest" and draws attention to the inevitable consequences of such violence. Concocting "edgeless dreams," Jeffers remarks, only leads to the birth of giants and knives (his symbols for scientific "progress"), over which we eventually have no control because we have so seamlessly subsumed them into our pastoral mythologies. Jeffers also feminizes nature, but unlike Frost, who renders her a passive supplicant at the male altar of exploration, Jeffers compares nature to the goddess, Diana, who, once seen naked, revolts at this audacity by having her voyeur, Actaeon, destroyed by his own dogs. He mocks human pretensions to knowledge of, and therefore power over, nature, by comparing it to "a pebble from the shingle/A drop from the oceans," an infinitely minute fragment of the whole. By confronting the collusion of the "edgeless dreams" that America has so effectively manufactured since its inception, with the knives and giants

of our rapacious machinery, Jeffers makes evident his "ironic distance from the pastoral dream" (Marx 129) in his ability to critique the consequences of its tenaciousness.

The second poem, with its tri-couplet, tri-stanzaic form, "Praise Life," could almost be interpreted as a direct address to proponents of simple pastoralism. Jeffers quite plainly deconstructs the notion that there was ever a country exempt from "human anguish" (570), ever an idyll immune to time and mortality. While present America may be less "clotted" with despair due to the immensity of its geography, it too is not exempt from agonies caused by human folly. When Jeffers says, in his boldly imperative fashion, "Remember that at your feasts," he is speaking not only of bodily feasts, but feasts of ideology in which the mind becomes crammed with concepts and myths designed to palliate the gnawing of real knowledge. Again, he emphasizes the need for wholeness in any appraisal. "Praise life," yes, (obviously not a misanthropist's command), but do not obscure the pain that co-exists with it or one risks creating a monistic approach to existence, sterile and monotonous as "a pebble/Rattled in a dry gourd." Jeffers' version of counter pastoralism entails the inclusion of both causes and effects into the rural scene. This inclusivity undermines the myth of co-existence in which axes and trees can be subsumed into a unified vision, as well as questioning the tendency towards a fragmented perception which refuses to address the possibilities inherent in seeing "the whole." In the process, the complex pastoral points out the flaws in human arrogance by clearly displaying the dark side of acquisition, colonialism and the abuse of technology. Apocalyptic ideology plays a role in both simple and complex pastoralism, but whereas the first form merely performs a mimesis of the colonizer's mythology in their

replication of the "new Eden," the latter questions this eschaton in order to propose a new beginning marked by a passage through the abject into the knowledge of the interrelatedness of things.

In an early poem, "Apology for Bad Dreams," Jeffers first acknowledged the land's effect on him, as well as the difficulties of using language for its expression. He wrote, shortly after moving to his house on the Carmel cliffs,

> This coast crying out for tragedy like all beautiful places,
> (The quiet ones ask for quieter suffering: but here the granite cliff the gaunt cypresses crown
> Demands what victim? The dykes of red lava and black what Titan? The hills like pointed flames
> Beyond Soberanes, the terrible peaks of the bare hills under the sun, what immolation?) (CP 209)

This passage elaborates the complex tension that Jeffers intuited between dichotomous modes of relating to the earth. His visceral connection to the vistas surrounding him seems to lead him, in this piece, to claim an animism for the coast in which it has the capacity to demand a human tragedy befitting its harsh yet sublime nature. However, a knowledge of Jeffers' philosophy of Inhumanism directs one to question this interpretation. Joseph Meeker suggests that the notion of tragedy rises out of "values that regard the personal self as the pinnacle of all worth and that regard the world as humanity's personal property" (23). Obviously, Jeffers did not subscribe to such a view, leading us to read his use of the word, "tragedy," in a multivalent and ironic fashion. His emphasis on the tragic, in many of his poems, underlies his strident critique of the humanist pastoralization of the land. When the earth is conceived of as merely backdrop,

a proscenium for our mythologized undertakings, Jeffers determined, it is invisibilized by being transformed into a symbol. Through this symbol-making, we reduce, if not eliminate, the earth's autonomous presence. As Jeffers states more directly, later in the poem, human mishaps, even "the insanities of desire," are not tragic because they are a part of the universe's roiling chemical energy, "essential," and those who, in their humanist desperation, invent victims are only having "bad dreams" (176), escaping the ambivalent real in favour of fantasized constructions.

Jeffers' critique of an American pastoralism in which the reality and therefore the integrity of the land is sacrificed to representations of it in poetry or popular culture as a placid locus devoid of complexities is presented in an even more cogent form in his poem, "Self-Criticism in February." In this piece, Jeffers' establishes a dialogue with those critics who castigate him for his "morbid" appraisal of both the earth and the human race (a critique that, incidentally, continues to the present date with Jacqueline Vaught Brogan's determination that because Jeffers' "valorize[s] the tragic" he therefore "dismiss[es] the optimistic"[Brophy 126]). It begins:

> The bay is not blue but somber yellow
> With wrack from the battered valley, it is speckled with violent foam-heads
> And tiger-striped with long lovely storm-shadows (SP 601)

Jeffers' negation, in the first line, of a common conception of the ocean as virgin and pellucid, is followed by a description of the actual state of the bay as one jaundiced by the turmoil of weather and human activity, its violence emphasized by the hard "k" and "t" sounds of "wrack/battered/speckled." Jeffers then follows this emendation with the interpolation of a voice which elides the accurateness of his vision, saying "*better eyes*

than yours/Would feel the equal beauty in the blue." Disregarding his assertion that there is no "blue," the critical voice continues to enforce a dominant cultural interpretation of nature and to infer that Jeffers presents a deficient perception. Jeffers' response to this accusation may be his most pointed statement on his opposition to the exclusion of temporal and even abject considerations in our treatment of nature:

> But the present time is not pastoral, but founded
> On violence, pointed for more massive violence; perhaps it is not
> Perversity, but need that perceives the storm-beauty (SP 601).

Here, he implicates the pastoral genre as developed from Theocritus through to Frost in which the real conditions of relating to the earth are often effaced for nostalgic or propagandistic purposes. More than ever, Jeffers suggests, faced with a world at war on many levels, we must resist a simplification of the land which only serves those who wish to control and destroy it. He gestures to a reciprocity that can exist between humans and the forces of nature when the land is not idealized, not objectified, but made instead a subject. Once conceived of as a subject, it then can be "perceived" clearly as an entity imbued with complexities, less an inanimate object of the human gaze than a dialogical response to humanity as another manifestation of nature's diversity. Jeffers' fixation on the "tragic" propensities of nature then reveals his awareness of the interconnected states that exist between humans and their environment, for instance, the war's echoing of the storm. His correlation of the abject in humanity with that in the non-human world is one of the means by which he repositions humans as an aspect of natural cycles, as well as a means to valorize nature's often dark, unrepresented facets. Jeffers' re-definition of the tragic became integral to the later development of a counter-pastoralism in his poetry

which incorporated tragedy's emphasis on the apocalyptic and the abject as a means, not to establish human victims, but to oppose the mis-representation of the land.

Jeffers' narrative poem, "The Loving Shepherdess,"[1] presents the most explicit example of his counter, or complex, pastoralism. Although not a "typical" piece in Jeffers' oeuvre due to its avoidance of the incest theme, its after-the-fact depiction of the main dramatic events of the piece, and its development of a female character, Clare Walker, who displays Christianized traits, "The Loving Shepherdess" is the fullest elaboration of a counter-pastoral vision to be found in Jeffers' work. Clare's detailed physicality, the apocalyptic characters she encounters on her journey, and Jeffers' evocation of a temporally and geographically real locus, are the central features of this critique of the simple pastoral whose elisions, for Jeffers, had extra-textual repercussions. The poem had its genesis in a footnote from one of Sir Walter Scott's novels, The Heart of Midlothian, regarding a shepherdess named Feckless Fannie who, according to legend, used to wander southern Scotland in the eighteenth century with her flock of thirteen sheep (Zaller 201). As a character, Clare Walker, like the pastoral myth itself, was transported from Europe and subsequently transformed by the American locale. Her name retains the purported freedom of the rural life - "clear walker" - now imbued with irony in this modern, post-frontier landscape which renders unimpeded movement impossible in the presence of land ownership and enclosure.

The narrative describes Clare's passage from her home, from which she has been exiled after her lover killed her father, and then marauding shipwreck victims occupied

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[1]Hunt, Tim ed. "The Loving Shepherdess" in The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers (Volume Two: 1928-1938). Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989.

the place, slaughtering one of her sheep. On the way northwards with her dwindling flock, Clare has become impregnated by a man who nursed her following one of her illnesses. Encountering land owners, ranch hands and the visionary, Onorio, throughout the months of her trek, she gradually loses her sheep to hunger, sickness and injury. Finally, she too succumbs to a lonely death as she labours to birth her child from a malformed pelvis, in her last moments wordlessly realizing that her acts of sexual selflessness with these men were only evidence for the failure of her savior mentality.

As a woman, Clare is curiously androgynous, described as having "boyishly flattened flanks" (CP II 51) and wearing a cloak that "might be a man's or woman's either" (45). Her androgyny performs at least two functions in the text: it allies her, in terms of her physiognomy, with Jeffers himself, which opens the poem to being read as a loose biography of Jeffers' quest for an Inhumanist understanding fraught by the incomprehension of critics. More significantly, Clare's androgyny, which includes the manner in which she dresses, establishes her immediately as a counter-pastoral "heroine." Unlike the highly-feminized figures of "traditional" pastorals who were often referred to as "nymphs,"[2] Clare has a physicality that, in its paradoxical state of hunger-induced leanness and its concurrent ever-readiness to nurture, acts as a signifier for the earth itself, rather than as a cipher for male textual or sexual pleasure.

While she does function as the provider of both kinds of pleasure, as will be elaborated later, she does so less from the femaleness of her character, than from its

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[2]See for instance, Edmund Spenser's "The Shepheard's Calendar" which features "fair Elisa"who was "yclad in scarlot, like a mayden Queene, and ermines white" (Chambers 15), or John Milton's "Song" of Sabrina who knits "twisted braids of lilies [in]...the loose train of [her]amber-dropping hair" (201).

inscription as an "offshoot" of the earth. That she is allied with the land is made clear by the numerous physical descriptions provided of her "wind-burnt lips...cracked by the sun"(45, 48), and the way her body has almost become an extension of the walking stick she uses, hewn from "rosy-barked madrone wood" (45). She seems to have become part of the earth's topography, subject to its erosions and excavations. As Mark Jarman points out, Jeffers "spent more precise details on [Clare Walker] than on any other character except Hoult Gore, the "'walking corpse'" (Brophy 112). This suggests the primacy of Clare's corporeality in revealing both her connection to earth, her distance from stereotypes of the pastoral genre, and, finally, her domestic mutability. At the same time, however, she is also often represented with the use of bird imagery. When attacked by Fogler's dogs, she shrieks an "inarticulate wildbird cry" (48), her cloak described as "flapping like wings" (61) around her slight figure. The climax of her absorption into the land, prior to her death, occurs when she is depicted abstractly as being like "some random immortal wish of the solitary hills" (72). This image is echoed by a lyric poem of Jeffers' in which human beings are conceived of as being but signs of "nature dreaming" (CP III 369). Here, the conventional system of metaphor is entirely reversed. Instead of nature supplying similes for human inscription, humanity becomes "like" a whim or a reverie of nature's, whose desires for life forms may be indifferently ascribed. Human will is subtracted, the race becoming but a manifestation of nature's subconsciousness. As Herbie Butterfield observes in his essay on "The Loving Shepherdess," Clare, in this line, becomes "less a person than an essence or metaphor of the world's body" (Zaller 210). This process renders her substantially different from a shepherdess situated in the

"traditional" pastoral genre who serves mainly to represent the idealized essence of the pastoral myth, and who is only connected to the earth through generic tropes such as "ivy buds" and "fragrant posies" (Chambers 74). The tracings that persist of Clare, as in the glimpse Onorio, the visionary, has of "the prints of her bare feet" captured in the "yellow mud" (103), are only temporal, suggesting a momentary reciprocity with earth, but one that will be effaced soon, likely by the rains of April which herald Clare's death.

There are other characteristics that Clare displays, besides the androgyny of her physicality and dress, to situate her in the counter-pastoral mode. Jeffers' attention to Clare's bodily functions, from orgasm to defecation, the fact that she is pregnant with an illegitimate and doomed child, and the manner in which the philosophy of soft Inhumanism circumscribes the way she relates sexually to the men she encounters along her journey, none of whom match the cliché of the "courtly shepherd," position her as the converse of the aestheticized shepherdess. The "naturalness" of her character depiction then propels the elaboration of other aspects of the counter-pastoral: temporality, pain, and the inclusion of history/technology.

The land's vivification is registered in part through Clare's own abject particularities. Jeffers never shied away from depictions of the sexual, the horrific, or the merely banal functions of the human body. In his counter pastorals, this serves as opposition to the aestheticization of rural life to be found not only in the pastoral genre, but in American society in general where the "middle landscape" has long represented an always already lost, yet incessantly re-manufactured, ideal. From Tench Coxe's vision in the 1780s of "apple-cheeked farm girls" (Marx 159) gracefully labouring in his mills, to

present day images of pioneers on cereal boxes, the humanity of rural inhabitants has often been effaced in order that they may be more easily re-inscribed to sell nostalgia or fit into the facade demanded by the purveyors of destructive forms of technology. Jeffers engaged with the abject to undermine the pastoral myth which enabled the eradication of nature due to its acquiescence to colonial and technological interests. With Thoreau, he believed that "until we confront the unalterable...there can be no redemption" (355). However, the redemption Thoreau referred to was from the industrial system, wheras the redemption Jeffers envisioned was connected to our acceptance of the "geologic sublime." A confrontation with the unalterable involves an entrance into the abject. Attaining an earth-awareness requires us to journey down dark passages, spaces where a real human face stares back from the superimposed "roseate tint...[and] leafy groves" (Schama 5) of a Claude glass.

To this end, Clare is depicted, as Mark Jarman points out, with "a body that includes appetites...human realities" (Brophy 114). Her emotions soar to the peaks of pantheistic connectedness and crash to deep chasms of Calvinistic sorrow. Her displays of fear and terror are particularly unsettling, as in the passage when she watches a hawk attack a heron:

> A heavy dark hawk balanced in the storm
> And suddenly darted; the heron...fell screaming, the long throat
> Twisted under the body; Clare screamed
> in answer...striving with the gesture of a terrified child
> to be quiet, her clenched fist pressed on her mouth...(CP II 62)

Here, with her cloak "flapping like wings," Clare teeters on the liminal edge that tenuously demarcates one species from another, responding almost instinctively to the

pain of being prey, while re-inscribing her social conditioning upon this reaction, her fist a palimpsest of cultural admonitions.

Clare is continually depicted in motion around "the verge" (52), "the brink" (56, 60) and "the ridge" (74), vertiginous, and liminal, spaces between tame and wild, ocean and pasture. Kirk Glaser suggests that Jeffers was "attracted to the edge, the border country of the continent and deep water, also the edge between human ingenuity and the land, between human history and the earth's history" (Brophy 163). Ecologically speaking, the edge between two ecosystems is certainly the most fertile zone for plant species to flourish. This analogy, applied to Jeffers' characters, implies that those who reside, as Clare does, outside unfixable locales, such as the fearsome indestructability of the Barclay house's "crystalline shape" (54), are perhaps more accurate indicators of the polyphony and hybridity of discourses which characterize the counter-pastoral genre.

Clare's bodily functions, as when she describes to Onorio how her first orgasm with her lover, Charlie, was "like a sweet fire"(84), or when, due to cold and fever, her "bowels [are] loosened," or when she vomits because of hunger, maintain her position in that liminal space outside of societal sanitization. Perhaps the most abject detailing of Clare's body in the poem also connects the reader most irretrievably to the associations evoked by this potent border zone. She is ill and Onorio is gazing at her prone body by the fire:

> [he] watched the artery in the lit edge
> of her lean throat jiggle with its jet of blood
> like a slack harp-string plucked (78)

Another edge, that of the boundary between vitality and mortality, is figured here. The

alliteration of "lit" and "lean" create the skin's surface while the hard sounds of "jiggle" and "jet" thrust the reader beneath, into the viscerality of veins pulsing an earthly thrum. The reference to the "harp-string" suggests the lute-accompaniment of songs common to eclogues, only this tune is plucked, not from a litany of pastoral tropes, but from a living, breathing body.

Clare's pregnancy presents a further between-state, her period of gestation defining the time line of her journey and her certain progression from life to death. Her movement northward across the land "along the last ridge of migration" (74) parallels the fetal growth whose birth will lead to the end of both her abject body and her savior-like aspirations. Clare's androgyny, coupled with her pregnancy, renders her a curious combination of physical barrenness and visceral fertility, the antithesis of a "traditional" pastoral heroine whose fleshy bountifulness rarely translates into acts of procreation, keeping her in the realm of male courting fantasies. Moreover, the man who has impregnated Clare is depicted as resembling a "monkey" with "a frill of red hair/ all around his face" (91), a description that distances him from any conception of a courtly shepherd, as well as providing a further correlation between Clare and a primal condition. Clare, a "stray...on the territories of animal" (Oliver 235), is a generic and gender, as well as a topographical, boundary-transgressor. Her wandering from her androgynous body to her generative one, either sexually or pro-creatively, is paired with her wanderings off the road and into enclosed pastures where she encounters various male characters, from Fogler, to the also-ironically named Will Brighton, to the man with the mustache over his mouth. And each time she encounters one of these men a counter-

pastoral moment is initiated in which Clare not only has a sexualized interaction, but in which her sheep are frightened, wounded or rendered ill, before, during, or after her physical contact with these counter-pastoral representatives.

Clare is an embodiment of Jeffers' philosophy of Inhumanism in its soft form. Clare's experience of being driven out of her home, houses being the epitome, for Jeffers, of the fossilization of borders and boundaries, has enabled her transformation from one who constrains the circumference of her love, to one who gives limitlessly. While before she confined "her joy to few" (CP 89), now she feels free to feel beyond the enclosures imposed by her culture. Neither race nor age, class nor species impede her desire to initiate connections among life forms. As she rhapsodizes to Onorio,

> The beetle beside my hand in the grass
> And the little brown bird tilted on a stone,
> The short sad grass...there was nothing there that I didn't
> love with my heart, yes the hill though drunk with dear blood (88).

Concentrating on a tiny microcosm of various species: grass, beetle, bird; all of them located in a specific locale, the hill - Clare nonetheless manages to evoke an immense macrocosm, in Emily Dickinson-like fashion. The movement of imagery, down to the beetle, up to the bird, then down again to the grass establishes visual and ecological links between these species, a rhythmic food chain. Even the apocalyptic image of the blood-soaked hill can be absorbed into this sequence of life forms, as it too is a part of nature and therefore a worthy subject for Clare's affection. Clare's soft Inhumanism reaches extreme levels at times in her urgent need to imagine a unity into which the impediment of her individuality can be subsumed. At one point, she experiences so much love for a hawk that she exclaims: "if it were hungry I'd give it my hand for meat" (89). As she

envisions her unborn child "feeding on peace and happiness" (94) inside her womb, so she also longs to nurture inhuman species with all she has to offer them, her flesh. Her Inhumanism, whose central premise is the existence of a multiplicity of inter-species connections, only becomes a problematic discourse when it veers too sharply in the direction of humanity. Clare's misinterpretation of this tenet of Inhumanism leads her to squander her knowledge in human directions. This introduces an imbalance into Inhumanism as it becomes re-inscribed in Clare's mind as less a simple acceptance of nature's intricacy, and more a validation of a harmful savior- mentality.

Thus, while Clare's abject anti-pastoralism, by incorporating the reality of pain and corporeality into the often idealized rural scene, re-vivifies the natural, her misinterpretation of soft Inhumanism continually threatens a re-writing of the earth solely in terms of her own anthropocentric gaze. It is in Clare's encounters with men that this tendency is most marked. The first man, Fogler, she meets through the agency of his dogs who come flying "over the fence," sending the "packed and trembling ball of fleeces rolling into the wood" (208). When Fogler emerges, he brings Clare not a kirtle, but practical items for her trek, "a sack of food and two old shoes" (209). The courtly gesture of wooing in which the man is upon one knee clasping the lady's hand is here reversed. Clare has just finished the homely act of tying her shoes when Fogler bends down, kissing "Clare's knee, where the coat had slipped back." In response, Clare offers no maidenly blush. Fogler's face instead is the one "burning," while hers is inscribed with no emotional barriers. She receives his need to establish physical contact

with her, affecting an almost-inhuman indifference, without yet reciprocating. Throughout the poem, it is as though Clare's boundaries in relation to the subjects of her affection keep spreading, as she progresses in her misinterpretation of soft Inhumanism from merely being the passive receiver, to being the active initiator of human intimacy.

Will Brighton, the next man Clare encounters, initially tries to drive her off the range into which she has inadvertently strayed. When he realizes she is a woman, his tone changes to accommodate the sexual payoffs her gender suggests. Marking the first point in the poem at which an intertextual continuum is inserted, Will brings Clare to the old Barclay house, the place where, in Jeffers' poem "The Women at Point Sur," the Reverend Barclay and his ill-fated daughter April lived until incest, hubris and suicide combined to deracinate the family. Jeffers' incorporation of habitations from other poems in his oeuvre continues in "The Loving Shepherdess" when, later on, Clare passes Cawdor's abandoned home and then the "gate where Tamar Cauldwell used to lean" (256). Through the reiteration of such motifs, Jeffers establishes a sense that a narrative continuity can exist in the prevalence of connections between his texts and the land they emerge from. At the same time, he ensures that the motifs he chooses to repeat are imbued with an apocalyptic resonance which enables a foreshadowing of the current character's mortality. With the use of this strategy, Jeffers again places the emphasis on the survival of the macrocosmic, in this case, the textual macrocosm, over and above the microcosmic lives of his characters. This, and not, as Pierre Lagayette implies, Jeffers' need to cancel "the sense we may get of a desperately closed narrative" (5) is at stake in Jeffers' inclusion of both textual and topographical echoes. His "fascination with

endings" (41) as ShaunAnne Tangney suggests, however, may result in his subconscious insertion of such textual touchstones in order to subvert or negate the apocalyptic inevitability inherent in his Inhumanist philosophy.

When the inexperienced, nerve-wracked Will sexually propositions Clare in the Barclay house, she presents a similar emotional between-state as with Fogler, "her mouth twitching, but whether with fear or laughter no one could tell" (56). However, with Will she acquiesces, desiring to "make him happy...leave glad memories," displaying signs of her burgeoning savior mentality. Yet, during their sexual encounter, Clare's sheep again fall prey. This time it is an "old well"(57), a vaginalized sign of human entrance into the earth, that, due to time's rot on the "timbers that [had] closed the mouth," opens to swallow, like an indifferent, Old Testament God, two of the flock. Jeffers' thanatotic vision is vividly realized in such a passage. Clare's misinterpretation of soft Inhumanism, which leads her to imagine that she is the sole fount of sustenance for all species, results in the maiming or death of those she has nurtured. Furthermore, it is often a humanized intervention into the natural which produces such moments in which the domesticated is devoured. For instance, the well drilled into the earth, a symbol of a territorial claiming, later becomes a deadly trap for the domestic beasts such a settled, agrarian lifestyle spawns. Jeffers' incest theme attains a more abstract level here, as like consumes like in a perverse, humanly-contrived, cycle.

This counter-pastoral scenario occurs a final time in "The Loving Shepherdess" when Clare encounters the ominous figure of a man who seems to possess almost no features, his "gray mustache covering his mouth" and his eyes "hidden" (66). He is both

the epitome of the apocalyptic human and a representative of the extremities to where Clare's practice of her misinterpreted version of soft Inhumanism take her. Akin to the "blood-red moon," one symbol of Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, the man's hands are described as "red" (68) in the lantern glow, the fingers erupting, dragon-like, with "scaly lumps." It is with these hands that he touches Clare, first on her shoulder, and later, on her bare foot. The fact that he is repellant is of almost negligible concern to Clare now, who has become feverish with her need to nourish. She blatantly offers the man pleasure, explaining that "a shell broke"(70) in her life and that now she truly "love[s] all people." As he listens to her offer, his mouth, like the old well, "a black hole under the grizzled thatch," gapes as though he too is an abandoned passage, rendered dangerous by age. Clare's proposition makes him too nervous, however, for its acceptance, and he leaves her gesture unanswered. Meanwhile, the sheep are once more victimized, this time by "bad hay" (72) which impales their throats with "barbed seeds," its natural fertility distorted by over-domestication. Clare's savior-mentality receives a dual blow here; she is stymied both from offering sexual pleasure and from relieving pain as her fingers are unable to reach the "folds" of her sheep's throats in order to assuage their agony.

While these three instances with men heighten Jeffers' portrayal of Clare as a counter-pastoral heroine and also serve to show her growing entrenchment in a fatalistic Inhumanism, the scenes featuring her interactions with the visionary, Onorio Vasquez, emphasize her terrestrial and temporally-located nature. In stark contrast to Onorio's transcendental mind set, Clare, like Narciss to Goldmunde in Herman Hesse's novel, is

represented as possessing a mind attuned constantly to the implications of living in the flesh and on the earth. While this seems like a traditional dichotomization of female instinctiveness and male rationality/spirituality, in which the latter construct is the valorized approach, it should be recalled that Jeffers was leery of any pursuit, whether transcendental or scientific, whose aim was to posit a separation between humanity and the planet. Clare's mode of being, flawed though it may be, nonetheless continually accords credence to both the vissitudes of her own body and to the often-frightening cycles of nature.

When they first meet, Clare mentions her knowledge of her impending death to Onorio: *"Many people will see hundreds of moons: I shall see five" (60),* to which he responds, *"you needn't be afraid. I often...have visions."* Clare, however, laughs at this and exclaims, *"Visions! My trouble is a natural thing."* Later, when they encounter each other again on the road, Clare elaborates on the cause of her certain mortality, refusing the possibility of a life-saving abortion because, as she describes to Onorio, the child is presently resting in what she herself remembers as, *"a purer peace...near the heart of life"* (93). Again, he misunderstands her, thinking she refers to a transcendental realm that makes *"the breast of the earth bitter...the dear sun ridiculous."* Her surprise is once more palpable as she draws him verbally down from his idealism and back to the tangible though transient real. *"No*, she answers, *the place was my mother's body before I was born."* These two dialogic moments between Clare and Onorio mark a significant tension in the text in terms of modes of relating to nature. Onorio is often trapped by his desire to ascribe symbolic or numinous meaning to the natural, while Clare, conversely,

is enchained emotively to the phenomenological.

This is particularly evident in Onorio's vision of the melded universe as contrasted with Clare's dream of a similar supernatural occurrence. Onorio sees the universe as a substance fabricated of "one tissue" (97) whose parts have "no division between them, no emptiness." Onorio's reaction to this vision is revelatory. Contemplating the earth's seamless endurance, he admits, "It was dreadful to see." Onorio's fear is produced by his inability to differentiate, and thereby assign a nomenclature and symbolic relation to the earth's formerly separate substances. In the end, he represents the epitome, in Jeffers' oeuvre, of a self-absorbed character, an "eye that makes its own light and sees nothing but itself" (98). While Clare may view herself as central in terms of nurturing, she still relates to the world in relatively autonomous terms, whereas with Onorio it is as if the earth's life forces are somehow little more than one of his self-concocted reveries. In her dream, Clare too sees the universe as "blended"(99), the planets and stars indistinguishable from each other, but she, however, is not unsettled by this sight. For her, the merging of the solar system into "one tiny light" is the ultimate vision of connectedness, albeit with herself standing outside of it, caught in her instinct to "be its comfort and hold it and rock it on [her] breast." While Clare's savior-mentality impedes this expression of soft Inhumanism, she still reveals herself as more attuned than Onorio to the beauty of the earth's singularity.

The representation of the land, interwoven with the characterization of Clare Walker in "The Loving Shepherdess," is equally crucial to Jeffers' elaboration of the counter-pastoral. Kirk Glaser relates two ways in which Jeffers inscribes an alternate

relation to a traditionally pastoralized locale so as to imbue it with both ecological and apocalyptic overtones. First of all, instead of the Romantic notion of the "sublime" as inhering in awe-inspiring vistas such as mountain and cataracts, Jeffers repositions both the location of the sublime and the position of the viewer. The sublime is reconfigured in terms of process, not appearance. Therefore, it now inheres in the "geologic" (Brophy 140) cycles of nature, the erosions and accumulations of strata, the stalactites and canyons; the inner activities of a continually evolving planet, not its aesthetically-appealing surfaces. The human gaze is subtracted, or at least reduced on the scale of significance, as humanity is re-set in a "context of geologic time," as part of the earth's processes, rather than its almost atemporally located critic. Secondly, Jeffers further undermines the pastoral by valorizing landscapes in which signs of civilization or human intrusion are "obliterated or naturalized" (141). Instead of focusing his descriptive passages on either the Romantically sublime or the tame landscape of pastoral desire, Jeffers centers his gaze on apocalyptic vistas. These loci resist human habitability to the point of actively effacing it, thereby diminishing human presence or re-positioning it as negligible in terms of necessity or durability.

In "The Loving Shepherdess," both means of recognizing the ecologic and the apocalyptic in landscapes are apparent and provide a further way that Jeffers critiques the tendency of the pastoral to evade the reality of the land. Clare, as previously mentioned, is often less a character than she is an outcropping of the earth. Therefore, while being temporally located, she also appears to be part of an atemporal space, or a timeline extensive enough to seem incapable of being encompassed by human measure. When she

is observed trembling "at the simple morning of the world"(52) among "nothing but hills and sea," it is as if she is a continually recreated element in the landscape, as similar and renewable as the rising sun. And later in the poem, when she is described as, "some random immortal wish of the solitary hills" (72), the agency for selection, in aesthetic terms or otherwise, is relinquished to the land, so that Clare, and humanity in general, appear to have been created by the locus they are embedded in. It is the earth, in other words, that accords Clare her reality and not her gaze which transmutes the earth's frames of reference or value. Clare is an inseparable part of the "geologic sublime"in Jeffers' vision, akin to one of the "drooping redwood needles [that] had made the earth" (64), sentient, but without the authority to assert a hierarchical position in an ecological sense.

No "natural resource," in a Jeffers poem, is available for unequivocal use by humans. The landscapes that Clare encounters are often foreboding, etiolated or parched, rife with apocalyptic tropes, as in the pond like a "red coal" (51), the "skeleton of sandbar (51), Little Sur, a "dry bone" in its "grey bed" (64), and the sun's "wheeling swords (64). The colour grey pervades the poem and the grass is always dead or withered. Where a human presence is evident, it is often stated in the past tense as an attempt to tame always already encroached upon by the relentless, necessary wilderness. In Cawdor's canyon, "the barns were vacant, the cattle were vanished" near the site of a "ruined sawmill" (104): while the land near Onorio's home used to be quarried, now

> The woods have grown back...the roads are gone
> [and the] old masonry kilns [stand] like towers in the deep forest
> But cracked and leaning, and maidenhair fern grows from the cracks (102)

As Glaser notes, Jeffers' landscapes are intent on depicting "the end of human history, the dying back of human technology which, for him, signals the rebirth of primal nature" (162). Even when domesticated life is present in the landscape, as in the cattle grazing just outside the Barclay house, it is described in apocalyptic tones, as "part of the world's end sag" (54). While Clare is a representative of soft Inhumanism taken to misinterpreted extremes, the landscape of "The Loving Shepherdess" continually re-inscribes a hard Inhumanism that resists or conceals any attempt at humanization. Thus, the "rebirth of primal nature" signals the end, for Jeffers, of the pastoral myth, the unmasking of the illusion of the leasheable middle landscape. Both Clare Walker's abject nature and the land's apocalyptic vistas are integral to Jeffers' critique of pastoral sanitization as well as to any relations with the earth solely defined through the strictures of a human obsession with nomenclature, borders and temporality.

A final way in which "The Loving Shepherdess" presents itself as a complex pastoral is through its inclusion of history and technology. This is accomplished in a subtle and less didactic manner than in many of Jeffers' lyric poems, such as "The Last Conservative" where he bemoans,

> Oh heavy change.
> The world deteriorates like a rotting apple, worms and a skin.
> They have built streets around us, new houses
> line them and cars obsess them... (CP III 418)

Apart from the intertextual history that Jeffers enacts, history figures in a general sense in the poem to emphasize the apocalyptic tone. Clare is depicted, on her trek, as if she is "drawing a line at the end of the world" (74), the last human in the procession of "generations in Asia...in Europe...in America." This version of history combines with the

geographical locale to suggest a finality in what was formerly considered the immutable chain of human progress. But history is also written into Jeffers' counter-pastoral in a local sense. Poverty is overtly racialized with Onorio Vasquez's family described as necessarily living "on land that was not their own [as] yearly...taxes increase...[and] poor people must move their places" (66). Jeffers never romanticizes this poverty (as Wordsworth, for instance, was wont to do in his portrayals of impoverished rurals), refusing to elide the origins of this economically-induced itinerancy.

Technology is a less intrusive presence in this poem than elsewhere in Jeffers' oeuvre. When it is included, in the guise of the lime kilns or of the "motor-car driven fast" (67), it is often in the process of being subsumed into its natural setting. The car, although a threatening apparition for Clare and her flock, is described in diminutive terms as a "small black bead," little more than a polluted raindrop, while the kilns, as previously mentioned, are seen erupting with a camouflage of ferns. This is not done to smoothly incorporate the new technology into the old pastoral myth in the manner of Tench Coxe, in order to better enable its unimpeded acceptance, but conversely, to relativize the significance of such technology and to depict scenarios of its transience. If corporatized language can transform the car into an "engine of freedom," Jeffers' asserts that his use of language can reduce it to the ambivalence of a "small black bead." Similarly, if men can erect buildings and employ machinery, a narrativized lapse of time can portray these edifices as temporal constructions, soon eroded by the elements.

In the conclusion of "The Loving Shepherdess," Jeffers shows Clare, near death from her painful labour, attaining the crucial realization that her humanized love is not

sufficient to provide sustenance for all species. Suffering through this fatal birth, she "perceive[s]," for the first time, that her flock is gone, decimated due to hunger, disease and wild animal attacks. Prior to this, she had attempted to conjure them out of their absence by reciting their litany of names. Now she reaches an awareness that she is alone and that neither her human desires, nor her narrative propensities, are enough to preserve her domestic relations with the earth, intent as it is on wildness and on the relentless effacement of humanization. As she dies, the land continues its own eternal pilgrimage to the ocean, the "poplars planted along the road reach[ing] dreadfully away northward" (106). Counter to Pierre Lagayette's assertion, it has become evident that Jeffers did not mean for this to serve as a "tragic outcome" (4). Clare, in her misinterpreted version of soft Inhumanism, is the creator of her own necessary ending. Unlike pastoral heroines who exist in some immortalized realm, Clare is subject to the ravages of time, pain and history. Her death represents the demise of antiquated ways of relating to the land as a space completely shaped by and subsumed to human frameworks. By dying, she attains what Arthur Coffin calls, "the ultimate stage of Inhumanism" (250), an act which truly unites her with the earth. In "The Loving Shepherdess," Robinson Jeffers' counter-pastoralism, imbued with his Inhumanist philosophy, provides a ruthless critique of the pastoral dream in literature as well as extra-textually, evolving a potent new genre from what Leo Marx called, "the wholly new conception of the precariousness of our relations with nature" (Buell 51).

Mourning the broken balance, the hopeless
prostration of the earth under men's hands and their minds

On the road to the university,
men march with signs.
In each yellow diamond, a stag rears,
silhouette of fierceness.
These are daguerreotypes from the future
where only ancestry's outline
remains.

*

On the walls of caves
stick etchings of stags
record past hunts
inscribe a kind of wish list.

Yet there is homage
in these ochre figures,
an eating that leaves intact
what is beyond us.

*

Stags, dripping with ink
traverse
the blind curve
and where cars
won't stop
a darkness
swallows their windshields.
Those who escape
enter the forest on hind feet
to mate mutely
with other images.

*

Into one silhouette,
we pour both hope and the fear of flesh
while readying ourselves

for roads & roads around emptiness
when shadows in yellow diamonds
will suffice for the inhuman

and other shadows will represent our race.

Chapter Two: From Man to Not-Man

Robinson Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy underlies and informs his counter-pastoral vision, its soft version, in particular, emphasizing the need to see "the whole picture" when writing of human/land relations, and not eliding any reality in the service of poetic fashion or political ideology. According to Arthur B. Coffin, in his study, "Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Inhumanism," Jeffers began his poetic career under the influence of Nietzschean ideals such as The Will to Power and the Overman, but cast these notions aside in his later works, which display an Inhumanist philosophy imbued with "Lucretian materialism" (190). While Nietzsche's influence certainly lessened in the later poems, especially in the lyrics, my study of "The Loving Shepherdess" maintains that Jeffers' Inhumanist mindset was present from early on in his oeuvre. In a poem such as "Summer Holiday," for instance, from an early volume, The Women at Point Sur, a sounding of the increasingly strident tone to be found in The Double Axe or The Beginning and the End can be clearly discerned. Jeffers compares the human race to the mutable age of iron, stating that, with time,

> The towered-up cities
> Will be stains of rust on mounds of plaster...
> Then nothing will remain of the iron age
> And all these people but a thigh bone or so, a poem
> Stuck in the world's thought, splinters of glass
> In the rubbish dumps, a concrete dam far off in the mountain... (CP I 202)

Here, there is no sign of an Overman or an Eternal Recurrence in human form. Instead, an apocalyptic scene is sketched in which the demise of the human race is equated with the natural erosion of materials, and where the luxation of a human bone is comparable

to a shard of glass. Even one of our higher cultural artifacts, the poem, will soon, Jeffers believes, be little more than a linguistically-contrived rock lodged as momentary impediment in the earth's otherwise smoothly-flowing stream.

In an even earlier piece, Jeffers' first verse drama, "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," based on the tale of two generations of The House of Atreus, one finds a character, Orestes, who comes to embody the mindset of a hard, Inhumanist philosophy. The final interchange between Orestes and his sister Electra, shortly after he has killed his mother (at his sister's urging), and she has proposed an incestuous relationship with him, vividly presents the dialectical tension that exists between the lone proponent of Inhumanism and the uncomprehending masses. Here, Jeffers establishes his unease with the ability of language to encompass such a philosophy, language becoming, throughout this dialogue, as much of a nemesis, in its insufficiency, to Inhumanism, as is societal conditioning. This passage demonstrates, contrary to Kathleen Mackin's claim that Jeffers "reveals no mistrust of language" (4), that Jeffers is continually confronting the linguistic limitations inherent in the expression of his Inhumanism. One of the key symbols evoked to delineate this conflict is one of Jeffers' core tropes: stone.

In the preamble to the dialogue, humanity is described in negative terms as "a mongrel race, mixed of soft stone with fugitive water" (CP I 166). When Orestes arrives on the scene, it is with the observation that, shortly after his mother's murder, "even the stones have been scrubbed." This instantly correlates humanity with a crime, whose obscuring by an act of sanitization does little to alter the origin of the stains. Stone, in this instance, is evoked to represent the manner in which the natural is humanized,

scoured of its elemental traits and overlaid with cultural associations. When Electra uses the symbol in her speeches, it is in this sense. For her, stone is a material to be incorporated into edifices, monuments; it never exists independently or without metaphorical attachments. Particularly in this brief interchange between Electra and her brother, the difference in their evocation of the symbol becomes evident:

> Electra: ...But you, you will bind the North-star on
> Your forehead, you will stand up in Mycenae
> **Stone** and a king.
>
> Orestes: I am **stone** enough not to be changed by
> words... (CP I 174)

In this passage, Electra invokes stone to suggest the humanist permanence accorded to a royal lineage, wheras Orestes begins to utilize the word in an Inhumanist sense by refusing to privilege the signifier over the signified. He relates to stone as a tangible entity, rather than as a symbol, as a subject with weight and natural durability. He then accords the stone prominence and renders himself merely the beneficiary of its attributes. Rather than being a simile of stone, however, analogous to it, he becomes stone. A metamorphosis which, after his awakening, transforms him into a substance resistant to human temptation, even to the deceptive ease found in modes of expression. As he imagines himself outside the bounds of flesh, so he views himself as one who has transcended language, finding it incapable of encompassing his new Inhumanist knowledge, and stating repeatedly that "they have not made words for it" (CP I177) while wondering how he can "express the excellence [he has] found" with such a limited lexicon. In their final dialogue, he and Electra use the same image to describe the division that has occurred between them. Yet it is the opposing emotions with which they

invest the image that delineates their contrary positions in relation to Inhumanism:

> Electra: ...This horror draws upon me like **stone** walking
>
> Orestes: ...I have fallen in love outward... it is I that am like **stone** walking (CP I 177).

For Electra, the motility of stone suggests the slippage of tradition, the straying of material certainty. Stone must be cemented in place, enslaved to human desire, never breaking free of its linguistic or symbolic bounds. Conversely, for Orestes, the notion of stone liberated from its courtyards and doorways and humanized associations, even to the point at which it shakes off the race, little more than a "moving lichen on [its] cheek" (CP I 177), is an image of Inhumanist freedom. Imbued with the properties of stone, yet still graced with the fluidity of limbs, Orestes can now cast aside humanity's soft dilutions and enter "the earlier fountain" (CP I 178), becoming, as Zarathustra counseled, "an arrow of longing for the other shore" (Nietzsche 9). Orestes' sudden, and very personal, awakening to an Inhumanist philosophy emphasizes a crucial aspect of this mode of belief: it cannot be codified into doctrine in the manner of Christianity because it emanates from an individual epiphany of connectedness to the universe. Therefore, while it attempts to be, as Richard Messer claims, "a description of the experience of meaningfulness" (15), because Inhumanism is so antithetical to valorized terminologies, it can never be fully imparted to one who has not undergone the epiphany. Thus, it repudiates disciples and the doctrines they seek to learn and serve.

Perhaps the character who best represents the fiercely individual facets of an Inhumanist philosophy, a character who some critics suggest is Jeffers' textual doppelganger, is the title character of "The Inhumanist," the Gore place's acerbic

caretaker in Jeffers' 1948 epic narrative, The Double Axe.

This second, and lengthiest, section of the poem details the travails of a Zarathustran man who lives on in yet another Jeffersian-styled "tragic" home, the site of the Gore family's downfall as narrated in part one of the poem: "The Love and the Hate." The old man of "The Inhumanist" epitomizes the struggle of one attempting to live according to an Inhumanist philosophy: his self-contained solitude is disrupted by the appearance of a dog, his daughter and various other personages, including thieves, an erstwhile disciple, and Christ figures, while his views are critiqued and his philosophical certainty is shaken by moments of agonizing doubt. David Copland Morris proposes that Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy involves the expression of two defining attitudes. The first is a "refusal to accept the sharp distinction between human and animal or between consciousness and the material world" (Ideology 34). This attribute may be equated to the soft version of Inhumanism and has been evidenced thus far through my discussion of Clare Walker and her slippages between liminal, undifferentiated states of being. The second, while it can't be directly equated to a hard Inhumanist position, certainly leads to the necessity for one. In itself it involves a "firm belief in the objective reality of the outer world's inherent value" (35). In other words, it rejects the notion that the earth's beauty is merely a subjective construction, that, according to the minds of such writers and thinkers as Mallarmé, Derrida, Sartre or Kant, the "world is a book." Thus, while this attitude posits that value can be located in both subject and object, it also veers into the assertion that value only resides in what lies outside subjective and symbolic modes of perception, thereby relegating this subjectivity to a negligible and even detrimental role.

In "The Inhumanist," both attitudes are evinced, the old man's lapses into soft Inhumanism accentuating the complexity of maintaining Hard Inhumanism's misunderstood and often reviled position. At the beginning of the poem, the old man soliloquizes on the nature of God's existence, first elaborating on the unity of all creation:

> All the little animals
> are the one man: there is not an atom in all the universes
> But feels every other atom...the stars, the winds and the people:
> one energy, one existence, one music... (CP III, 257)

In imagining the wholeness of life, the Inhumanist also conceives a notion of the equality of death. If all life forms partake in one chemical process, which is the case according to the Lucretian materialism thought by Arthur Coffin to inform the poem, then recurrence is not eternal as heat's capacity to be converted into mechanical energy is indeed finite. Meditating on the deaths of the Gore family, the old man ponders,

> Time will
> Come no doubt
> When the sun too shall die, the planets will freeze...
> Also the galaxy will die (CP III 261)

This attitude configures neither the earth, nor humanity, as being lesser or greater than each other but both as partaking in the same elemental strain, burgeoning and eventual subsiding. When, steeped in this soft Inhumanism, the old man is thrust back against his societally-conditioned dualisms, it is not to deny or undermine his part in creation, but to query it, to wonder at such mysterious correspondences. For instance, one evening, experiencing an awe-struck sensation over the earth's magnificence, he exclaims,

> Dear love. You are so beautiful...How can you be...
> All this...and me also? Be Human also? The yellow puma, the flighty
> Mourning dove...are in the nature of things; they are noble and beautiful

> As the rocks and the grass: - not this grim ape
> Although it loves you - Yet two or three times in my life my walls have
> Fallen...I have been you. (CP III 289)

Although he refers to himself momentarily in a derogatory fashion as "this grim ape," the purpose of his invocation is not to deride his human status but to express a sense of disbelief at the intricacy and diversity of existence, its uncritical inclusiveness. He also divulges, in this passage, the climactic possibility inherent in an Inhumanist position: the moment at which artificially imposed boundaries and taxonomies become transparent, allowing an individual, in the manner of Orestes, or more intermittently, Clare, to transcend intra-species limitations and metamorphose into a form of animal or cosmic energy. Wryly incorporating the presence of the abject into such a possibility, the old man then comments to his dog Snapper, "I *have* been you, and you stink a little" (CP III 289). With such statements, the Inhumanist's desire for transcendence remains in the reality of the bodily realm, rather than soaring idealistically above it, as Onorio did in his visions.

Two transitional points in the text mark the middle ground between soft and hard Inhumanism as exemplified by the ancient caretaker. Both instances function as warnings against the unbalanced extremism implied by the forging of absolute alliances. In the first, the old man is depicted as watching two rivers, one of animals flowing backward into the past and the other "of humanity, all races" (CP III 285) coursing into the future in the opposite direction. The humans ask him which species he will travel among and he replies, vehemently,

> I would break both my legs/Liefer than go with beasts or men or angels en masse
>
> (CP III 285)

While his expressions of Hard Inhumanism suggest that, in fact, he would sooner associate himself with the instinctual animals, here he recognizes the imbalance this would introduce into the objectivity of his perceptions, while also asserting the individualism implicit in an Inhumanist stance. In the following section, he offers an encapsulation of Inhumanist wisdom, orated with more than a tinge of sarcasm, emanating from the knowledge that his philosophy eschews, rather than embraces, language's ability to impart the experiential. In relation to the attitude one should best hold towards the human race, he pronounces,

> Whoever loves or hates man is fooled in a mirror....
> But truly, if you love or hate man, swallow him in wine...
> Man and nothing but man is a sorry mouthful (CP III 304)

The need for balance is here reiterated, and the necessity for a position to be maintained outside the solipsistic cycle of the human gaze. Thus, the old man attempts to reside in that slippery space apart from the intrusions of emotional extremes. Invariably, this stance of aloofness falters and the Inhumanist finds himself drawn into the eye of a variety of conflicts, many of which lead him to the expression of a hard Inhumanism.

The old man's axe, the double axe of the title, itself represents this uneasy fusion of flesh and spirit, the human and the natural, soft and hard Inhumanism. While it exists for the man as a symbol of both generation and death, a sign of the peace made possible by the acceptance of such dualisms, it also threatens his very peace by continually seeking to turn his philosophy into a violent praxis. As with the disciple who falsely assumes that the Inhumanist desires acolytes to spread his word, so the axe believes that any expression of hard Inhumanism demands a concomitant action, an actual death, until

the man finally exclaims wearily,

> You wish to kill...every man that we meet...
> But that is for God to do, not for you and me (CP III 308)

He then tosses the axe disgustedly into the deepest part of the ocean. However, the axe, like so much that the man tries to expunge from his nature, returns, climbing like a "small grey dog" (CP III 309) back up the cliff and into the man's hand, a domesticated antagonist. In the next passage, it even assumes phallic connotations. Just as the man rejoices at being alone, the axe "jerk[s]" in his palm, an abject gesturing towards the impossibility of ousting the desires of the flesh from the most inhumanly-centered mind.

While the old man evinces a hard Inhumanist position throughout the text, which tempers itself with the occasional soft Inhumanist conciliations, his verbal eruptions in this vein increase towards the end of the narrative, affected by his experiences with his daughter Seagull and her lover's family, as well as by encounters with other unwanted visitors and his knowledge of war-time events. In fact, it is news of the war which occasions the old man's first hard Inhumanist outburst. Jeffers deliberately makes this character a mouthpiece for his views concerning the war, views that led to him being labeled a fascist by many detractors and compelling Random House, the publisher of The Double Axe, to preface the text with their opposition to Jeffers' polemics. In Section VII of "The Inhumanist," Jeffers has the old man loudly declaim against all nations who wage war, condemning their leaders equally and concluding with the pronouncement,

> If it were mine to elect an animal to rule the earth
> I'd choose tiger or cobra but nothing cruel
> Or skunk
> But nothing foul (CP III 259).

By separating the adjectives, "cruel" and "foul," from the animals they are frequently associated with, he reminds us that these are subjective attributes and are more honestly assigned to humans than to instinctive beasts. This also initiates the reader into his position in relation to the "objective reality" of other species, as well as towards the earth, a position which entails a wariness in regard to the deceptive "objectivity" of human language. We will see how this deconstruction of language foregrounds the deflation required for an Inhumanist perspective. For now the interest lies in how this focus on "objective reality" lends itself to the old man's hard Inhumanist tendencies.

From the outset, the old man is caught between his assertions of the oneness of all life forms, and his recognition that there is a vast division between the "intrinsic value" (CP III 260) inherent in "transhuman" species and the criteria humans have developed to determine worth. His ire is roused by the realization that our race has been so flawed in its "translation" of the earth that words such as "beauty" and "nobility" have been used both to affix the globe to a pedestal as it were, as well as to justify its plunder. Additionally, his knowledge of the race's unique ability to utilize not only the falsities of language to our perverse benefit, but also "pyres...barbed wire...terror [and] slave-sweat" (CP III 308), renders his Hard Inhumanist invective understandable. Intensely conscious of the gap between immutable reality and the fallibility of the subjective frameworks that our race uses to imprison other life forces, the old man frequently employs analogies to put the human race into perspective. Sometimes he expresses this in a merely philosophical sense as, when glimpsing his shadow greyly imbricated upon his horse's shadow, he muses,

> ...it is very curious...that Worse always
> rides Better. I have seen it in my lifetime...a circus monkey on a
> Great Dane, and man on the Earth (CP III 305).

While here he, in a detached manner, subverts the Great Chain of Being, in other passages he utters vitriolic condemnations of the entire race, baldly asserting that "the whole human race ought to be scrapped" as what would "the vast and rushing drama of the universe...want clowns for?" (CP III 274). At other moments he abandons his carnivalesque analogies to announce in an understated fashion,

> Every person that leaves a place, improves it...and when
> the sociable races of man and dog are
> done with, what a shining wonder
> This world will be (287).

Only once does he actually petition God, who for him epitomizes the energy source responsible for the intricacy and multiplicity of the universe, literally to obliterate humanity, raging, "Exterminate the race of man... cut if off, sear the stump" (308). Here he transgresses against even a hard Inhumanist philosophy however by using language as the masses do, uncritically, and as if his subjectively formed words have the power to effect apocalyptic change in the inhuman cosmos. When he acts thus, he reneges on his role as defamiliarizer and unsettler, falling short of the human mentors he mentions as initiators of Inhumanist thought:

> Copernicus...who first pushed man
> Out of his insane self-importance and the world's navel, and taught him
> His place. And...Darwin (CP III 274).

In the extreme throes of hard Inhumanism, the old man even falls into a self-loathing diatribe in which his own humanness, in relation to even the most "vile" of creatures such as the "poison-gorged pit-viper" (CP III 282) is contemptible, leading him to desire

transformation into "a stone...or any bush," the most inhuman of objects.

Most significantly, though, both the old man's opposition to dualisms, which expresses itself as soft Inhumanism, and his belief in objective reality, which often directs him to a hard Inhumanist perspective, center themselves in a critique of language. As Neal Bowers comments in an essay on Jeffers and W.S. Merwin, significantly entitled, "The World Beyond Words," Jeffers recognized that language is the "linchpin of twentieth century arrogance" (Thesing 13) and sought to foreground "the corruptions as well as the inadequacies of language," including the ineffable nature of what he felt was the poet's task: to depict faithfully what eludes human modes of expression. In terms of the system of poetics, and particularly the prosodic values, that emerged from Jeffers' commitment to Inhumanism, the old caretaker of "The Inhumanist" serves as an ideal spokesperson. We have seen that another way of describing soft and hard Inhumanism, more poetically and less ideologically perhaps, is by utilizing the terms "inclusion" and "deflation." And "deflation," because it proves to be more radical in its innovations, is at the core of Jeffers' Inhumanist poetics. The revaluing demanded by deflation occurs in his shifts of perspective, his critique of metaphor and his problematizing of naming.

Jeffers addresses the need for a renewed perspective in human/inhuman relations in many of his dramatic poems, such as Thurso's Landing and Give your Heart to the Hawks, as well as in lyric pieces like "On an Anthology of Chinese Poems." In the latter piece, Jeffers commends Oriental poets for the inhumanist perspective their verses are imbued with, their "hanging cliff[s] and wind-blown cedars" (CP 449) immense while their farmhouses and figures are "fantastically small," signs of agricultural development

a mere "ribbon." In "The Inhumanist," humans are similarly accorded a reduced and more humble place in existence. Often this is accomplished solely by the sheer proliferation of natural imagery as in the scene in Section XVI when the old man's concerns are dwarfed by the battling of two eagles evoked as,

> two black stars...[that] locked and fell downward...
> and spiralled upward, hacking with beaks and hooks and the heavy wings (CP III264).

Rather than dramatic details being relegated mainly to human activities, Jeffers, in the manner of Hardy, Lawrence and Eiseley, provides the natural world with an equal, or even more prominent role as textual presence. Instead of the earth serving as a backdrop for humanity, Jeffers' characters often seem, like Clare Walker, to be embodiments of elemental forces, or at least to be formed by a dialogic relationship with the land. In such a dialogue however, humanity is heard as a lesser voice, a "reflex" (270) almost, an echo, full of pathos, of nature's greater voice which, when it was first spoken, was pure and "in earnest." The violence that occurs between Seagull's lover's wife, Dana Enfield, and Dana's daughter, Vere Harnish, therefore seems like a distorted reaction to the natural turmoil of the storm which swirls around them:

> the mud-yellow sky streaked with flying cloud [and]...
> streaks of yellow floodwater...below the foam-drift
> on the sea's beaten face (271).

The elemental here mirrors, but with more necessary intensity, the mother's "yellow eye[s]" (268) and furious outbursts. Similarly, the pelican who collides with the house during the gale (again, a scene of wildness being destroyed by domesticity) is symbolically connected to Dana Enfield, who, like the pelican, is stabbed to death by

Vere. The natural force of the gale that causes the pelican's death however is sharply differentiated from the forces of petty jealousy that lead to the daughter's,

> kneeling against the bed beside her mother's half-naked body, pumping a penknife into it (CP III 289).

In both language and action, Jeffers often implies, the human race performs a poor mimesis of nature, diluting the pure potency of the elements by transmuting them through our lesser lexicons and emotions.

A reconfigured perspective, apart from being rendered through a surfeit of natural imagery and the comparison of human/inhuman life forces, is also achieved in Jeffers' work by his visual reduction of the human presence in a landscape. The Stewart ranch house, where Dana and Vere live, is described in static terms as "cube-shaped and unadorned, painted dull yellow" (CP III 268), a small and stagnant entity amid "the mountain-ridges pitch[ing] to the sea" like "the steep necks of a herd of horses." As for the old man, he is frequently seen looking up at the "vast landscape" (CP III 281) whose "dark headlong slopes, black-fanged rocks and high grinning/snow teeth" surround him with their geologically sublime immensity, which has the effect of reducing him to a transient scrap of flesh, his own voice becoming little more than that of a "blind vulture...bumping against the faces of rocks" (303). In "The Inhumanist," however, a physical reconfiguring of perspective actually operates on a much lower level to effect a philosophy of deflation. Far more significant in suggesting the necessity of deflation is the old caretaker's deconstruction of metaphorical modes of speech and his critique of our human obsession with nomenclature.

Jeffers, through his Inhumanist-based poetics, views metaphor and simile as an

avoidance of the direct treatment of one's subject matter, an anxious elision of the individualized, non-hierarchical nature of things, and an over-humanization of the process of relating to the world. While Jeffers' work is far from being devoid of metaphor, when he makes use of it, more often it is to express the natural entering the human rather than vice versa. Instead of nature being compared to a human attribute or object, then, we read of Vere's mouth moving "like a fish's mouth" (CP III 284) or of mathematical symbols resembling "small dead spiders" (CP III 291). With these metaphors, the focus is shifted from a human image to a natural one, the natural taking precedence as a means of valorizing its predominance and of elevating the descriptive intensity. Much of the time, however, Jeffers eschews or problematizes such tropes and devices.

He remains uneasy with the notion that humans can designate such "absolutes," such untroubled equivalencies, when, as John-Paul Tassoni writes, these terms, these relations between objects are only "approximations" (51) of what is outside our paltry forms of knowing and in possession of its own "transhuman worth." In "The Inhumanist," Jeffers has the old man comment, as Wallace Stevens would put it, on the "motive for metaphor." For him, the desire to draw connections arises both from our need to make sense of things and from the strain inherent in our inability to control them. "Metaphors," the old man remarks in Section IX, are like "dust in a whirlwind, making/the wild wind visible" (CP III 260). The dust is not necessary for the wind itself, he implies, but for us, the dust renders what is ineffable, apparent, and perhaps deceptively so, leading us to make determinations that may only drive us further from the

"essence" of any thing which is often elusive.

The old man also problematizes the issue further by claiming that one can never truly make a direct statement about anything, that we not only choose to use metaphor as a mode of expression, but that we really are mired in metaphor, reiterating monotonously, "like beauty, like nobility," forever unable to utter the true name, paralleling, "but never touching, reality" (CP III 260).This, failure, the old caretaker asserts, is positive because "names foul in the mouthing." His relationship to the practice of metaphor, as to his usage of the words "beauty" and, as I will suggest shortly, "instinct," are complex. He both derides metaphor for its pretense to a command of materiality and strangely seems to advocate its fallacy as a way of keeping the race rotating in endless circles, imagining they are accessing a core which continually eludes them.

His direct condemnation of our addiction to nomenclature, taxonomies, and other ways of naming which surface repeatedly in this poem takes its basis from his opposition to metaphor: names, like metaphors, operate to establish a control over the "other" and therefore act to blind one to the earth's "transhuman magnificence." Expatiating on the distortions of naming is something the old man of "The Inhumanist" does with great frequency. His role in the text is primarily that of a disruptive presence, a wedge between the smooth and sightless progression of hegemonic meaning present in any transference from subject to object. Even more fervently than Thoreau, who proclaimed, "A name is a mere convenience - as soon as I begin to be aware of the life of any creature, I can at once forget its name," the Inhumanist asserts that names are not only to be derided for

being conveniences, but for acting as impediments to an open awareness of "anotherness." In Section VIII, he first expounds vehemently:

> The human race is bound to defile, I've often
> noticed it,
> Whatever they can reach or name (CP III 260).

For Jeffers, there was a direct correlation between the humanist compulsion to colonize through language and environmental despoilation. As part of his poetics of deflation, Jeffers has the Inhumanist deride our human desire to assign words to every encounter with what Emerson called the "Not-Me." Akin to the way certain cultures oppose such capturing devices as the camera, believing them to be snatchers of the soul, so the old man asserts that all who receive a name are transformed by this christening into a mere shell. "All the stars that have names are dead" (261), he says, commenting on the ironic fact that not only does the act of naming nullify the unimpeded movement of the "other," but that names, linguistic monuments of sorts, are often only accorded to fossils, shadow-traces of what was once unmastered, yet alive. Near the end of the poem, a man seeks out the Inhumanist in order to become his disciple, asking, "first tell me your name so that my friends may know it and listen." The Inhumanist, however, scoffs:

> My name...is Jones or McPherson or some other
> word: and what does it matter? It is not true that the word was in the
> beginning. Only in the long afternoon comes a little babble and silence
> forever...and those...to whom the word is God: their God is a word (CP III 350).

This is the old man's climactic critique of our obsessive onomasticism, an obsession particularly noticeable in the field of poststructuralist theory, where reality, which is to some extent created by language, is also displaced by the excessive foregrounding of the latter. His critique of language here conjoins with his derision of

religion whose aim is frequently to codify spirituality through language in order that it may more easily be controlled. Envisioning God and all God's creations as forms of energy entails an opposition to any attempt to contain that energy which, to remain at its peak, must be enabled to flow amorphous and unimpeded by lexical or physical limitations. The humanist emphasis on the linguistic primacy of our race is then diminished by the old man to a "babble" that, heard in context, is reduced to meaningless insignificance amid the wide inhuman "silence." The old man aims to defamiliarize our attitudes towards language, as well as towards religion, nature and women, crossing ontological boundaries by serving as the subversive mouthpiece for what Tassoni refers to as "the androcentric consciousness" (58).

Therefore, when he states adamantly that "words/are like women: they are made to lie with" (CP III 273), he is effectively only reiterating the analogy he has deduced from his observations of his society. As Tassoni suggests, both women and words "are vehicles through which man centers himself and therefore misinterprets reality." The Inhumanist's concern is with how this epistemology, as it functions through our concepts of nature, woman, religion and language, has come to impede our relations with the earth. He accomplishes this critique by relativizing words that we have been de-sensitized to in their context, or that have lost their original meaning through mis-use. In a manner similar to Tassoni, who traced the old man's reclaiming of the word "beauty," I will look at the progression of another textual trope, "instinct."

At first it appears as if the old man's depiction of his daughter Seagull as having "no mind but an instinct" (CP III 273) is a mere reiteration of the woman/nature

paradigm. However, we must recall here, as we saw with the case of Clare Walker, that Jeffers has a complex relationship to "instinct." Both Clare and Seagull are sketched as flawed in their interactions with the planet because they transgress against their own inhumanist acts by transferring their emotions indiscriminately to themselves (Seagull "loving her own bare body" [CP III 282]), as well as to other humans (Seagull riding off with Clive Enfield, provoking the old man to exclaim: "instinctive female: in all this magnificence/ of sea and mountain - one man" [CP III 286]). Yet, despite this over-reliance or mis-application of their instinctive drive to connect with other life forms, their instinctiveness is nonetheless reinscribed as a more necessary and healthy approach to the earth than logic or rationality will ever be. However, the old man also foregrounds the tension that exists between theory and praxis when it comes to instinct. While, in one section he claims that "it is far better...not to/complicate/action with expectation, but go on by instinct"(CP III 276), in the very next section, Seagull's purely instinctive actions lead to her brutal rape by men who can only despoil anything "beautiful" and "instinctual," crudely distorting it through their androcentric gaze.

Similarly, the old man often confronts his own inability to follow through from philosophy to action. After he has saved the "man full of fears" from drowning, he berates himself, saying, "I have acted against reason/and against instinct" (CP III 297), deconstructing two, usually disparate, terms to suggest that instinct, and not logic, is what is truly reasonable. This problematic correlation of reason and logic had been previously emphasized by the old man's meeting with the German scientist who insists that his "Mathematische Formel...brings under one rule atoms and galaxies" (CP III 291).

Although he refuses to use this formula to aid the war effort, he still epitomizes the man of logic whose symbols line the page like "small dead spiders." While Seagull's instinct may lead to a detrimental narcissism, it still participates more holistically in the earth's life force than the false certainty of logic by incorporating that "mad old serpent infinity, the double zero that/confounds reckoning" (CP III 293) into its praxis.

The "deflation" achieved in "The Inhumanist" through Jeffers' manipulation of perspective, and his critique of metaphors and naming is assisted by the less prominent, but equally significant, devices of "inclusion": rhythm and form. James Dickey, representative of many other critics who consider that Jeffers neglects prosody and has a lax relationship with linguistic form, argues that "his metaphors, his actual linguistic insights are second-rate" (Thesing 43). David J. Rothman compellingly argues against this view in showing how Jeffers is actually intent on inscribing a "systematic hostility to language" (Brophy 85), both through the rhythmic stress he incorporates and through the form he chose for much of his poetry. This linguistic hostility supports Inhumanism's focus on the earth's multiplicity as a counter to humanist frameworks which aim to codify its heterogeneity. Jeffers wrote neither traditional nor "free" verse, believing that both forms of prosody exhibit too excessive a humanism which renders the world solely from the perspective of a human gaze. Instead, he developed a prosody that was "unrhymed [and] accentual" (Brophy 93), based on Greek quantitative verse in which the fierce compression of each line is achieved through the counting of stresses instead of syllables. This was highly significant to the evolution of Jeffers' Inhumanist and environmental poetry. The reduced emphasis on rhyme and on syllabic counting and the

traditional attention to the poetic foot work towards diminishing a human presence in Jeffers' poems, while the increased emphasis on a line's stresses strengthens the sense that the poem's rhythm derives from such non-human sources as "the sea's waves and time's return" as well as from the body's pulsing of breath and blood. The connection between Jeffers' poems and the land that shaped them is thereby intensified.

In "The Inhumanist," the rhythm alters from section to section, paralleling the dialogic movement of the old man's thoughts and the land's response . Yet the stresses remain continually strong even when the pattern shifts. An examination of a passage from Section II will help demonstrate the significance of Jeffers' placement of stress, as well as his use of other inclusionary devices, such as hyphenation, assonance, enjambment and repetition. In these lines, the old man registers the unity of all forms of life through a prosody that enacts it:

> -all the little animals
> are the one man: there is not an atom in all the universe
> But feels every other atom: gravitation, electromagnetism, light, heat and the other
> Flamings, the nerves in the night's black flesh, flow them together, the stars the winds and the people: one energy,
> one existence, one music, one organism, one life, one God: star-fire and rock-strength, the sea's cold flow
> And man's dark soul (CP III 254).

Although there is no regular pattern of stresses established here, as in some of Jeffers' poems, there is his characteristic alternation between lengthy and shorter lines, a rhythm which mirrors the surge and retreat of the tide's ebb and flow. The repetition of the key word "one" acts to add a mantra-like quality to the lines, constructing progressively deeper entrances into the word's implications, while the two hyphenated words also

participate in effecting this unified praxis. Additionally, the preponderance of enjambed lines suggests a waterfalling of sound, a continuous euphony akin to that of nature's unceasing alluvial bodies, emphasized by the assonance in a juxtaposed image such as "the sea's cold flow/...man's dark soul." Jeffers' aim in using these devices, which are found throughout his work, is to incorporate a planetary, and not solely a human, energy into his verses; to include the "other" and thereby pay homage to his environment as well as attempting to rectify the balance in terms of the word's relation to the world.

Jeffers prose-like style also furthers his Inhumanist project. By refusing, even in his lyrics, to limit himself to the constricted lines and rigidly-hewn images favoured by many Modernists, he also lessened the presence of his ego in his verse. His form's surplus is therefore not due to bombastic tendencies, as may have been the case with Whitman, but to a desire to perform a mimesis of nature's arbitrary, cumulative spillage. In Rothman's words, Jeffers enacts a "thematization of the sublime" (Brophy 98) in terms of both his rhythm and his form. The geologic and cosmological sublime is therefore not only an abstract theme, but is embodied in Jeffers' poetic techniques. Jeffers' unique experimentation with form then becomes an act of inclusion, both in its reduction of authorial presence, and in its echoing of nature's exquisite tumult. The very length of his narrative poems, written in a time when extreme brevity was lauded, suggests an aim of inclusivity, and the negation of closure. It's as though Jeffers could only endure the necessity of using language by over-using it, hoping that a superfluity of rhythm, form and imagery would, by echoing nature's abundance, somehow transcend the very humanness of language.

The main tenets of Inhumanism, then, "inclusion" and "deflation," form the basis for a reading of Jeffers' oeuvre through an eco-literary framework. Both the character of Orestes in "The Tower beyond Tragedy" and the old caretaker of "The Inhumanist" serve as cynosures for a reconfigured relation with the earth in which human hubris and frailty is first acknowledged, then critiqued, and a new stance is assumed of humility and awareness. Throughout "The Inhumanist," in particular, the deceptions of religion and language, as well as the degradation of the earth, caused, in large part, by land ownership, are foregrounded. Inhumanism, by re-inscribing God as a force of energy rather than an anthropocentric image, and by deconstructing language as an obstruction on the path to a lucid perception of the world, unravels the two central threads of the humanist domination which has led so directly, in this century, to ecological disaster.

Like Jeffers' critique of pastoralism, his philosophy of Inhumanism is also deeply implicated in a current reading of his nascent ecological awareness as manifested through his narrative and lyric verse. Inhumanism, first and foremost, insists on what Kirk Glaser refers to as "nature's primacy" (Brophy 170). By unearthing the dualisms under which society (dys)functions, and positing the existence of a reality apart from lexical or ideological constructs, Inhumanism imagines a participatory, balanced planet, in which

> The Beauty of
> things is not harnessed to human
> Eyes
> and the little active minds: it is absolute (CP III 311).

A little too abstract, a little too wise, it is time for us to kiss the earth again

after the first snow
sunders
human colours, speed at which
machinery
travels, a text luxates beneath
the crust,
cardboard bone, laminate.
*
a book entitled Earth
erupting
beneath the scrim
numerical data pertaining to
swaddled in greens
& blues,
topographies of human
value
the word earth (letters/tubers)
an oracle obvious
yet: disposable.
*
on the earth itself, enfolding growth
in shrunken topsoil through the erratic
western winter,
a text settles
squat with graphs & charts
objective collections
it cannot hear the worm's waking
nor
(being a book called Earth)
does it want to
*
but someone has cast
the text down
(this is the important act)
a litter of data known as Earth
upon the earth itself
its slow, uncollatable seasons.
someone has laid the book
beneath the snow and said to it -
grow carrots *provide shade*
smell of daisies *become loam*
then tell me what you know about earth.

Chapter Three: The Dark Ecologist

In a poem by the Mexican poet, Octavio Paz, entitled "Flame, Speech," the "word of man" is described cuttingly as the "daughter of death" (Aisenberg 152). This line of verse succinctly articulates the core of Robinson Jeffers' critique of pastoralism and the reason behind his development of an Inhumanist philosophy, as well as pointing to one of the central ways he can be read as an environmentally-conscious poet. His almost-visceral awareness of the devious opacities of our language, which are inadvertently responsible for the assimilation of the pastoral myth into a techno-utopia and the glorification of a war-spawning humanism, led him to continually foreground his opposition to the linguistic basis of our destructive relations with nature.

Leonard Scigaj offers a lucid exegesis of four more recent environmental poets in his seminal text, Sustainable Poetry, claiming rightly that Jeffers is their "mentor" (42). Yet Scigaj, along with other critics such as Rexroth and Brophy, seems incapable of perceiving how primary Jeffers' critique of language is to his nascent ecological re-visioning. Scigaj's assessment that Jeffers' poetry never incorporates "self-reflexivity and responses to the problematics of representation and referentiality in language" (43) has already been shown in this study to be mistaken. In "The Inhumanist," in particular, Jeffers' attention to the problematics of using language in any form to express the predominance of the non-human, as well as his specific difficulties with metaphor, nomenclature, and de-contextualized language use, are clearly delineated. While current ecologically aware poets may necessarily express a heightened consciousness of the consequences of divorcing the lexical from the referential, due both to their tussle against

post-structuralist renderings of the world as text and to their greater sensitivity towards the environmental ramifications such a rift can effect, Jeffers' sense of the consequences of the gap between signifier and signified was, for his time, a prescient understanding.

Before exploring Jeffers' lyrics through the framework provided by Lawrence Buell's criteria for environmental literature, as well as placing Jeffers' ecopoetry alongside the work of two later ecologically-conscious poets, Loren Eiseley and Denise Levertov, I want to examine those lyrics in which Jeffers inscribes a meta-poesis. Unlike John Elder, who determines in his happy comparison of Jeffers and Wordsworth that, "a poet, through his use of language, gives the lie to his rejection of humanity" (25), this study insists that a careful use of language and a repudiation of humanity are not mutually exclusive. To infer that because Jeffers rejected human preeminence that he should also repudiate language is patently absurd. Language, like shelter and sustenance, is a medium of survival. Utter silence enacts a death for the poet, enabling those who misuse language, from advertisers to journalists, to rise to deleterious prominence. The poet's affinities with language hone an attentiveness to its deceptive capacities, along with its tendency to be utilized in a manner that valorizes anthropocentric forms of perception. By remaining self-reflexive in their language use, poets purify the word while keeping it a tool, instead of a ruler.

While Jeffers desired, in many ways, to transcend language, expunge it of its metaphorical murkiness, and write with a lexicon transparent enough to convey nature's unmediated essence, he was also aware, not only of human misuses of language, but of how language itself is unable to be such a lucent vehicle. One of his more fractious

acknowledgments of this appears in a poem entitled, "Love the Wild Swan." Here, he rails against his urge to capture in words the inhuman beauty of things, griping bitterly,

> I hate my verses, every line, every word,
> Oh pale and brittle pencils ever to try
> One grass-blade's curve or the throat of one bird (CP II 410).

His return to sonnet form in this piece is unmistakably part of his awareness that the use of language is often a sign of failure. Not only can his lexicon, symbolized by the etiolated and fragile pencils, not mimetically evoke the natural world, but his rhythms have also lost their tidal pulse and retreated into formal confinements. Geometrically even, we see the impossibility of the straight, inflexible pencil ever being motile enough to convey the curving of a grass blade or a bird's throat without snapping. He concludes the poem by rejecting linguistic representations of nature in the only way he can, through language:

> Love your eyes that can see, your mind that can
> Hear the music, the thunder of the wings. Love the wild swan.

Jeffers recognizes in this piece, in the words of poet A.R. Ammons, that "language, an invented instrument, is not identical with what it points to" (Scigaj 45), and that a silence, steeped in the apprehensions of the senses, is often the best response to the earth's beauty. Even those who are reflective about their relation to the earth must travel through the babel of language to arrive at a place in which a vocal or a written mark is deemed deficient in comparison to wordless signs of presence, to the place where "roe-deer's hooves in the snow" can be described as possessing a "language but no words" (Transtromer in Aisenberg 146). It is even more difficult for poets, who are lexically obsessed at best, to attain this acceptance of silence. Jeffers struggled constantly with the

veracity and fidelity of his relations with the earth as implied or belied by his use of language.

In some poems, such as "Birds," for instance, he claims that for verse to respond dialectically to the world it must incorporate "multitudes of thoughts, all fierce, all flesh-eaters" (SP 161), determining that the poet should present a clamorous excess of language to reproduce the superfluous tumult of the world's endless cycles. Conversely, he will also assert, less commonly, that, in the context of time in which even the earth is an "ephemerid" (SP 169), language itself, regardless of how mimetically honest it attempts to be, effectively matters little. In a poem entitled "The Treasure," Jeffers reduces language, amid the earth's vast schema, to a "noise...a jump of the breath" (CP I 102) as in "The Inhumanist," he had diminished it to an inconsequential "babble." Here, he accords credence only to silence, and not to the "Ah!" uttered as a man finds treasure. This is only the signifier he must devise to express his discovery and not the essence of the treasure itself, which resists being encompassed by language. It is an aesthetic arrest in the face of nature that remains important, and not the lesser expression of it, the moment's shadow present in artistic representations.

While a self-reflexive meta-poesis underlies many of Jeffers' "earth-imbedded" lyrics, conveying his turmoil over his motives for using language to "capture" the world, as well as his unease with the often-intangible consequences of investing "the word" with such power, it is more often the problematics of mass representation that he addresses most assiduously. In an untitled poem from The Beginning and the End, detailing the origins of humankind (or as e.e.cummings had perceptively dubbed us - "manunkind"),

Jeffers' implies a correlation between the development of language and our sadistic focus on the valorization of violent acts, whose end always harms the earth:

> Therefore they invented the song called language...and
> Therefore the deeds they celebrate...are cruel and bloody (CP III 433).

Language, he infers, is responsible for the diameter of "the wound in the brain," a cerebral locus where the race "learned to butcher beasts and to slaughter men/And hate the world" (CP III 433). In the same piece, Jeffers also addresses another problematic aspect of our language: it is not only reductive in its preference for adjectives of brutality, but it is selective in terms of what it accords sentience to. Naming may impede our ability to access the life force of "another," but the refusal to name with reverence may also blind us to the presence of the inhuman realm. Therefore,

> the earth and stars too, and the whole glittering universe, and rocks
> On the mountain have life
> Only we do not call it so (CP III 432).

By refusing to acknowledge the earth's animism by naming it "life," Jeffers feels that we thereby sacrifice its sentient multiplicity in favour of such monistic approaches as Kepler's "clockwork universe" (Koestler 534).

Language, in Jeffers' opinion, also boosts humanist arrogance. The predominance of such words as "progress" and "greatness" buffer our species against its mutability and act, in lieu of The Great Chain of Being, to position us hierarchically at the top of all species, and even seemingly outside of nature's cycles. In a poem called "Ocean," Jeffers follows the quest of whale and trout to their imagined culmination, before turning his attention to the human race which, despite its dominance, is faced with "deeps [it] will

never reach and peaks [it] will never explore" (CP III 404). Concluding with the reiterated question, "will you grow great or die?," he finally responds with the statement, "it hardly matters; the words are comparative," deconstructing, with one verbal blow, the notion that language, in itself, signifies the preeminence of our species, and contextualizing such utterances in terms of their cosmic relevance. Looked at in perspective, greatness and death conflate until they interchange connotations. When it comes to ecological health, death *is* a form of greatness, the apex of life from which further life is regenerated. As we saw in the poem, "Self-Criticism in February," discussed in Chapter One, Jeffers often aims to negate fossilized conceptualizations. The bay is therefore "not blue" and neither is the time "pastoral"(SP 601), he reminds those for whom words have become merely faint traces of their signifieds. Defamiliarizing language is the first step, for Jeffers, to defamiliarizing landscape. Only when landscape is re-vivified in this way can environmental perception commence.

Buell comments on our human failure of attentiveness towards both language and landscape when he says, "Place is related to complacency psychologically as well as etymologically; we reassure ourselves by converting abstract space into familiar space and subsisting in the unconsciousness of its familiarity" (261). When this process of invisibilization occurs, the land is more readily despoiled. Fortunately, as Buell goes on to note, writers like Jeffers "continually recalibrate" this ingrained state of familiarity we experience in our relations with both land and language. As ecologists restore moribund streams, so ecologically-aware poets restore our torpid interactions with the word, and hopefully through this act, with the earth. At times, instead of more subtly remarking on

the equation between linguistic consciousness and planetary awareness, Jeffers issues imperative statements. In the poem, "Monument," he beseeches humanity to "Erase the lines: I pray you not to love classifications," reminding us stridently that "the classifications/are mostly a kind of memoria technica...don't be fooled" (CP III 419). In other words, do not supplant the real, which is fluid and border-less, "one flowing life," for the blind ease of Linnean taxonomies which destroy the essence in order to define the entity. Even more firm is Jeffers' command in his poem, "De Rerum Virtute," in which he tells the reader forcefully to,

> Look - and without imagination, desire nor dream - directly
> At the mountains and sea...look at the Lobos Rocks, look
> At the gulls on the cliff-wind (CP III 403).

As elaborated in Chapter Two, Jeffers was uneasy in regard to metaphorical and symbolic usages of language, and attempted, throughout his oeuvre, to attain a direct and sensuous apprehension of the world without resorting to such estranging devices. Metaphor is often thought to posit connection, and thereby accentuate oneness, but just as often it can serve to elide the natural linkages between objects that synecdochic, or even analogic modes of discourse, can depict more faithfully. Here, Jeffers demands that the reader's gaze fall as purely as possible on the inhuman participants in this landscape, that she purge the verbiage which has sedimented around her sight, and disassemble those fancies, lusts and myths that have impeded perception. The problematics inherent in both the act of representing the earth and of accessing an audience capable enough to allow their gaze to travel where Jeffers' deixis sends it reach climactic proportions in "De Rerum Virtute." At the end of the poem, it is as though Jeffers is responding to the

New Critical theorists or, even more prophetically, to those who would eventually critique his belief in an external reality through a post-structuralist perspective. After this rhythmic evocation of the earth, he echoes, "it is in the beholder's eye, not the world?" Answering, "certainly," as though he is conceding to the notion that subjectivity effaces reality, he then continues by saying, "it is the human mind's translation of the transhuman/Intrinsic glory" (CP III 403) All our use of language is only an approximation, a feeble translation, yet as long as we use it with a critically-minded sensitivity, we can maintain a vigilance over language's necessary reduction of what lies eternally outside it. This understanding of Jeffers' use of language, which entails a meta-poesis and an awareness of the complexities of referentiality, is therefore at the basis of my reading of Jeffers as an environmentally-conscious poet.

Further complicating his awareness of the problematics of word representing world, while remaining intertwined with this knowledge, is the re-positioning entailed by his intent to foreground nature so that, in Glen Love's words, "the pattern of entry and return (in the passage between humanity and the environment) is reversed" (Glotfelty 234). In much of Jeffers' poetry, the reader's gaze, rather than being asked merely to follow the human characters as they colonize the land in various ways, is instead encouraged to accept the predominance of the land itself as a compelling presence in its own right. The earth's eruptions and infernos, expanses and intricacy, engulf the human element in Jeffers' narratives and lyrics; the human cannot escape the earth's influence or control its multiplicity. Alan Brasher encapsulates this facet of Jeffers' verse by determining that, throughout his "earth-embedded" poetry, "nature is the value to be

examined and the human [is only] a metaphor to express it" (Thesing 149). The natural world takes precedence in Jeffers' verse because it has endured longer than humanity and possesses, for him, an essentially untarnishable beauty, in spite of the embellishments and falsifications favoured by our race. It is also, simply, more necessary. Humans thereby become something akin to lexical appendages, figures of speech used to evoke one aspect of nature's heteroglossic propensities.

This crucial re-positioning can be readily perceived through the exploration of several of Jeffers' lyric poems (or, as I prefer to call them, prophetic utterances). Buell's framework of four criteria for the assessment of ecologically-aware texts is especially helpful in this evaluation. These criteria are not designed to be exclusive; there are other modes of measuring whether a text merely presents nature as an insentient "setting" or whether it indeed participates in affirming the earth as a living presence, enacting a consciousness of other species and their biological niches. For instance, SueEllen Campbell, in her delineation of the connections to be drawn between post structuralism and eco-theory, posits that texts evidence ecological priorities when they, "criticize the traditional sense of a separate, independent, authoritative center of value or meaning...[and] substitute the idea of networks" (Glotfelty 131). Joseph Meeker, in his seminal literary ecology text, The Comedy of Survival, suggests, more generally, that a text displays environmental characteristics if it foregrounds "biological themes" (7), while Leonard Scigaj defines ecopoetry in a far more strict sense, asserting that it must "emphasize nature conceived as a series of interdependent feedback systems" (43).

Jeffers' poetry could be interpreted as displaying a nascent, yet persistent,

ecological awareness beneath any of these frameworks. However, for the purpose of this chapter, Buell's criteria are more methodical and lucid heuristical tools for the exploration of Jeffers' lyric poems as environmental locutions due to their foregrounding of the necessary re-positioning of the human race prevalent in ecological texts. Buell's first criterion, that "the non-human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (7), is evident as an undercurrent throughout Jeffers' verse. The fierce, untamable vistas of the Carmel coastline not only inspired Jeffers' turbulent characters, as well as his Inhumanist philosophy, but literally molded these facets of his writing. The poet, Loren Eiseley, one of Jeffers' deep admirers, suggests that Jeffers had, "one of the most uncanny and complete relationships between a man and his natural environment that I know in literature" (Karman, R.J. 40). Jeffers himself observed that it was not necessary to use imagination to evoke such characters as Tamar and the Reverend Barclay, that the land's wilderness had shaped them, the region possessing a climate and topography that "both excites and perverts people" (41). Scigaj's claim that Jeffers only incorporated the "beauty of nature as an austere, impersonal backdrop" is a seriously flawed assessment. Nature is the "chief actor" (Karman 40) in all of Jeffers' verse and, while the earth may be drawn as indifferent towards human fate, this indifference is never implicated in the organic processes which are continually engaged with life's renewal.

Two poems, among many, which articulate the interpenetration of the human and the natural are "Winged Rock" and the prolegomenon to one of Jeffers' shorter

narratives, "Margrave." In the former piece, Jeffers addresses his resistence to the ecologically-destructive settlement implied by the presence of houses by recollecting its debt to natural materials. As in a Rene Magritte painting in which a sky or a forest is viewed through the transparency of a human figure, so Jeffers here dismantles human artifact by demonstrating how it is constructed from, and teems with, nature. In lines describing the house, such as,

> The flesh of the house is heavy sea-orphaned stone, the imagination of the house
> Is in those little clay kits of swallows
> Hanging in the eaves (SP 131),

Jeffers renders the house a naturally corporeal force, its body hewn from rock which, to Jeffers, was just as sentient as flesh. Moreover, he transfers the property of imagination, supposedly wholly human, to birds' nests, suggesting that it is only in the presence of nature that we possess imagination, and that if the nests were permanently removed it would be as if a cerebral node were excised.

In the latter poem, a man called Walter Margrave is being sentenced to death for the killing of a child. His introduction is prefaced by several passages detailing the disastrous progression of human consciousness. Jeffers describes the shift, following Copernicus's discovery, from "man [as the] measure" of the world, to man as an insignificant "particle of dust" beneath a "sand-grain sun" (CP II 160). Jeffers then empathizes with the "hard rocks" which must eventually become implicated in human history, as

> ...lichen, 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 (CP II 161).

The Great Chain of Being is both reversed and made circular here, with all life forms engaged in the interchange of properties through decay's transmutation. Jeffers' poems go further than merely beginning "to suggest the intricate intertwinings of human and natural history" (Buell 7). Instead, they are fully committed to the interrelatedness of all life forms, and to the impossibility of a human artifact or heartbeat existing without the ecological generosity of the universe.

That, in Jeffers' poems, "the human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest," Buell's second criterion for environmental texts, is already implied by his inscriptions of wholeness, and his reconfiguring of perspective addressed in earlier chapters. However, to explore this aspect of his poesis in a more particular, that is to say, a more ecologically-specific sense, two further poems will suffice. In "The Deer lay down their Bones," Jeffers describes his encounter with a deer grave site, a

> ...refuge for wounded deer...hurt ones [who]
> Escape the hunters and limp away to lie hidden; here they have
> Water for the awful thirst
> And peace to die in (CP 407).

The poem becomes a subtle invective against those human predators who interrupt the natural life cycle out of a perverse seeking of pleasure. While Jeffers has the choice, for the most part, to live out his own "thirty-year-old decision" (408) not to die before his time, the deer are at the mercy of those conditioned solely to consider human interest. At the same time, Jeffers mentally aligns his bones with the deers', as if he too, or at least his verses, were at the risk of being stripped down to an inanimate skeletal frame by those locked in an anthropocentric gaze. Most importantly, however, is how Jeffers'

detailed rendering of the suffering surrounding the bone-waste valorizes the deer as subjects rather than reducing them to mute venison.

In the piece, "Fire on the Hills," from Thurso's Landing, the deer are depicted again, this time fleeing not the corrupt acts of human appetite, but a natural, if merciless, brush fire. Here, it is not only human interest that remains in the background, but the interest of the "smaller lives" (SP 173) of other species. Focused as he is on the ecological health of the whole, Jeffers interprets the terror provoked by the flames as a "revelation of beauty" (Brophy 138), the beauty inherent in the purgation and revitalization of life. He therefore only foregrounds one species, the eagle, who,

> ...perched on the jag of a burnt pine
> Insolent and gorged...
> had come far off for the good hunting (SP 173).

While the human hunters in "The Deer lay down their Bones" are reviled for impeding the natural order, the eagle is praised for its role as participant in the ecological imperatives of its terrain, as the last line articulates in its assertion that, "The destruction that brings an eagle from heaven is better than mercy." In much of Jeffers' oeuvre, human interest, contextualized in relation to the cosmos, is negligible for the most part, while other species, who have biological niches, justly take precedence.

Jeffers wrote in a time when ecology was a nascent discipline. While there was a growing emphasis, in his very own landscape, on the necessity of preserving "wild" tracts of land such as the Sierra Mountain Range and the Hetch Hetchy Valley (Nash 161), and environmental prophet, Aldo Leopold, author of the ecological journal, A Sand County Almanac, had already defined his "land ethic" (197), there was little of the apocalyptic

fear that now surrounds discussions of human relations with the environment. Without fears of global warming, acid rain, nuclear weaponry, and countless other irreparable ills that we have since become painfully conscious of, Jeffers, along with his society, prior to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's seminal text on pesticides, Silent Spring, was far less concerned about "human accountability to the environment," Buell's third criterion for environmental texts. Jeffers' poems fit with difficulty into this criterion due to Buell's more current concern with human stewardship over the environment, a concern that Jeffers had little patience for, considering it yet another sign of our anthropocentric arrogance. Several of his poems, however, do indeed suggest that our race has caused deep and long-lasting harm to the earth's integrity and diversity.

A late piece entitled, "The Urchin," comments on our human fidelity to mathematical and scientific theories, sketching a prescient image of our mistaken assumptions regarding what has come to be known as global warming:

> Let's observe the shrinking of glaciers...
> the poles are thawing -
> Siberia will soon be all wine and roses. - Yes? - Be
> Advised. Lay in coal and cordwood for the new ice age (415).

Jeffers implies that humans, over time, have become less accountable to natural laws as we have increased our faith in scientific omnipotence. Other ravages, those caused by our adherence to harmful agricultural methods and the fallacies of progress, are taken account of in another piece, "The Broken Balance." Here, Jeffers details the brute deracination effected by "the plow in the roots/ the pitiless pruning-iron in the branches" (SP 260), even prophesizing that the rain will become "poison" with such heedless activity. But although he uses words like "killed" to describe how humans have ruined

"beautiful places" to erect their cities, Jeffers' rarely insinuates that our race's neglect of the universe is permanent due to our transitory status. Humans cannot be, in an ecological sense, accountable to the environment, he believed, because of their insignificant role in the universe. If the human species is, for the most part, a "moment's accident" (SP 261), "a sick microbe" (SP 403), or merely "the beast that walks upright" (SP 175), then how can our actions, however temporally detrimental, wreak eternal destruction on nature's immense inhuman magnificence?

Even in a poem such as "An Extinct Vertebrate" which opens with the statement, "Whatever we do to a landscape - even to look - damages it" (CP III 438), closes with the understanding that the lacerations caused by our gaze are temporary, and that oak trees and grass blades will soon suture these wounds after our mutable race passes on. This theme is reiterated in many of Jeffers' lyrics, among them, "Carmel Point," where, despite the defacing of a field by suburban homes, the "pristine beauty" persists in the "grain of the granite" (SP 399), poised to reassert itself. At times, Jeffers will even suggest that human technologies scarcely possess the power to effect short-term harm, diminishing a road carved from a cliff to a "ribbon" by which intrusion the cliff is "not the least hurt" (SP 381), and stating, in "Calm and Full the Ocean," that the "P-38 [bombers] and the Flying Fortresses are as natural / as horse flies" (CP III124). Elaborating further on his theory of tragedy in this piece, he also clearly provides us with the reason why he feels that human accountability to the environment is a sign of hubris, rather than humility:

> Man, his griefs and rages are not what they seem to man, not
> Great and shattering, but really
> Too small to produce any disturbance (CP III 124).

The notion that humans could be environmental stewards seemed to Jeffers merely a reconfiguration of the hierarchy implied by The Great Chain of Being. The most humble way for humans to be accountable to nature, Jeffers continually asserted, was for them to be conscious of interrelatedness, and accepting of their lesser role in creation. In fact, our species' swift demise, which he predicted we were preparing for through overpopulation and our fascination with war would, he concluded in his verse, be the most generous means by which we could show concern for our impact on the cosmos.

Finally, for a text to be deemed environmentally sound, it must, according to Buell, conceive of "nature as a process rather than as a constant" (8). As demonstrated by Jeffers' adherence to the Nietzschean philosophy of "Eternal Recurrence," nature conceived of as a fixed, stable entity never occurred to him. In all his work, he evokes nature as cyclical and as either an eternally reproducing force, or as a presence that, at least, will long outlive humanity; it is never stagnant, always surging towards decay or regeneration. One of the most potent delineations of this incessant energy can be found in the passage known as "The Caged Eagle's Death Dream" from the long early narrative, Cawdor. In this piece, the reader is taken on an astounding journey through the eyes of a recently-shot eagle's spirit as it travels temporally and spatially through the world before eventually reaching the sun, its final resting place:

> It saw from 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...it saw the
> Eagles destroyed,
> Mean generations of gulls and crows taking their world...as on earth
> The white faces drove out the brown...it saw men cover the earth and again
> Devour each other and hide in caverns, be scarce as wolves...

It saw growth and decay alternate forever and the tides returning (CP I 512). Similarly, in a later poem, "De Rerum Virtute," Jeffers expresses, this time from his own narrative viewpoint, the impetus behind the earth's ability to speciate and diversify, its nisus towards completion contained in its "first living cell," all creatures, from hawk to serpent, evolving imperceptibly over time until, "the race forms a new race" (CP III 401). Even when Jeffers is depicting nature in a temporal fashion, he emphasizes its seasonal ecology, remembering how "the flower fades to make fruit, the fruit rots/ to make earth...through spring exultances, ripeness and decadence" (SP 15). The inconstancy of the earth, unlike human inconstancy, is ecologically essential. Only within a state of fluidity and flux, Jeffers sensed, steeped as he was in an intimate awareness of the land, does one attain evolutionary capacity in nature and dialectic possibility in poetry.

Before turning to a brief exploration of several poems by two poets, Loren Eiseley and Denise Levertov, whose work followed Jeffers, both paralleling it and pursuing more contemporary lines of ecological thought, I want to suggest a fifth criterion for environmental writing that Jeffers also fulfills: that the work display a sensitive rendering of the land and other species that defamiliarizes as it depicts, opening wide unforseen entrances into possibilities of communion with the non-human world. This is perhaps an even more crucial characteristic of eco-poetry than the previous criteria because it provides a sensory mode of access and connection, even potentially jarring the reader into a state of wakefulness in relation to the universe that she would not have experienced otherwise. The land, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter, can be defamiliarized by attention to language. It can also be made new by a feel for detail that offers a sense of

transparency, enabling us to perceive what seemingly lies outside us. In a poem such as "The Broken Balance," images of other species are permeated with Jeffers' visceral and emotive attachments. Here, through terse assonance and the use of colour and movement, he describes animals in a way that both re-establishes them in their ecological niches and lifts them out of their life cycles, like gifts, to be contemplated:

> That light, blood-loving weasel, a tongue of yellow
> Fire licking the sides of the grey stones...
> The jewel-eyed hawk and the tall blue heron;
> The black cormorants that fatten their sea-rock
> With shining slime...the red-shafted woodpecker flying,
> A white star between blood-color wing clouds (SP 259).

The inclusion of such bodily fluids as blood and slime add that abject edge without which, according to Jeffers, there is no transport into the deep sublimity of the "other." Even more poignant and startling is Jeffers' success in the poem, "Oh Lovely Rock," in translating the apparent insentience of stone into a subject in its own right, capable of commerce with the world. Camping with his sons at night by Ventana Creek, he catches a glimpse, by the light of embers, of the rock wall rising above them and is struck by feeling as if he were seeing it "for the first time" (CP 546). His allowance for narrative awe enables the reader to experience a similar jolt in their perception of something so frequently invisibilized. "Nothing strange," Jeffers begins, "light-grey diorite with two or three slanting seams in it,/ smooth polished by the endless attrition of slides...pure naked rock," repeating then, before equivocating, "Nothing strange...I/cannot tell you how strange." The reiteration of "strange" propels the reader centripetally into a deeper and

deeper intimacy with the uncanniness of what was once "mere" rock and is now familiar in its features as a much-loved face. As with the animals in "The Broken Balance," the stone becomes a felt presence through this process of defamiliarization, while at the same time retaining its untamable "there-ness." Accessed emotively and sensorially, it still cannot be truly gathered, humanized, dis-placed.

Jeffers' unique ability to transmute nature's diverse energy through defamiliarized language without ever reducing it to an appropriated backdrop is key to deeming him an environmentally-conscious poet. On the whole, those most likely to name Jeffers a forebear in the field of ecological poetry are poets themselves. While critics have often misinterpreted his Inhumanism, or chosen to denigrate the validity of his poetics, poets like Czeslaw Milosz, William Everson and Gary Snyder have praised Jeffers' approach to both language and the earth. Jeffers' influence on Snyder, along with his effect on other poets such as W.S.Merwin and Wendell Berry, have already been subject to critical scrutiny. His influence on the environmental poetry of anthropologist and essayist, Loren Eiseley, as well as on the poet Denise Levertov's prodigious output of ecologically-minded verse, has not been considered. Therefore, it is to such an examination that I now turn.

Loren Eiseley, who died in 1977, openly acknowledged his debt to Jeffers, even writing a review of his poetry as far back as 1933 in which he determined that Jeffers' real strength as a poet was his, "complete identification...with his environment...[thereby] enabling the human to become a mere lens through which to interpret the ecological entirety of things" (Karman 185). Eiseley's poetry, which, due to lack of acceptance in

the scientific community, was only collected late in his life under the titles, Notes of An Alchemist and The Innocent Assassins. His work draws the force of its imagery and narrative voice from his years as a fossil hunter; again, as with Jeffers, the landscape he was exposed to, in his case the desert, dotted with sagebrush and ossified remains, became not only the impetus behind, but also the central player in his poetry. Glaser's concept of the "geologic sublime" would have appealed to him immensely, surrounded as he was by evidence of the earth's stratified history. Like Jeffers, he dreamed in cosmic time. The world he wrote of was inclusive of all cultures and stratospheres, blowflies and meteors. The reaching lines of his unrhymed verse also speak of "returning cycles" (50), whether it be those implicated in the decaying bird he finds in his yard in whose death all those "immediate molecular transpositions" take place "that ensure/ the endless procession of pine needles, new eggs, new birds" (51) or the littoral boulder that is eaten by "tiny lichen/ distilling acid" (103). Eiseley, more so than Jeffers, thought of himself as writing jeremiads for the upcoming age of ecological erasure. While he was never secure that his message would resonate enough to be responded to, determining fatalistically, as did Jeffers in "The Urchin," that "men have chosen the ice before its return" (30), he still incorporated dire warnings in his poems regarding the fate of other species due to DDT poisoning or the encroachment of the city. Eiseley is undoubtedly what Buell would refer to as an "environmental apocalypticist" (238), intent as he is on the "projection of the future of a civilization that refuses to transform itself according to the doctrine of the web." Haunted by the follies of history still present in bone shards and ruins, Eiseley continually attempts to remind our race of

its ephemerality, in order that we realize, as Jeffers too desired, that we are only one transient and selfish part of the eternal and magnanimous whole. Through such efforts, Eiseley partook of Jeffers' Inhumanist philosophy, often sounding like a modern replica of The Double Axe's crusty caretaker, especially in such pointed statements as,

> Animals are beginning to look better
> than my own kind;
> I request transfer (82).

Although Jeffers yearned for no followers, Loren Eiseley is a clear example of someone who constitutes a student of Jeffers' Inhumanist and ecological vision.

Denise Levertov, however, is a different story. Born in Britain, her move to the States in the 1950s coincided with her association with the Black Mountain School which included such poets as Robert Creeley and Charles Olson. On the surface, there is not much connection between Jeffers' prosody and Levertov's free-verse line which is based more directly on the human breath, rather than an inhuman, or inclusionary, rhythm. While there is no hard evidence that she read Jeffers, in a 1991 essay entitled, "Some Affinities of Content," her fascination with the writing of the wilderness poets of the Pacific Northwest is made evident. In their work, as in Jeffers' poetry, "what is seen (or otherwise apprehended)," in other words, the phenomenological, is foregrounded, along with a lesser "emphasis on the poet's reaction to it" (Essays 6). In a 1997 collection, The Life Around Us: Selected Poems on Nature, issued in the year of her death, she also includes a preface elaborating the reasons behind her ecological poesis: "In these last few decades of the twentieth century it has become ever clearer to all thinking people that although we humans are a part of nature ourselves, we have become,

in multifarious ways, an increasingly destructive element within it, shaking and breaking the great web and perhaps irremediably" (xi). She appears to have, particularly in her poems from the 1980s and 1990s, more of a confidence, than did Jeffers, that she will find listeners for her ecological wisdom. "It should be visible," she therefore pronounces serenely in a poem of the same title, "that this bluegreen globe/ suffers a canker which is devouring it" (25). Levertov is rarely as unflinching in form or as necessarily relentless in content as is Jeffers, and these attributes, along with the more environmentally-receptive milieu she wrote in, contribute to the fact that her verse currently receives a more appreciative reading than Jeffers has ever enjoyed.

Her verse most resembles Jeffers when she questions the conceptual constructions that have bound us, through Christianity or Humanism, to restricted perceptions of our role as part of nature. In a poem entitled "Tragic Error," Levertov reverses the Renaissance notion of earth as a mirror, saying, "Surely we were to have been earth's mind, mirror, reflective source" (12), while in another piece, she describes the life force of a hardy strand of ivy growing "between road and sidewalk" before commenting, "I am not its steward. If we are siblings...the relation is reciprocal" (32). Here, she deconstructs the Biblical trope of domination, positing instead, as Jeffers did many times in a less religious wording, the dialectic that should exist between humans and the planet.

Many of Levertov's poems echo with a Jeffersian rhetoric regarding the humility required to achieve healthy ecological relations. One of these is particularly representative of the connection between these two poets in environmental terms. In

"Sojourns in the Parallel World," Levertov surges into a Jeffersian litany as she names examples of non-human "insouciant life":

> cloud, bird, fox, the flow of light, the dancing
> pilgrimage of water, vast stillness of spellbound ephemerae on a lit windowpane,
> animal voices, mineral hum, wind
> conversing with rain, ocean with rock (75).

She has animated, in this passage, both animal and mineral, defamiliarized water (its dancing pilgrimage), and intensified our cognizance of the interrelatedness and diversity of all created forms. Whether she was directly shaped by Jeffers' poetic oeuvre or not, her environmental poetry evidences the polemical, if not the rhythmical, energy and sensitivity towards the earth expended in Jeffers' verse. Her concern, as was Jeffers', is with defamiliarization, a re-configuring of perspective, and the necessity for forceful, if less passionately strident, tirades in verse form against the despoiling of the planet, whether the damage affects us only for the present, or is irretrievable in time.

Robinson Jeffers is remarkable among poets, both of his age and of the present, for the persistence and consistency of his vision. His counter-pastoral landscapes inscribe an iconoclastic version of the "traditional" genre through their inclusions of temporality, abjection and apocalypticism. Furthermore, his Inhumanist philosophy enables a re-configuring of human primacy in relation to the land, a stance which led him both to critique the pastoral genre and to establish a nascent ecological poesis. Finally, this linguistic revaluation of the detrimental human/nature construct renders Jeffers' poetry a fertile space for the employment of current eco-critical frameworks.

His poetry, unlike the contemporary, and acclaimed, environmental verse of Levertov or Wendell Berry, is never domesticated in message or docile in rhythm or

form. It is indeed tragic that Jeffers' message is only now beginning to garner a reception, and that rarely through his own verse, and more often through the less poignantly caustic poetry of his modern "followers," such as Gary Snyder. Critics such as Winters and Vendler deemed Jeffers monotonously "turgid" (Karman 85) and anachronistic in both his thought and prosody because they were unable to open their minds sufficiently to access either his tidal rhythms or his fierce Inhumanist sensibilities. They, among other detractors, would do well to re-read the first couplet of Jeffers' poem, "Return," a beautiful paean to the sensuality present in the apprehension of the entirety of existence:

> A little too abstract, a little too wise
> It is time for us to kiss the earth again (CP II 409).

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