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# AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS' THE WOMEN AT POINT SUR

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AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS'

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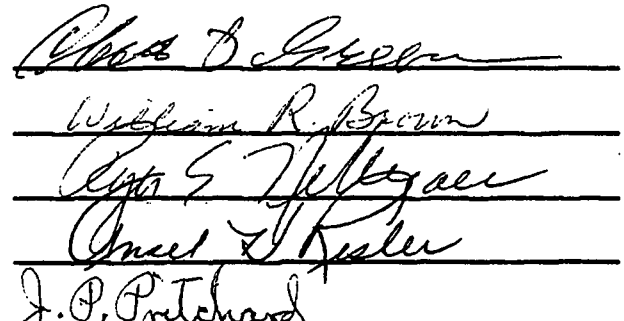

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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# AN INTERPRETATIVE ANALYSIS OF ROBINSON JEFFERS' THE WOMEN AT POINT SUR

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### The Justification of this Study

It has become rather commonplace for anyone doing a study of John Robinson Jeffers to speak of his meteoric rise and sudden eclipse. Moss noted that Jeffers' position as a major contemporary poet is precarious and acknowledged that the Jeffers' vogue is over.[1] Squires said that Jeffers wrote beyond the time that "stimulated his unique expression" and has been largely forgotten since about 1940.[2] Carpenter stated that rarely has any writer endured such extremes of criticism in his own lifetime as did Jeffers, and he offered as fact that Jeffers is one of the most "interesting" figures in contemporary literature.[3] What Carpenter offered as fact,

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[1]Sidney P. Moss, "Robinson Jeffers: A Defense," American Book Collector, X (September, 1959), 9-14.

[2]Radcliffe Squires, The Loyalties of Robinson Jeffers (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1956), p. 3.

[3]Frederick I. Carpenter, Robinson Jeffers (New Haven, Conn.: College University Press, 1962), p. 11.

this study takes as its first assumption. Robinson Jeffers is an interesting figure.

Jeffers, both as a man and as a writer, is interesting because he presents an enigma to the student. One is not sure whether his work represents dirges to the damned or, as Amos Wilder has observed, "hymns to salvation."[4] At one time or another, Jeffers' long works have been classified as, and then have been criticized for not being, narrative, dramatic, lyric, philosophic, and tragic. The usual categories of criticism just do not seem applicable to Jeffers.

Interest in Jeffers has been heightened by division among critics. Edna St. Vincent Millay, for example, said:

> People can't understand his sort of poetry because of its terrific implications. It's like seeing enormous mountains for the first time, or the sea--you're terrified by them. Here is a fine poet and a great man, a man that in his own generation will not be known to the public at large.[5]

Selden Rodman asserts that "Jeffers has never been a poet's poet," and that Jeffers is the "only contemporary American poet capable of communicating with a wide audience in the grand manner, or apparently desiring to."[6]

These two views are typical of the reaction to Jeffers and his work. Jeffers, who died in 1962, lived to see his

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[4]Quoted in Squires, p. 160.

[5]Quoted in Rudolph Gilbert, Shine, Perishing Republic (Boston: Bruce Humphries, Inc., 1936), p. 13.

[6]Selden Rodman, "Transhuman Magnificence," Saturday Review of Literature, July 31, 1948, pp. 13-14.

reputation "contained within the beautiful symmetry of a completed irony."[7] When he was first discovered, in 1925, by James Rorty, Mark Van Doren, and Babette Deutsch, Jeffers was praised for his sense of refined tragedy, his form and metrical accomplishment. Before the time of his death, he was being criticized for hysteria, formlessness and dubious metrics.[8] In view of such diverse opinion, whether Jeffers is to be considered as a major writer or a minor one or no writer at all seems to depend on which critic is consulted. The vagueness of Jeffers' place as an American writer is sufficient reason for additional study of his work.

In the criticism of Jeffers, whether favorable or adverse, there is some unanimity. Most critics, consciously or unconsciously, when describing Jeffers, use terms found in the tradition of the sublime. Few critics would deny that Jeffers' work demonstrates power. The outstanding exception is, possibly, Yvor Winters, who has been Jeffers' most severe critic.[9] Even with Winters, it is, at least, arguable that Jeffers is granted "interest" and "ineliminable virtues."[10]

H. H. Waggoner, after attacking Jeffers' views on science rather harshly, acknowledged:

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[7]Squires, p. 9.

[8]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[9]Yvor Winters, "Robinson Jeffers," Poetry, XXXV (1929-30), 279-86.

[10]Yvor Winters, Primitivism and Decadence: A Study of American Experimental Poetry (New York: Arrow Editions, 1937), p. 15.

> That there are still elements of greatness and moving passages in Mr. Jeffers' work suggests to me an integrity and a power of character in the man which the thinker would deny and the poet is usually not able to express.[11]

A more enthusiastic critic, Rodolphe Megroz, ends his Modern English Poetry by saying: "There is apparently no contemporary English narrative poet whose work can vie in power with the American, Robinson Jeffers."[12] It may attract or repel, but there is little doubt that people react strongly to Jeffers' work.

In 1920 or 1921, according to Jeffers, he wrote a story in verse called Tamar. This work began his reputation. He offered it, contrary to what many say, to no publishers. He did not offer it because he felt it was so lengthy that no publisher's reader would look through it. Eventually he had it printed at his own expense because, as he said, "it seemed to me the verses were not merely negligible, like the old ones, but had some singularity, whether they were good or bad."[13] This word, "singularity," has become a key term in describing Jeffers' work, and a key term in this study.

Several writers have applied this word to Jeffers and to his work. Louis Adamic has used it to speak of the

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[11]H. H. Waggoner, The Heel of Elohim (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 129.

[12]Quoted in Gilbert, p. 15.

[13]Breaking into Print (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1927), p. 89. This work has biographical notes and comments by Elmer Adler, but no author or editor is given.

mesmeric quality of Jeffers' eyes.[14] George Sterling remarked "that one could pick out, unerringly a poem by him from a stock of thousands of others."[15] Carpenter, more recently, has noted that "Jeffers' poems are interesting because they give expression to a 'singular' or 'particular' mind."[16] Carpenter also says Jeffers can be approached as a maker of "myth."

Recognizing the value of the term "singularity" as a possible approach to Jeffers, Carpenter develops the concept of singularity as meaning a particular or a unique quality, and he relates it to Henry James' idea that a novel, in proportion as it is successful, reveals a "particular mind, different from others."[17] Carpenter attaches the quality to Jeffers and points out that the challenging element in Jeffers' work is that he has always dared to follow his thought to its end wherever it might lead. Referring to Emerson's admonition to beware when God lets loose a thinker on this planet, Carpenter implies that God has done so in the person of Robinson Jeffers. He asserts that Jeffers' singularity "is the absolute self-reliance of transcendental individualism in its most extreme form."[18]

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[14]Louis Adamic, My America (New York: Harper and Brothers, Inc., 1938), p. 464.

[15]Quoted in Carpenter, p. 12.

[16]Ibid., p. 13.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

Although granting that what Carpenter says is quite valid, this study does not see his explanation of "singularity" as being complete. There are other aspects in the word. In 1948, while discussing the ideal poet, Jeffers used the term again. He did so in the process of describing a poetic fad in Spain during the seventeenth century. The founder was Góngora who invented "a strange poetic idiom, a jargon of dislocated constructions and far-fetched metaphors, self-conscious singularity, studious obscurity."[19] He goes on to point out that times changed and Góngora became ridiculed and adds that "Euphuism in England had a similar vogue and a similar catastrophe."[20] It would appear that, for Jeffers, there are different kinds of singularity, some of which are to be avoided. A closer inspection of the word seems in order. The word is important.

If one notes that "singularity" is a noun created from the adjective "singular," goes back to the adjective, and places it in a context with other words like "unique," "eccentric," and "strange," he finds that "singular" can suggest either individuality or puzzling strangeness, or both. "Unique," in a loose sense, implies singularity and

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[19]Robinson Jeffers, "Poetry, Góngorism, and a Thousand Years," New York Times Magazine, January 18, 1948, p. 16.

[20]Ibid.

the fact of being without a known parallel.[21]

The study that follows does not take Jeffers as being without a known parallel, as being unique, but it does take Jeffers as being "singular" in the sense of individual and in the sense of presenting a "puzzling strangeness." This phrase is of major concern to the study. "Puzzling strangeness" may be the key to the power of Robinson Jeffers. It relates Jeffers to the tradition of the sublime.

Surprisingly enough, one has little or no difficulty in finding writers who are willing to speak of Jeffers' individuality and to allude to his puzzling strangeness. Most critics seem to sense his puzzling strangeness. This is partly evident from the citations already presented, and it will become increasingly evident as citations are given by different people throughout this study. However, one finds few writers who seek to focus on Jeffers' puzzling strangeness and use it to explain his power. Carpenter moves in this direction when he approaches Jeffers as a maker of "myth." However, Carpenter has tried to cover the entire body of Jeffers' work, and by doing so, his study becomes very suggestive, but not very definite, as he is well aware. His thinking is valid and equates well with puzzling strangeness: one effect that myth produces is puzzling strangeness.

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[21]Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: C and C Merriam Co., 1961), pp. 790, 837.

Hence, the present study will include Carpenter's ideas under the phrase "puzzling strangeness."

Thus, at this point, the assumption is made that Jeffers' wrote with power, and that in some way the power is embodied in the word "singularity," which includes both particularity and puzzling strangeness. However, in this study, puzzling strangeness and not particularity gets the emphasis. In other words, "singularity" describes a quality which Jeffers' writing possesses. The study will seek to reveal attributes of that quality, but will try to do so utilizing a different approach than did Carpenter. The present study will confine itself to one work by Jeffers.

The Women at Point Sur, published in 1927, which seems to have been almost disregarded by Jeffers' critics, will be the work that is to be studied. Those critics who have spoken, and who speak, of it seem to do so in a cursory manner. Kreymborg gives it the wrong title, confesses that he was unable to finish it, and proceeds to attack it for its incest.[22] Gilbert, very briefly, compares it to Euripides' Bacchae, and calls it cold and sordid at one moment and soothing at another.[23] Powell says of this work,

> Part XII is particularly eloquent and has been mistaken for the Bible when read aloud. Since the reviews attendant upon its publication, the poem has

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[22]Alfred Kreymborg, A History of American Poetry (New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1934), pp. 624-25.

[23]Gilbert, p. 111.

been almost entirely neglected by the critics.[24]

The consensus, if silence can be taken as a part of that consensus, seems to be that the work is a failure as a poem. However, Squires calls it "the matrix" of Jeffers' "subsequent narratives."[25] Jeffers, as late as 1938, thought it the most inclusive and "the most intense poetically" of all his work. He also said it was the most misunderstood and the least liked of all his work.[26]

Why Jeffers felt it was "the most intense poetically" of all his work is revealed in his recent biography by Melba Berry Bennett. In April of 1926, Jeffers revealed that he had been working for over a year on a long project to be named "Point Alma Venus," but he was abandoning it because "every story that ever occurred to me got wound up into this one poem, and it was too long, too complicated, and from the attempt at compression, neither clear nor true. . . ."[27] However, he promised his publisher that he would have a work ready for publication in the spring of 1927.

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[24]Lawrence Clark Powell, Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work (Pasadena, California: San Pasqual Press, 1940), p. 44.

[25]Squires, p. 35.

[26]Robinson Jeffers, The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers (New York: Random House, 1938), p. xiv.

[27]Melba Berry Bennett, The Stone Mason of Tor House: The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1966), p. 115.

This work was The Women at Point Sur. In it appears the image of a gigantic, naked woman walking on the sea. The image is suggestive of Venus and of Mary. On the basis of that image and Jeffers' statement regarding the intensity of The Women at Point Sur, and the length and complexity of "Point Alma Venus," it is assumed in this study that much of "Point Alma Venus" appeared in The Women at Point Sur. The work seems almost ideal to employ in seeking to reveal attributes of Jeffers' puzzling strangeness.

Another reason for choosing The Women at Point Sur grows out of Jeffers' method. Jeffers was a monodist. Most of his work unfolds through one voice, a central intelligence, intensely passionate. This voice, central intelligence, is the unifying factor in The Women at Point Sur.

Another reason for selecting The Women at Point Sur, rather than another work, is that it is one of the few works that Jeffers ever bothered to try to explain. He wrote several letters in which he tried to explain his intent; these will be introduced at a later time in the study.

## The Purpose of the Study

This study has assumed that Jeffers' work has power; it has assumed that in some way the power is embodied in the word "singularity," which, for this study, emphasizes puzzling strangeness. In other words, it has assumed that "singularity" either names or describes a quality which

Jeffers' work possesses, and it will try to reveal facets of that quality by analyzing one work: The Women at Point Sur.

## The Method of the Study

Jeffers, at least until recent years, has had numerous attackers and defenders. He has been approached by investigators who are philosophically, religiously, psychologically, scientifically, or sociologically-oriented. However, he has much less frequently been approached by one who is production-oriented. The production-oriented approach is one feature that the oral interpreter offers. The oral interpreter is concerned with animation, with how a work sounds, and with how it should be read.

In many ways, as it is hoped will become obvious as the study progresses, the history of oral interpretation relates to the thinking of Jeffers. Jeffers was very active as he composed. He paced the floor as he worked, visualized his scenes, and said his words aloud. For example, Jeffers was once asked if he believed that poetry should be read aloud to be most effective. He answered:

> That was of course the original intention. And I have heard that Carl Sandburg and Vachel Lindsay do it well. I read it over aloud when working it. . . .[28]

The key phrase here is "original intention." This phrase takes one back in time to the rhapsodes, at least.[29]

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[28]Powell, p. 21.

[29]Robert Marsh, "Aristotle and the Modern Rhapsode," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIX (December, 1953), 491-98.

Jeffers, as will be seen presently, goes back even further in his thinking. Also, Jeffers' method of composition, walking, visualizing, and reading his work over aloud as he worked it, strongly suggests the method of composition that Aristotle advises a poet (if poet is thought of as a maker) to follow. Aristotle said:

> It is necessary that the author when putting together his plots and laboring on their diction should bring the play before his own eyes, for thus seeing everything in the clearest light as though he were actually present when the events happened, he will find what is suitable, and incongruities will be very unlikely to escape him.[30]

And a little later:

> As far as possible the author should act out his piece with gestures, for the most persuasive poets are those who have the same natures as their characters and enter into their sufferings; he who feels distress represents distress and he who feels anger represents anger most genuinely. Therefore poetic art is the affair of the gifted man rather than of the madman, for men of the first kind can adapt themselves well but those of the second are beside themselves.[31]

Aristotle is saying that the poet (the maker) should visualize and should empathize with what he is producing. These represent aspects of the oral interpreter's art. The interpreter must visualize and empathize, and then use delivery (the visual and audible symbols of speech) to recreate for an audience what he has gained through the first two.

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[30]Aristotle Poetics 17.1455a22. The translator is Alfred Gudeman. See bibliography, A. H. Gilbert.

[31]Ibid.

In order to re-create a work for an audience, the interpreter will analyze the work to facilitate his visualization and empathic response. Analysis helps the interpreter to understand and to absorb a work. Then, he will formulate a plan for the delivery, the re-creating of the work. To make possible his analysis, the interpreter will need to be familiar with the theory of rhetoric and of poetics, for it is through these that he will obtain his knowledge of a work. This theory, as Marsh puts it," is a common concern of poets, critics, and scholars in general. . . ."[32] One could say, as does Marsh, that "the business of the poet is to make the poems, the interpreter's to know how to read them."[33] Thus, knowing how to read involves an interpreter in criticism. The oral interpreter, making use of historical and structural analysis, together with oral re-creation, can arrive at critical insights. This is especially true in the case of the work of Robinson Jeffers. The training of an oral interpreter makes him alert to the central intelligence, "the voice," the "I" through which The Women at Point Sur unfolds.

To facilitate the interpreter's visualization of and empathic response to The Women at Point Sur, this study will utilize in analysis the tradition of the sublime. The citations from Jeffers' critics, that have been given this far,

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[32]Marsh, Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXIX, 494.

[33]Ibid., p. 495.

suggest the sublime tradition. Power and puzzling strangeness are key concepts in the sublime tradition. A plan for the delivery, the re-creation of the work, will be formulated on the basis of what is learned from the analysis.

The sublime tradition is most complex. It is full of controversy, and this makes an explanation vital. How to handle this explanation constitutes, perhaps, the most crucial decision of the study. This decision follows.

Because of Jeffers' personal background and education, because of the complex pattern that Jeffers' writing reveals, because of the kind of subjects he treated, and because of the kind of line that Jeffers employed, it seems advisable to delay a full explanation of the sublime tradition and the specific method that derives from it until the biographical and critical material has been presented. The basis of this decision requires amplification.

The sublime tradition, from which the method for analysis for this study will be abstracted, grew out of a much larger tradition. The broader tradition from which the sublime tradition emerged is difficult, perhaps impossible, to define with precision. The biographical and critical material reveal this larger tradition, attach Jeffers to it, and help to focus the sublime tradition. Although this larger tradition is difficult to define with precision, one can point toward some of its characteristics.

In its inception, it embraced those men who felt language had sacred and/or magical qualities; those men concerned with God, immortality, how man should live, freedom and submission; those men concerned with permanence and change, the one and the many. Probably all men think about, and are concerned with, facets of one or more of these in some degree, but to the men in the tradition from which the sublime tradition emerged, working with one or more of the above ideas served as the basis of their lives.

What has just been said is nebulous, because not all the characteristics of the tradition have been named. Perhaps it could be said that the essential characteristic of the tradition is that a man in this tradition holds as a major aim of his life the contemplation of and/or the expressing of one or more of the above ideas. With "fear and trembling" one could call this tradition the tradition of "permanent truth." Thus, the sublime tradition, from which the method for analysis for this study will be abstracted, emerges from the tradition of "permanent truth."

As is to be expected, the sublime tradition is as nebulous as the tradition of permanent truth. It is not a systematic, unified body of literary or rhetorical theory. It cuts across all the arts. In those arts whose medium is language, the sublime tradition treats of work ranging from Aeschylus and his concern with moral and theological problems to Goldsmith and his humanitarian spirit; to Gray and his

concern with melancholy; to the involuntary transport of Longinus; to the intensity of Shelley; to the wild, barbaric, primitive, superstitious, mysterious, unknown of the gothic, to the grandeur of Addison, and to the terror of Burke. This list is representative rather than comprehensive. The sublime tradition is like a huge umbrella under which many people have gathered to get out of the rain. Thus, the sublime tradition embraces diverse ideas.

However, "power," "intensity," "puzzling strangeness," "striking," "instantaneous effect" (almost a gestalt) are among the terms most frequently found in the tradition. Additionally, the tradition has three (relatively) discernible divisions: The Longinus,[34] the gothic,[35] the grand style.[36] Also, the first two are probably less ambiguous to work with than the third. "Grand style" is a difficult term. It arouses too many associations, many of which are distasteful.

The method for analysis is acquired by narrowing these three divisions. Each will then serve as a different position from which to view the work. They can be, loosely, named greatness of conception, subject-matter, and grand style.

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[34]T. R. Henn, Longinus and English Criticism (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 15.

[35]Ibid., pp. 107-109.

[36]Donald Lemen Clark, Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 104-107.

Through the application of these, an attempt will be made to assimilate The Women at Point Sur. This is the first step in the process that will reveal facets of Jeffers' puzzling strangeness.

## The Plan of the Study

The study begins with biographical details; the intent is not to present a complete biography but to treat of some of the events and ideas that acted on Jeffers and were acted on by him. It expands on implications of ideas and events, even when the implications may not be immediately clear to the reader. It seeks to clarify some ideas and to point others toward an explanation of the sublime tradition and the analysis that is to follow. The biographical material serves to familiarize the reader with Jeffers' ancestry, his immediate family, his education, his general viewpoint, some of his thought.

Simultaneously, it begins to reveal the tradition of "permanent truth." This is the motif in which Jeffers moved and had his being. Also, this same material will reveal aspects that appear in the sublime tradition from which the method for analysis will be abstracted.

The study next considers a sampling of Jeffers' critics. It comments on this criticism and tries to relate and draw parallels where to do so seems pertinent to the analysis. The critical material serves to show how critics

felt about Jeffers, and it also serves to relate Jeffers more strongly to the tradition of permanent truth and to the sublime tradition.

Utilizing what has been learned through biographical and critical material, the study attempts to explain the sublime tradition and to draw from it the method for analysis. Taking the emergent method, the study analyzes The Women at Point Sur. Using what is gained from the analysis, the study formulates a plan for the delivery, the re-creation, of the work. Following this, a statement will be made of what appear to be some of the attributes of the singularity of the work and of Robinson Jeffers.

## CHAPTER II

## PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter builds a context from which to view The Women at Point Sur. Sections one and two form a laying out process. Section three begins pulling together the material that has been presented. It clarifies the sublime tradition and emphasizes the three divisions of that tradition from which the method for analysis will be abstracted.

Section one presents biographical details and some of Jeffers' ideas concerning poetry and life. These give the reader an insight into Jeffers' life, times, and thought. The same material reveals aspects of the tradition of permanent truth. Jeffers' pattern of education will be seen to be ancient, a movement from trivium and quadrivium into philosophy and theology with a firm basis in science. He also had the equivalent of the "grand tour." His comments will, also, help to reveal the tradition of permanent truth, and aspects of the sublime tradition. The biographical material also focuses an age of western civilization. This age is of major concern in The Women at Point Sur. The age is set by 1914. Thus, beyond the year 1914, chronology is less

important to the analysis, and Jeffers' ideas are more important.

Section two presents comments by some of Jeffers' critics and reviewers. This material strengthens the readers' acquaintance with Jeffers. It places Jeffers more strongly into the tradition of permanent truth that he has helped to reveal. It points the relation between this tradition and the tradition of the sublime. Most of the epithets used by the critics to describe Jeffers and his work in this section are terms used in speaking of the sublime tradition. Section two also suggests that three streams of the sublime tradition are visible in the criticism.

Section three sketches part of the sublime tradition and defines the three streams that are pertinent to this study. From these three streams the method that is to be employed in the analysis will be abstracted. The guiding idea running through the three sections is to trace Jeffers' power through his singularity, his puzzling strangeness.

## Jeffers: Events and Ideas

This section of the study begins in a chronological pattern which is followed, more or less, strictly until the year 1914. Concern with ideas occasionally intervenes, but the chronology is stressed, because it serves as the anchor of the study. After the year 1914 the organization follows ideas rather than chronology and will, where possible, allow

Jeffers to speak for himself. The intent of the section is to establish a body of ideas for the purpose of establishing that, when certain ideas do occur in The Women at Point Sur, those ideas are not incompatible with the life, times, and thought of Robinson Jeffers.

William Hamilton Jeffers, father of John Robinson Jeffers, was the culmination of a long line of devout Calvinists.[1] His ancestors, mostly farmers, had been Calvinists for generations.[2] There was in his ancestry an awareness of three major doctrines dating back to John Calvin: the democratic kernel with the neighborhood group constituting a self-governing unit, the extraordinary emphasis placed on human conduct, and the utterly subservient position that man holds in relationship to his God.[3] In a word, they were well aware of the type of man produced by the creed as pictured by Macaulay in his Essay on Milton:

> Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king.[4]

William Hamilton Jeffers A.B., D.D., L.L.D. was of this

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[1]Powell, p. 6. [2]Carpenter, p. 22.

[3]Ferdinand Scheville, A History of Europe from the Reformation to the Present Day (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 119.

[4]George B. Woods, Homer A. Watt, and George K. Anderson, The Literature of England, I (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1947), p. 569.

tradition.

He always identified himself with the Presbyterian faith. He had been a minister, and had served as pastor at the Euclide Avenue Church in Cleveland, Ohio.[5] At the time of his son's birth, January 10, 1887, he held the chair of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis at the Western Theological Seminary (Presbyterian) in that part of Pittsburgh known as Allegheny. Eight years later the seminary would further honor him by giving him the Chair of Biblical and Ecclesiastical History.[6]

A former president of Western Theological Seminary described him as a "scholar of the old school," thoroughly versed in classical learning, with a wonderful command in public speech of the English language. He had the ability to come up with just the right adjective at the right time, but he was not a writer.[7] Not just a teacher, but a scholar of languages as well, he knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew thoroughly.[8] He also knew--at least--German and French. He had traveled in Egypt, Syria, and Greece.[9] When he came to Western, he was a widower having lost a wife and two children.[10] He inherited $60,000 from his wife's estate, which

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[5]Joseph Roddy, "View from a Granite Tower," Theatre Arts, XXXIII (June, 1949), 34.

[6]Bennett, p. 4.

[7]Letter quoted in Powell, p. 6.

[8]Bennett, p. 7.

[9]Powell, p. 5

[10]Bennett, p. 12.

made him financially independent.[11]

To his neighbors he was something of an odd joke. He was a tall man, and always walked with his hands clasped behind his back. Melba Bennett describes him thus:

> Although many of his neighbors whispered that this tall, stooped man, with the high cheek bones and inscrutable expression, had Indian blood, others fascinated by his shiny black clothes, his long frock coat, his coarse, bushy, untrained hair, referred to him secretly as "old Ichabod Crane." They shook their heads sadly over the young boy with the aging father.[12]

He was a taciturn man. Una Jeffers, the wife of his son, was to describe him years later as a recluse.[13] Roddy says he was a man of deep culture, no amusements, a man with all the traits of a martinet, and "by his design young Jeffers' childhood was without friends and laughter."[14] This seems somewhat overstated but it is close to being accurate.

As a member of the seminary, he was expected to preach within his district when so invited. When he was doing so in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, he met the church organist, Annie Tuttle Robinson.[15] She was one of three girls born to Edwin and Mary Sherwood Tuttle, who were also very religious. A few weeks after the birth of the last, Edwin died. Mary fell back on God and was not completely satisfied with the

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[11] Ibid., p. 17.

[12] Ibid., p. 7.

[13] Letter to M. P. Ashelman, 1938, quoted in Powell, p. 35.

[14] Roddy, Theatre Arts, XXXIII, 34.

[15] Bennett, p. 9.

arrangement.[16] She died in 1876. The girls went to live with a relative, John Robinson and his wife Philena in Sewickley, Pennsylvania. Annie was then fourteen. When she met Dr. Jeffers she was twenty four; he was forty eight.[17]

As most preachers were, he was invited to spend the night with the elder, John Robinson. He was attracted by Annie's vivacity and began his pursuit. The Robinsons objected to him because of his age, but Annie was attracted by his goodness, kindness and thoughtfulness to her. They were married in the Robinson's parlor April 30, 1885. Their first child, John Robinson Jeffers, was born January 10, 1887.[18]

Robinson Jeffers was learning to read by the time he was "three and a half years old."[19] He was reading Greek at five.[20] His father, his first teacher, started Jeffers' Latin lessons at seven.[21] When Jeffers responded eagerly the father piled on more assignments. The boy rebelled. Nearly sixty years of age and concerned with his own health, Dr. Jeffers reluctantly turned over the responsibility for his son's education to schools. However, he kept close check on the assignments and the results and always seemed to be disappointed with his son's progress. He kept moving the

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[16] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

[17] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[18] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[19] Ibid., p. 18.

[20] Powell, p. 7.

[21] Bennett, p. 4.

family, seeking greater privacy for himself, and seeking to turn young Jeffers away from other children toward books and scholarship.[22]

Powell pictures Dr. Jeffers as an extremely liberal theologian who never tried to foist dogma on his son. He adds that Jeffers did not attend Sunday-school and was taught the Bible by his father as Oriental literature, not as divine revelation.[23] Yet Una Jeffers stated that, in Dr. Jeffers' household, there was family prayer, Bible reading, and catechism to learn by heart on Sundays. She added that Jeffers was well-versed in the Bible and that his language was influenced by the Bible.[24]

Robinson Jeffers, in a letter dated November, 1937, in which he answers some questions posed by H. H. Waggoner, said:

> My father was a clergyman but also intelligent, and he brought me up to timely ideas about origin of species, descent of man, astronomy, geology, etc., so that progress was gradual, none of the viewpoints of modern science came as a revelation. Studies in university and medical school gave me more room to move in, more points of support, but never, that I remember, any sudden readjustments--and so with later reading.[25]

In order to show the discipline of the father over the son, to indicate its meticulous quality, to give some

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[22] Ibid., p. 21.

[23] Powell, p. 35.

[24] Letter to M. P. Ashelman quoted in Powell, p. 35.

[25] H. H. Waggoner, "Science and the Poetry of Robinson Jeffers," American Literature, X (1938-9), 287.

idea of the depth of its penetration and the scope of Jeffers' thought, all of which is important to the sublime tradition, the study offers some of Jeffers' ideas that were revealed in 1947, when Dear Judas was adapted for the stage. This work is the one Jeffers did following the "Jesus as a man" trend, established by Strauss, Renan, Hegel and others. This trend will be noted later in the study. The ideas also help to reveal the tradition of permanent truth. The article, from which an excerpt is taken, was published in the drama section of The New York Times on October 6, 1947. Jeffers was sixty years old. In this article he had been discussing prospects for the drama. He said:

> To anyone who reads the gospels attentively--as I was required to do under the stern eye of the Presbyterian clergyman, my father--it soon becomes apparent that, though the deeds and sayings are of a beautiful simplicity, the minds of some of the persons are far from simple. Peter's mind was simple, no doubt, faithful, impulsive, bewildered, very human. The mind of Jesus is shown to us as if unintentionally, in wonderful glimpses, through the objective narrative. It is deep, powerful and beautiful; and strangely complex, not wholly integrated. He is the Prince of Peace, and yet He came 'not to bring peace but a sword'. He is gentle and loving yet He drives men with whips from the temple, He calls down destruction on Jerusalem, His curse kills an innocent fig-tree.
>
> This is not the mind of mere incarnation of love, as the sentimentalists represent Him, but of a man of genius, a poet and a leader, a man of such great quality that He has been regarded as God--literally, God--by successive millions of people, for eighteen or nineteen centuries (and some future ones) of the greatest age of human history. That is why there is no attempt in my play to represent this mind directly; but only through its ghost, its haunting echo or after-flame.
>
> Again, the mind of Judas, as represented in the gospels, is obscure and sick and divided. It may be

> tragic, or it may be reptilian, according to the motive that drives him; but surely the motive was not mere lust for money. He was a man who had been entrusted with money, and apparently was honest; he had been accepted among Christ's disciples; his despair at the end was so deep that he threw back the silver to those from whom he had received it, and went and hanged himself. One is left free to imagine his mind, provided only that it tallies with his acts; and I have imagined it as skeptical, humanitarian, pessimistic and sick with pity.
>
> But finally I should like to say that the play is not about Judas. My title is deceptive perhaps. The emphasis should be on the word "dear"--"dear" Judas--the man was dear to Jesus even while He was being betrayed by him. The play is about this man of transcendent genius who was capable of loving even His enemies, even Judas; and who deliberately sought crucifixion because He understood that only a fierce and dreadful symbol could capture the minds of a fierce people. Only the cross, and death by torture, could "fill the wolf bowels of Rome;" and conquer the blond savages from the North, who were about to take over Rome's power and primacy.[26]

Several things are to be noted in the excerpt. Most central to this study is the description of Jesus. The phrases are key phrases to Jeffers' singularity: "beautiful simplicity," "as if unintentionally," "in wonderful glimpses," "through objective narrative," "deep," "powerful," "beautiful," "strangely complex," "not wholly integrated." These same phrases that Jeffers uses in speaking of Christ could be used to describe Cassandra, Parmenides, Empedocles, the Delphian Oracle, Plato, Alcaeus, Buddha, psychoanalysis. They could and have been used to describe, historically, the tradition of permanent truth. They relate well with "puzzling strangeness." They describe Jeffers'

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[26]Excerpt from article in New York Times, October 16, 1947; quoted in Bennett, pp. 196-98.

writing.

Next, the excerpt points to the rise and fall of civilizations. This idea connects to permanence and change, to ages of men dying and being born, to gods dying and being reborn. This idea is of major concern in The Women at Point Sur. Note the reference to Rome and to the blond savages from the "North."

Next, the excerpt demonstrates that Jeffers is quite capable of deep, wide, and subtle thought. Such is a characteristic of the sublime tradition. His prose style displays Greek or Latin characteristics. He lets the thought control its length without fear of using "and." He does not arbitrarily break into short sentences--create unnecessary hiatus.[27] This, too, relates to the sublime tradition; it will be discussed when the "grand style" is considered.

Finally, it returns us to his childhood and the stern discipline imposed by his father, which instilled skill and precision in the use of language in Jeffers and increased his acuteness of observation. Writing in another place, Jeffers speaks of his own dislike for libraries--but not for

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[27]Paul C. Rodgers, Jr., "Alexander Bain and the Rise of the English Paragraph," Quarterly Journal of Speech, LI (December, 1965), 401-403. This article shows the rise of the organic paragraph from sentence logic. A comparison of the ideas treated here with Jeffers' prose style shows he was classical not modern in his style.

books-- and calls his father "studious."[28]

While seminary was out of session in the summers of 1891 and 1892, the family went to Europe. On each of these trips Jeffers' mother took language lessons, and from her, and the kindergartens in which he was placed he had his introduction to French and German.[29] In 1894, Hamilton Jeffers, Robinson's brother, was born. By the time this occurred Robinson had been bent to a pattern of solitude.[30] He absorbed book-learning readily and his speech became somewhat pedantic from long association with his father.[31] He was quite advanced in his education, but his father was not satisfied with the progress. Because of this dissatisfaction, Dr. Jeffers sent his wife and two sons to live in Europe for the next four years.[32] He joined them every summer and each time he did, Jeffers was taken from one school and placed in another. By the end of his first year abroad, Jeffers could speak German and French fluently, had a thorough knowledge of Latin, and could read but not converse in Greek.[33] He was twelve years old.[34] While they were abroad, Robin, as most of his friends called him, did not live with his mother but was placed in boarding schools with children from all parts

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[28]Robinson Jeffers, Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems (New York: Random House, 1951), p. x.

[29]Bennett, p. 20.

[30]Carpenter, p. 23.

[31]Bennett, p. 22.

[32]Ibid., p. 23.

[33]Ibid., p. 24.

[34]Ibid.

of Europe.[35] He became introverted and he acquired the nickname "the little Spartan."

By the time he was fourteen, he was showing an interest in poetry and trying to write simple verse.[36] His father had given him two small books of the poems of Thomas Campbell and D. G. Rossetti.[37] Years later, in retrospect, Robinson seemed quite surprised by the effect Rossetti had on him. Speaking of this experience he said:

> When I grew older came Milton and Marlowe and many another; normal and reasonable raptures; but never again the passionate springtime that Rossetti (of all authors!) made me live.[38]

At fifteen, an English woman in Zürich lent him a copy of Also Sprach Zarathustra.[39]

Apparently Dr. Jeffers was content with his son's European education, for he brought the family home the following year and Robin was entered at the University of Western Pennsylvania (the University of Pittsburgh) as a sophomore in September of 1902.[40]

Dr. Jeffers' health was questionable; he was sixty-seven years old. He decided to leave the seminary and the East and try a new climate. The family moved to California and eventually bought a house at Highland Park. Robin

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., p. 27.

[37] Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[38] Letter quoted in Squires, p. 13.

[39] Adamic, p. 466.

[40] Bennett, p. 28.

enrolled at Occidental College (Presbyterian) at Highland Park, and there he received his A.B. degree in 1905.[41]

He studied such subjects as Biblical Literature, Grounds of Christian and Theistic Belief, Economics, Geology, Surveying, History, Rhetoric, Greek, Ethics.[42] He was well liked by his fellow students, shy, bright and aloof. He wrote verses steeped in Biblical and classical lore for the college magazine of which he was an editor. He loved to go on long hikes, could quote long passages of Tennyson, Homer and the other classical writers. He was active in athletics as a distance runner. Few would have considered him a bookworm, but most of his classmates would have acknowledged his intelligence, cultured background, and the qualities that had earned him the nickname "little Spartan" in Zürich.[43]

In the fall of 1905, Jeffers entered the University of California at Los Angeles as a graduate student to take an M.A. in letters.[44] He studied Oratory, English, Spanish, German and enrolled in a gymnasium class.[45] He felt the Oratory would help in overcoming his shyness.[46] The English course, Old English, was conducted by Dr. Dixon, a Scotsman from the University of Edinburgh whose specialty was old Scottish ballads and early nineteenth-century poets.[47]

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[41] Ibid., pp. 29-34.

[42] Powell, p. 8.

[43] Bennett, pp. 29-34.

[44] Ibid., p. 35.

[45] Powell, p. 10.

[46] Bennett, p. 35.

[47] Ibid., pp. 35-36.

He added the German class later when he learned Faust was to be read with discussion.[48] The star pupil in the German class was Una Call Kuster, until Jeffers joined.[49] He fell in love with her, but not immediately.

Later, he was to speak of her relation to his life in the same manner that Wordsworth had spoken of Dorothy, his sister. Borrowing Wordsworth's terms, Jeffers said of Una, "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears, and arranged my life."[50] But, that was to come later, and "not until wine and tears had flowed in abundance."[51] Una, two years his senior, was already married when they met. Powell notes that before they were married in Tacoma, Washington, August 2, 1913, "they endured a time of stress."[52] Carpenter notes that friends of each tried to dissuade them, and Dr. and Mrs. Jeffers felt extreme distress and disapproval.[53] Bennett indicates that the distress and disapproval came between the time they learned of the affair and the divorce. When it became evident that Una would get her divorce and that she and Robin would be married, both of his parents gave their consent and blessings.[54] However, before the divorce, much was done on

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[48]Ibid., p. 36.

[49]Ibid., p. 37.

[50]Adamic, p. 467.

[51]Powell, p. 10.

[52]Ibid., p. 14.

[53]Carpenter, p. 29.

[54]Bennett, pp. 62-66. Here two letters are offered, one from Dr. Jeffers to his son, the other from Annie Jeffers to Una. Each offers blessings. The style of Dr. Jeffers' letter (p. 66) is like Robinson's letter style. He makes frequent use of and to carry a thought to completeness.

both sides to break up the relationship. Robin and Una both struggled to forget each other, but without success.[55] Roddy says Una's husband acquired the divorce.[56] The Los Angeles paper played up the scandal in the usual triangle format.

During the period between 1905, when he met Una, and their marriage in 1913, Jeffers experienced stress, partly because of Una and partly because of a lack of sureness about his future. He studied in Zürich. While at Zürich, from April to September in 1906, he studied Introduction to Philosophy, History of Old English Literature, History of French Literature from 1840 to 1900, Dante's Life and Work, Spanish Romantic Poetry, History of the Roman Empire.[57] He attended medical school at the University of Southern California and was a brilliant student, although he did not intend to be a doctor. He studied Forestry and Law at the University of Washington, and he finally decided to try to write poetry, the only field for which, he said, he ever felt a permanent interest.[58] In 1912, he received a legacy of $10,000 from a relative of his mother.[59] He used part of the money to print Flagons and Apples, his first volume. He also used part of

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[55]Ibid., p. 50-56.

[56]Roddy, Theatre Arts, XXXIII, 34.

[57]Bennett, p. 63. Bennett gives the courses in German and French. The translation is mine.

[58]Powell, p. 14.

[59]Roddy, Theatre Arts, XXXIII, 34.

the money for "sowing wild oats" around Hermosa Beach. Roddy says "He set up Bacchanal headquarters for himself at Hermosa Beach near Los Angeles."[60] His life did not begin to focus sharply again until he and Una were married. This marriage proved to be lasting. It produced a daughter, who died almost at birth in 1914, and twin sons, both of whom grew to manhood and have families of their own.

Originally, the couple planned to live in Europe, but news of the impending war delayed their departure; Una's pregnancy caused further delay; finally, the outbreak of war in Europe caused cancellation of their plans.[61] Fred Clapp told them about Carmel and they settled there in September of 1914.[62] Carmel remained their home until Una died of cancer in 1950[63] and Jeffers died quietly in his sleep January 20, 1962, ten days after his seventy-fifth birthday.[64]

They made several trips while living on the California coast. Some were to Taos, New Mexico, during the 1930's.[65] A few were to Ireland. Some were to the East. One of these was to Washington D.C. where Jeffers inaugurated the series, "Twentieth Century Poets in English," at the Library of Congress.[66] While on this trip Jeffers lectured and read

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Bennett, pp. 64-67.

[62] Ibid., p. 68.

[63] Ibid., pp. 222-23.

[64] Ibid., p. 237.

[65] Ibid., pp. 136-39.

[66] Robinson Jeffers at Occidental College (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1955), p. 8.

parts of his work at seven universities.[67] One trip was to New York for the opening of his free adaptation of Euripides' Medea.[68] But, the major portion of Jeffers' life and thought, from 1914 until his death, was spent at Carmel in an aura of contemplative seclusion. Like his father, he, too, was a recluse.

1914 was a pivotal year in Jeffers' life. It was the year he came to Carmel, the year his first child was born and died, the year his father died, the year war broke out in Europe, the year much of his thought concerning poetry and his relationship to it clarified, and crystallized. Attention focuses on that year and those thoughts and their expansion.

In 1914, unable to go abroad because of the war, Una and Robin discovered, and were impressed by, Carmel. Jeffers in speaking of his first view of that section of California said,

> A second piece of pure accident brought us to the Monterey Coast mountains, where for the first time in my life I could see people living--amid magnificent unspoiled scenery--essentially as they did in the Idylls or the Sagas, or in Homer's Ithaca. Here was life purged of its ephemeral accretions. Men were after cattle, or plowing the headland, hovered by white sea-gulls, as they have done for thousands of years and will for thousands of years to come. Here was contemporary life that was also permanent life; and not shut from the modern world but conscious of it and related to it; capable of expressing

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[67] Bennett, pp. 172, 187.

[68] Roddy, Theatre Arts, XXXIII, 34.

> its spirit, but unencumbered by the mass of poetically irrelevant details and complexities that make a civilization.[69]

The country is so important in Jeffers' work and thought that it is worth emphasizing by giving another writer's opinion of the same country. Henry Miller, speaking of Jeffers' country, said:

> If the soul were to choose an arena in which to stage its agonies, this would be the place for it. One feels exposed--not only to the elements, but to the sight of God. Naked, vulnerable, set against an overwhelming backdrop of might and majesty, one's problems become magnified because of the proscenium on which the conflict is staged. Robinson Jeffers is unerring in high-lighting this aspect of his narrative poems. His figures and their manner of behavior are not falsely exaggerated, as some believe. If his narratives smack of Greek tragedy, it is because Jeffers rediscovered here the atmosphere of the gods and fates which obsessed the ancient Greeks. The light here is almost as electric, the hills almost as bare, the community almost as autonomous as in Ancient Greece. The rugged pioneers who settled here needed only a voice to make known their secret drama. And Jeffers is that voice.[70]

The Carmel coast acted as a catalyst on Jeffers' thoughts, thoughts springing from a learned background. The country, as both he and Miller note, furnished him with a focal point, a setting, a proscenium for his ideas. When he saw the coast he thought of idylls, sagas, Homer's Ithaca. When these thoughts are added to Jeffers' statement, given earlier,

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[69]Jeffers, The Selected Poetry. . ., pp. xv-xvi.

[70]Henry Miller, Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 145.

that the "original intent" of poetry was to be heard,[71] one can see that Jeffers' ideas on poetry are turning to antiquity, toward the early ages of man. They are not following modern (1914) trends. An attempt will be made to follow and to expand some of those thoughts. One of these is originality. It is vital to Jeffers, to the tradition of permanent truth, and to the sublime tradition.

About 1935, Jeffers wrote an introduction for Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems. He discussed the thoughts relative to poetry that he had had when he was twenty-seven. That would have been 1914. He was quite concerned because, as he said, he had "accomplished nothing but exactly nothing, in the only course that permanently interested me."[72] He wrestled with the problems of originality.

> This originality, without which a writer of verses is only a verse-writer, is there any way to attain it? The more advanced contemporary poets were attaining it by going farther and farther along the way that perhaps Mallarmé's aging dream had shown them, divorcing poetry from reason and ideas, bringing it nearer to music, finally to astonish the world with what would look like pure nonsense and would be pure poetry. No doubt these lucky writers were imitating each other, instead of imitating Shelley and Milton as I had done. . . .[73]

Jeffers did not like this direction;[74] every step in this direction meant the loss of some aspect of reality.[75]

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[71] Supra, p. 11.

[72] Jeffers, Roan Stallion. . ., p. viii.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

He did not wish to go this way, nor did he wish to turn to the Chinese way of using quotations from books to build a mosaic.[76] He did not wish to build something new by building a mosaic with the old.[77] Jeffers did not object to the use of the past; he objected to any work that had not been fused in the white heat of imagination. He was thinking of the concept of imitation as it is found in Aristotle, not Plato's idea of copying. His thought relates to the organic concept contained in Longinus' ideas of the sublime. He was, perhaps, following Coleridge's concept of the secondary imagination which echoes Longinus. In a mosaic, the viewer sees the dividing lines, the pieces of the old, without difficulty. A fusion in the crucible of the secondary imagination uses the old, perhaps, but produces a new creation. Jeffers sought fusion, not mosaic. He indicated as much when he rejected modern (1914) trends by saying,

> I did not want to become slight and fantastic, abstract and unintelligible.
>
> I was doomed to go on imitating dead men, unless some impossible wind should blow me emotions or ideas, or a point of view, or even mere rhythms, that had not occurred to them. There was nothing to do about it.[78]

If one takes the word "imitate" to mean "copy" and translates Jeffers' intent here as to go on "copying dead men," as some critics and reviewers seem to have done, then the implication of his entire introduction is missed.

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[76] Ibid. [77] Ibid. [78] Ibid., p. x.

Jeffers had much more in mind than merely copying when he spoke of imitation and originality. What he had in mind relates directly to what he saw when he viewed the Carmel coast for the first time, and it relates to the tradition of the sublime as found in Longinus. He had in mind the doctrine of imitation and inspiration that has been so much a part of the history of rhetoric and poetics. This doctrine is part of the tradition of permanent truth and the sublime tradition that emerges from it.

That Jeffers had this doctrine in mind is, of course, an assumption, but it is an assumption that is not without foundation in light of Jeffers' academic background. It is almost impossible to conceive of him as not being aware of the concept. Most of the writers, at least, from Plato forward have wrestled with the problem: Aristotle, Longinus, Dante, Elyot, Castelvetro, Sidney, Spenser, Tasso, Milton, Dryden.[79] Most of the writers on rhetoric before and after Cicero and Quintilian, at least, touched the problem. The major writers on taste including Addison, Blair, and Burke touch the idea. The doctrine has so many facets and underlies so much of what so many writers say that it seems more

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[79]Allan H. Gilbert, Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 693. Due to the diverse translation Longinus has received, it seems more consistent to cite his work through Gilbert rather than classical citation. This will be done when Longinus is quoted.

feasible to assume that Jeffers had inspiration in mind than to assume he meant copying.

The doctrine has been treated as furor poeticus, imitation, inspiration, imagination, taste and, probably, others. It goes back in history to the time when poetry, philosophy, religion, and rhetoric merge; to the times when poetry was sung or chanted. Longinus treats of one aspect of the doctrine, and he is quoted at some length. Note particularly the comparison to the Pythian Priestess and the religious concept of the shining through of truth that is being suggested.

> Plato also points out, if we will but not neglect his counsel, that another road, in addition to those we have mentioned, leads to excellence. And what road is that? It is imitation and emulation of the great prose writers and poets of antiquity. Let us apply ourselves to this, my dear friend, with all our might. Many are in this way inspired by the spirit of another, just as report says that the Pythian priestess, on drawing near to the tripod where there is a chasm in the earth breathing forth a divine exhaltation, is so filled with the heavenly power that she utters oracles under its influence. So from the great spirits of the ancients an influence as though from the holy cave of the emulators; inspired by this, even those not susceptible share enthusiastically in the greatness of others.[80]

And a little farther on:

> We then, when we are toiling on something that requires excellence of expression and greatness of thought, would do well to ask our hearts how Homer would have said it or how Plato or Demosthenes or

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[80] Ibid., pp. 163-64.

> Thucydides, in his history, would have given it distinction. For these great characters appearing to us as objects of emulation and standing prominently before us will raise our souls to the pitch we have imagined. Still more if we try in addition to formulate in our minds an answer to the question: If Homer or Demosthenes were present how would he react to this thing I am saying? How would he be affected by this other passage? Certainly our efforts will be great if we set before ourselves such a group of critics and such an audience for our utterances and imagine we are presenting our writings for examinations to such superhuman judges and witnesses.[81]

Perhaps the doctrine of inspiration, or imitation, can be summed up by saying the writer attempts to catch the spirit of his model, enters into a kind of rivalry with him and attempts to emulate his manner. By so doing he draws inspiration from his model. This is more nearly what Jeffers means when he says he must go on imitating dead men. He is saying, in 1914, that he is not accepting current trends in poetry but is resigned to returning to antiquity. He is choosing an audience of the best. When he saw the Carmel coast he had found his proscenium. Perhaps in antiquity he found the source that produces his "puzzling strangeness." By 1914, Jeffers is making up his mind to attempt to present in poetry the enduring aspects of life. We note some of these aspects and their relationship to poetry.

In the same work, in 1938, where Jeffers tells of his first view of the Carmel coast, he also speaks about poetry. He repeats much of what he had said earlier about modern

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[81] Ibid., pp. 164-65.

poetry. In this discussion he is, also, speaking about 1914. He felt that, if poetry were to survive, poetry "must reclaim substance and sense, and physical and psychological reality."[82] This feeling led him "to attempt to write narrative poetry and to draw subjects from contemporary life."[83] He wanted to handle themes that modern poetry had generally avoided, and he wanted to attempt to express philosophic and scientific ideas in verse. These are the ideas in the tradition of permanent truth. It was not his intention to open new fields for poetry but rather "to reclaim old freedom."[84]

Jeffers recognized a difference between poetry and prose, and he made his distinction on the basis of subject and material, but he is aware of other distinctions. He made his distinction between poetry and prose by saying:

> Prose can discuss matters of the moment; poetry must deal with things that a reader two thousand years away could understand and be moved by. This excludes much of the circumstances of modern life, especially in the cities. Fashions, forms of machinery, the more complex social, financial, political adjustments, and so forth, are all ephemeral, exceptional; they exist but will never exist again. Poetry must concern itself with (relatively) permanent things. These have poetic value; the ephemeral has only news value.[85]

He makes his meaning of relatively permanent things more specific:

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[82]Jeffers, The Selected Poetry. . ., p. xiv.

[83]Ibid. [84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

> Permanence is the one essential element in the subject of poetry. The gods of Greece are dead, there is pathos in them but no poetry; the customs of Greece are dead, there is pathos in them but no poetry; Homer and the race he sired are alive, because light and darkness, mountains and sea, humanity and its passions, are permanent establishments.[86]

They are also components of the sublime tradition.

The idea of permanence is one of the most repeated ideas in Jeffers' thought. Permanence represents the "truth that shines forth," or is seen through "a veil of fictions," or "through a glass darkly," or beyond the ephemeral, or through the moments of clear sanity found in some kinds of madness or religious ecstasy. Jeffers pursues this thought in an unpublished preface that he wrote in 1923 for Tamar. It was not included in the book and, as far as is known, appears only in print in its entirety in Bennett's recent book. Because it is so rare most of it will be quoted here. To do so will bring Jeffers closer to the larger tradition from which the sublime tradition emerged. The quotation will be divided into two parts. The first half, which contains the treatment of permanent things, will be quoted now; the second will be quoted when the blending of sound and sense is treated later in this section.

Jeffers gives us an additional insight into his concept of poetry and with what he thinks poetry treats.

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[86]S. S. Alberts, A Bibliography of the Works of Robinson Jeffers (New York: Random House, Inc., 1933), p. 110.

Poetry has been regarded as a refuge from life, where dreams may heal the wounds of reality; and as an ornament of life; and, as a diversion, mere troubadour amusement; and poetry has been in fact refuge and ornament and diversion, but poetry in its higher condition is none of these; not a refuge but an intensification, not an ornament but essential, not a diversion but an incitement. As presenting the universal beauty poetry is an incitement to life; an incitement to contemplation, because it serves to open our intelligence and senses to that beauty.

The poetry that means to be amusing, or ornamental, or a refuge, has its own licenses; it may play the clown or the dreamer, it may chatter like a fashionable person, or mince out bits of life for its own enjoyment, like a dilletante. Its one condition is to be what it sets out to be, amusing, or ornamental, or a refuge. But the higher form of poetry has laws, many of them too basic to be conscious; there are three to be spoken of because they are so much ignored; this poetry must be rhythmic, and must deal with permanent things, and must avoid affectation.

The superfluousness of imitative poetry is quite recognized nowadays (in principle) by everyone who thinks on the subject; and this is a gain; but a second-rate mind is sure to confuse eccentricity with originality; its one way of saying something new is to deform what it has to say; like the bobbed fox it sets a fashion for third-rate minds; and these are inevitably imitative, only now they follow a bad model instead of a good one. Here, I believe, is the origin of those extraordinary affectations which distinguish so much of what is called modern poetry. But this is not a disease of adults; and all there is to say further on the subject is that one's clearest thinking is not certain enough, nor one's most natural choice of words appropriate enough, for the passionate presentment of beauty which is poetry's function. If we alter thought or expression for any of the hundred reasons: in order to seem original, or to seem sophisticated, or to conform to a fashion, or to startle the citizenry, or because we fancy ourselves decadent, or merely to avoid the commonplace: for whatever reason we alter them, for that reason they are made false. They have fled from reality.

As to the necessity of dealing with permanent things I . . . need but add that permanence is only another aspect of reality; a railroad, for example,

> is not real as a mountain is; it is actual, in its fantastic way, for a century or two; but it is not existent. (Novelty is in itself no bar to poetic quality; permanence is the condition. An airplane is as poetic as a plow or a ship; it is not existent in the human past except as a most ancient of dreams, but it is existent, in some form or other, in all the human future. It is a real thing, not a temporary expedient, but the incarnation of metal and tissue of a permanent human faculty.) Most of our inventions are mere expedients, or the possible essential in them remains hidden; and here is what makes the life of modern cities barren of poetry; it is not a lasting life; and it is lived among unrealities. A life immensely fantastic is not poetic; and what is romantic is not usually poetic, though people think it is.[87]

By the time Lawrence Clark Powell wrote his book on him, Jeffers was ready to make a still more positive statement regarding subjects suitable to poetry. In 1933, Jeffers wrote a foreword for Powell's book. In it he said:

> Poetry by Milton's definition must be "impassioned": poetical speech has little value and no likelihood unless it is born of passionate feeling. The lyrical poet finds the feeling in himself; the maker of narrative or dramatic poetry must cause the persons of his imagination to feel passionately. He must do this by involving them in some story or other, a sequence of emotion-producing events. Most often he chooses a tragic story, because pain, being more intense than pleasure, produces stronger emotions. The story may deal with war, like the Iliad, or religion, like the Divine Comedy; but in times of high civilization war becomes too specialized and inhuman, and religion too vague or incredible for poetry to fix its roots in. Other sources of emotion must be tapped; and, when poetry has remained vigorous in civilized times, the poets have turned with singular unanimity to one source in particular, to the family and its relationships.[88]

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[87]Bennett, pp. 106-108.

[88]Powell, p. xvi.

Jeffers points out that the relationships treated are always unhappy and they are often vicious. This is not because "poets prefer vice and sorrow, but because happiness makes no story and but calm emotion."[89] To people who feel that bloodshed and violence are not proper subjects for modern poetry because we are more civilized than our barbarian ancestors, Jeffers gives this answer:

> There was a time in my youth when physical violence appeared more or less anachronistic. It was hoped that this "old ballad-material" belonged to the past, all tragic feeling would soon be only of the mind and spirit. Unhappily that time was not normal but a rootless exception, and died nineteen years ago.[90]

Nineteen years before this was written would have been 1914. The dying of that time will be investigated later in this study. At present it is noted that Jeffers lists as themes relationships involved in wars, religion, or the family.

In a letter quoted by Powell, Jeffers gave an additional indication of how deep into the past his thought ventured and how deep into the scheme of life. He said:

> We are something more than American citizens and creatures of the twentieth century; a race doesn't change so rapidly as all that. Our bodies and souls are equally capable of adaptation to life in the middle ages--in the interglacial ages. Our cells remember the sea-salt of their origin, and the turns of the sea-tide.[91]

By the end of 1914, Jeffers had found a proscenium for his thought in the Carmel coast, had dropped the ephemeral

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid., p. xvii.

[91] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

from his thinking in poetry, had turned to antiquity for his guidance, had decided to write long stories in verse, had pushed poetry back to where it merged with religion, rhetoric, philosophy, prophecy, and had chosen relationships growing out of war, religion and the family as his themes.

Such decisions were contrary to the major streams of poetic thought prevalent during the early decades of the twentieth century. Jeffers knew they were. He has already given us an indication that he was aware of the problems his decision created. It was mentioned earlier that he finished a long poem, Tamar, in 1920 or 1921, and that he did not offer it to a publisher, and finally had it printed at his own expense. He felt it was too long for any publisher's reader to go through.[92] He was aware of a poetic trend voiced by Edgar Allan Poe. Jeffers shows his awareness of the trend more specifically:

> Edgar Poe lived ahead of his time and formulated the tendency, saying in effect that there is no poetry but lyrical poetry. The belief became orthodox. Arthur Symons announced it as beautifully as possible; no one nowadays can put his world into a poem as Dante did; he may put it into a series of novels, like Balzac, but poetry in a too complex world can deal only with essences; it has to withdraw to an ivory tower "where it sings ignoring the many voices of the street."[93]

Note the word essences. It relates to truth shining forth.

What Poe asserted was that there is no such thing as a long poem. He held a long poem to be a "flat contradiction

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[92]Supra, p. 4. [93]Letter quoted in Powell, p. 206.

in terms."[94] He held that a poem deserved the title "only in as much as it excites, by elevating the soul."[95] He held that a poem could not extend itself over more than a half an hour of reading time, and then it fails; a revulsion begins.[96] Poe felt that Milton's Paradise Lost was poetical only when a reader forgot unity and read it as a series of short poems.[97] Poe goes on to add:

> If, to preserve its unity--its totality of effect or impression--we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is a constant alternation of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical pre-judgement can force us to admire; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again; omitting the first book--that is to say, commencing with the second--we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned--that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun is a nullity:--and this is precisely the fact.[98]

What Poe says cannot be done, Jeffers by 1914 is proposing to do, and by 1920 or 1921 has done. He turned out long works until he died. Jeffers was aware of the problems he faced, but he turned to reclaim old freedoms for poetry. He sought to treat philosophical and scientific ideas in poetry. He turned to the tradition of permanent truth.

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[94]Gay W. Allen, and Harry H. Clark, Literary Criticism: Pope to Croce (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 346.

[95]Ibid.

[96]Ibid., p. 347.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Ibid.

Once when Jeffers was asked what practical suggestions he would offer for a student who was beginning a study of poetry, he replied:

> It seems to me I'd begin with ballads of action-Scott's Border Minstrelsy, if the dialects were not too difficult. Then short lyrics, as Shelley, Keats, Herrick, Andrew Marvell. For a study of poetic form, I'd direct the student's attention to accentual imitations of classic meters, like Tennyson's and Swinburne's, and to some well-made rendering in modern English of Beowulf and Piers Plowman, as well as to the metrical instances of today and last century. And some Old Testament poetry, to face the Hebrew verse like an echo in the mountains.[99]

The quality that Jeffers valued most in poetry is that of imaginative power "activated by strong emotion, so that the imagination is not displayed idly for a show, but as if of necessity and in earnest, under emotional compulsion."[100] This describes "I" of The Women at Point Sur. This same quality is reflected in the atmosphere of the Oracles, in the Orphic rites, in the prophets, in the pre-Socratic philosophers. Perhaps the quality is part of the puzzling strangeness, the singularity of Jeffers. Perhaps this quality is the source of Jeffers' power. Perhaps he has caught the inspiration of antiquity.

Having seen something of Jeffers' ideal of poetry, the study seeks to gain some insight into how he felt about the blending of sound and sense. This blending reveals additional aspects of enduring qualities which Jeffers felt

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[99]Letter quoted in Powell, p. 19.

[100]Ibid., p. 205.

poetry could treat and relates him more strongly to the motif of permanent truth. Klein has done the major study to date on Jeffers' prosody, and his study will be commented on and utilized during the analysis.[101] C. C. Cunningham has made an attempt to identify Jeffers' prosody for the oral interpreter.[102] His study, also, will be utilized in the analysis, but, at present, attention is focused on Jeffers' idea of the blending of sound and sense with the emphasis on sense. The focus begins rather diffusely and sharpens as progress is made. The beginning is made with the second half of the unpublished preface to Tamar. In the first half of that preface, Jeffers, among other things, named three of the laws that the higher poetry must follow: it must be rhythmic, must deal with permanent things, must avoid affectation.[103] He discussed, in the first half, the latter two. Consideration is now given to the third:

> This poetry must be rhythmic. By rhythm I do not mean the dissolved and unequal cadences of good prose, nor the capricious divisions of what is called free verse, (both these being sometimes figuratively spoken of as rhythmic), but a movement as regular as meter, or as the tides. A tidal recurrence, whether of quantity or accent, or of both, or of syllables and rhyme as in French

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[101]Herbert Klein, "A Study of the Prosody of Robinson Jeffers" (unpublished Master's thesis, Dept. of English, Stanford: Occidental College, Los Angeles, 1930).

[102]Cornelius Carman Cunningham, "The Rhythm of Robinson Jeffers' Poetry as Revealed by Oral Reading," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXII (October, 1946), 351-57.

[103]Supra, p. 44.

> verse, or of syllables and rhyme and tone as in Chinese verse, or of phrase and thought as in old Hebrew verse, has always been the simplest and inevitably one of the qualities of poetry. A reason is not far to seek. Recurrence, regular enough to be rhythmic, is the inevitable quality of life, and of life's environment. Prose belongs rather to that indoor world where lamplight abolishes the returns of day and night, and we forget the seasons. Human caprice, the volatile and superficial part of us, can only live sheltered. Poetry does not live in that world but in all the larger, and poetry cannot speak without remembering the turns of the sun and moon, and the rhythm of the ocean, and the recurrence of human generations, the returning waves of life and death. Our daily talk is prose; we do not often talk about real things, even when we live them; but about fictitious things; expedients, manners, past times, and aspects of personality that are not real because they are superficial and exceptional.
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> So we are brought a third time to the question of reality. It is the distinction of all the higher sort of poetry that it deals in the manner of reality with real things; not with abstract qualities; but not either with fantasies nor pretences, nor with things actual indeed, but so temporary and exceptional that they are not to be counted among realities.[104]

Treating the subject of rhythm once again, in 1928, the year after the publication of The Women at Point Sur, Jeffers said of his writing:

> I want it rhythmic and not rhymed, moulded more closely to the subject than older English poetry is, but as formed as alcaics if that were possible too. The event is of course a compromise but I like to avoid arbitrary form and capricious lack or disruption of form. My feeling is for the number of beats to the line. There is a quantitive element too in which the unstressed syllables have part. The rhythm comes from many sources--physics, biology, beat of blood, the tidal environments of life, desire for singing emphasis that prose does not have.[105]

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[104]Bennett, p. 108.

[105]Alberts, p. 150.

The focal point of emphasis for the moment is the phrase, "as formed as alcaics." Mention was made earlier of Rossetti's influence on Jeffers.[106] When Jeffers was speaking of this influence, he added, "Later came The Wind Among the Reeds, and Shelley, and Tennyson's Alcaics and Boadicea, doubtful imitations of classical meter but sonorous as the beat of the surf. . . ."[107] It has also been stated that Jeffers read and was influenced by Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra.[108] It now remains to establish and to clarify the relationships among all of these and between them and Jeffers' feeling about the relationship between sound and sense.

In "The Torch-Bearers' Race,"[109] a short selection in which Jeffers discusses freedom and life, with the torch being allegorical of both, three bearers of the torch are named: Sappho, Alcaeus, Aeschylus. It has been seen that alcaic in some manner describes the prosody that Jeffers seeks. From "The Torch-Bearers' Race," it can be seen that, in some manner, Alcaeus animates an idea in which Jeffers has interest. Even if one grants that the relationship is tenuous, it is worth investigation. It points Jeffers' blending of sound and sense.

Alcaeus was a contemporary of Sappho; both were active

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[106]Supra, p. 30.

[107]Squires, p. 13.

[108]Supra, p. 30.

[109]Jeffers, Roan Stallion. . ., p. 104.

about 600 B.C. in Lesbos.[110] Lesbos was famous for its poetry long before either was born.[111] The poetry of Lesbos grew up out of religion.[112] Thus, as is to be expected, much of Alcaeus' poetry was hymns to different gods. His "Hymn to Apollo" will be mentioned in the analysis of The Women at Point Sur. His poems were lyric. In this context "lyric" means poems meant to be sung or chanted to the lyre. It does not signify either length or subject matter. Lyrics can be short, but do not have to be. The stanza is usually short, but does not have to be, and there is no prescribed limit to the number of stanzas. A story, narrative, can be sung or chanted. Alcaeus' stanza relates well to Jeffers' verse paragraph. In this connection, Poe's concept of the Iliad as a series of lyric poems begins to take on significance for the study. Jeffers knew Poe as has been shown.

Alcaeus' poetry is monody, designed to be chanted or read by a single voice.[113] That voice, in Alcaeus' work, is always direct, personal.[114] It is generally serious, passionate. Alcaeus moves abruptly from theme to theme and he is careless in his use of connectives; at least, he is careless by modern English standards. He shows his intensity of

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[110]C. M. Bowra, Greek Lyric Poetry (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 134.

[111]Ibid., p. 130. [112]Ibid.

[113]Richard Lattimore, Greek Lyrics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. viii.

[114]Bowra, p. 135.

feeling by his combinations of adjectives. He is a masculine writer. He has the ability to drive a point home when it suits him, and he is the master of plain or direct statement.[115] He sang because he wished to do so; "he wrote because he had something to say."[116] His stanzas are often self-contained. This paragraph also describes Jeffers.

In this connection, Alcaeus' direct manner, abrupt change from theme to theme and carelessness about connectives are similar to those same traits in Heraclitus.[117] They are similar to the Delphic Oracle (Oracle of Apollo, god of truth). These same traits, incidentally, are those of Thus Sprach Zarathustra.[118] They are those of Jeffers also, and a clue to his "puzzling strangeness." Poetry, philosophy, and religion have merged, perhaps to produce "hymns to salvation."[119]

In an effort to give some indication of Alcaeus' work, especially an indication of his subject matter and a suggestion of his style, one of his poems is quoted. Lattimore, who did the translation, said he tried to recapture as much of the Greek as he could. Incidentally, the subject is

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[115] Ibid., p. 170 [116] Ibid., p. 174.

[117] Robert S. Brumbaugh, The Philosophers of Greece (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964), p. 44.

[118] Ibid., p. 45. Brumbaugh adds here that this type of speech was unadorned and heard for a thousand years. Jeffers, too, thought of a thousand years.

[119] Supra, p. 2.

Alcaeus' by way of Hesiod.[120] There is no title; it is simply number five in Lattimore's translation.

> Wet your whistle with wine now, for the dogstar,
> wheeling up in the sky,
> Brings back summer, the time all things are
> parched under searing heat.
> Now cicada's cry, sweet in the leaves, shrills
> from beneath his wings.
> Now the artichoke flowers, women are lush, ask
> too much of their men,
> Who grow lank, for the starburning above withers
> their brains and knees.[121]

The length of the line, the choice of subject, the directness of statement are similar to Jeffers. He could have written this poem. Alcaeus anticipates the climate and the season of The Women at Point Sur. This similarity is one of the reasons that this paper rejected the singularity concept that meant "without known parallel." Alcaeus is one of Jeffers' parallels. Jeffers blends sound and sense through the voice, the narrator of his work.

In 1948, Jeffers, in sketching a portrait of the ideal poet, summarized and clarified some of the ideas that have been touched on to this point. These are condensed, paraphrased, and sometimes quoted, in about the same sequence as they appeared in the article.[122]

1) Poetry is less bound by time and circumstance than any other of the arts. It does not need tangible materials. It comes almost directly from a man's mind and

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[120]Bowra, p. 159. [121]Lattimore, p. 42.

[122]Jeffers, New York Times Magazine, p. 16.

senses and bloodstream, and no one can predict the man.

2) It does not need a school or an immediate tradition. It does not need great audiences.

3) Great poetry could be written today.

4) The ideal poet would break sharply away from the directions that are fashionable in contemporary poetic literature. There are some great poems that have been written by contemporary poets, but they are not for imitation.

5) He would turn from self-conscious and naive learnedness, undergraduate irony, unnatural metaphors, hiatuses, and labored obscurity.

6) He would have something to say and for just that reason would wish to speak clearly.

7) He would seek to express the spirit of his time--as well as all times.

8) He would keep his life separate from the characters he creates.

9) He would choose as subjects the more permanent aspect of things.

10) He will address himself to readers a thousand years from now.

11) "Tragedy has been regarded, ever since Aristotle, as a moral agent, a purifier of the mind and emotions. But the story of "Medea" is about a criminal adventurer and his gun moll; it is no more moral than the story of Frankie and

Johnny; only more ferocious."[123]

12) Medea, the Agamemnon series, the Oedipus Rex--all tell primitive horror stories. What makes them noble is the poetry; the poetry, and the beautiful shapes of the plays, and the extreme violence born of extreme passion. That is to say, three times, the poetry--the poetry of words, the poetry of structure and the poetry of action.

13) People love disaster, if it does not touch them too nearly--as we run to see a burning house or a motor crash--and also it gives occasion for passionate speech. Disaster is a vehicle for the poetry. [One could add here, people like to see the sea in storm, if they are safe on shore. This is a major element of the sublime tradition.]

14) "Poetry is not a civilizer, rather the reverse, for great poetry appeals to the most primitive instincts. It is not necessarily a moralizer; it does not necessarily improve one's character; it does not even teach good manners. It is a beautiful work of nature, like an eagle or a high sunrise. You owe it no duty. If you like it, listen to it; if not, let it alone."[124]

It has been emphasized that 1914 was a momentous year for Jeffers. The flow of thought concerning poetry that has been under consideration here began to crystallize in that year. It has been noted that Jeffers at one time felt that

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[123] Ibid., p. 16. [124] Ibid.

"old ballad-material,"[125] the Frankie and Johnny material, the Medea material, was not a fit subject for modern poetry, but that time died in 1914. A consideration of that time, its death, and the relationship of these to Jeffers will now be made. It is the death of this age that is one of the concerns in The Women at Point Sur.

If 1914 was thought by Jeffers to be the death of an era, perhaps 1815 could be said to mark its beginning. Breisach calls the period between 1815 and 1914 "The Age of Confidence."[126] He points out that this may seem surprising when one considers the misery, conflicts, the shouts and shots of revolutions and wars, and the radically shifting political borders; but none of these destroyed "the confidence that the final triumph over man's perennial problems was near and the mystery of human life itself would soon have to yield to man's inquiring mind."[127]

It was the period of "the big picture," the "Grand Design." The thought behind it is, perhaps, best clarified by using Hegel's philosophy. To understand this, one needs to go back in history. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the theory of Copernicus had been rather generally

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[125]Supra, p. 46.

[126]Ernst Breisach, Introduction to Modern Existentialism (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1962), p. 11.

[127]Ibid.

acknowledged.[128] It had been incorporated along with other theories into the system of Newton. As a result, the static world of the middle ages was gone. In its place there came a "dynamic world," a world of movement and force, a world of mechanical laws. Concepts in all areas of human thought--at least those that accepted the new theories--had to be revised, revised from the static to the dynamic. To illustrate, in the field of biology the prevailing ideas had been those of Linnaeus.[129] He held that nature has been understood when it has been arranged into the categories of our concepts, divided "into species and genera, into families, classes and orders."[130] Goethe opposed this theory, and "to put it briefly and clearly, Goethe completed the transition from the previous generic view to the modern genetic view of organic nature."[131] Such changes occurred, to some degree, in most, if not all, fields of thought.

In the midst of such feverish change in human thought, unifying principles, stablizing factors were sought. The philosophy of Hegel, in the nineteenth century, although it was not unique in the sense of being without a known parallel, seems to have been the focal point. It has been said

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[128]Angus Armitage, The World of Copernicus (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1963), p. 119.

[129]Ernst Cassirer, Rousseau, Kant and Goethe (New York: Harper and Row, Inc., 1963), p. 69.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Ibid.

that Hegel was the school master for all of Europe. Breisach speaks of the Hegelian system:

> Whatever the Hegelian system may lack, it most certainly is not grandeur. Within it every human experience finds its meaningful place and every perplexing phenomenon its smooth explanation. It is one of those all-embracing systems in which the wonders of the cosmos are reflected in the mirror of total comprehension.
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> At the core of this grandiose system is the view of history as a single process with one beginning, one development, and one end. History is the world spirit unfolding, evolving from its entanglement in a not-so-spiritual world to its eventual self-realization in purity. Then the universally valid will triumph over the contingencies of the merely particular. In this process each historical stage fulfills its task, each culture makes its contribution, and each idea presents one particular although imperfect image of the world spirit. Nothing is left to chance. Chaos has disappeared from the world. What is is reasonable. Destructive forces are only seemingly harmful. In reality they are midwives of the new. The antithesis (the opposite) turns against the thesis (that which is) not out of malice, hatred, or conviction, but only to facilitate the better solution, the synthesis (the new stage).
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> Those who have said their "no" to Hegel have usually done so because they disliked one or more particular features of his system. Even such a vehement critic as Marx stays within the Hegelian system, although he wants to put it on "its feet"; that is, in direct opposition to Hegel he lets the economic conditions determine man's ideas.[132]

And a little farther on:

> A strange thing happens to man in the Hegelian system. Hegel attempts to elevate man to a privileged position by clearly distinguishing him from the objects of nature. Of the latter the most that can be said is that they are present at a given place at a given time. Man, on the other hand, constitutes a unity in himself, being conscious of himself. Thus he participates in the stratum of the spirit. For a moment man seems to be endowed with a special position in the world. But this promise is never redeemed in the Hegelian system.

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[132]Breisach, pp. 13-14.

> First, pure thought and its development represents the only genuine reality. Everything else is reflection. Accordingly the man of flesh and blood with his feelings, fears, sorrows, joys, loves, and hates has no room in it.
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> Second, the grand design of world history reduces the place of the individual's existence and actions to that of a grain of sand in forming a desert. While the grain of sand certainly makes a contribution, it hardly has decisive importance. Even the great men of history do what they do only under the inducement of the inevitable process of the unfolding world spirit. They are tricked into doing it by a sly process. Man has become the agent of an all-powerful process. The world is the stage, history the drama, man the actor, and self-realization of the spirit is its final denouement.
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> And the world? It is emptied of all that is strange, startling, and even frightening in it. Man knows the master plan, and all the human problems immediately become of minor proportions. Closely connected with this is the vanishing of all true antagonisms from the world scene. In Hegel's concept of dialectical development each thesis and its antithesis merge into the higher unit of a synthesis. Man's conflicts are eventually superficial since they are always dissolved in the ensuing development. Man's decisions are of more importance as contributions to the on-going process than for himself. The full blooded reality of life has been swallowed up by the world spirit which alone has actual reality. If all this had been only the work of a philosopher whose influence had been confined to other philosophers, as is true in so many cases, Kierkegard would hardly have protested against it so violently. But Hegel was the great symbol and school master of his time. No field of human endeavor escaped his influence. The idea of the dialectic which eliminates all true antagonisms led to a fascination with the "general" development, the "grand" view, and the consolation that even the worst catastrophes of this world had their meaningful place. This spirit of dialectical harmony, with its total loss of the really deciding individual, of risk, and of true freedom, even penetrated deeply into nineteenth-century Christianity.[133]

It might be wise to affirm that this study is not intended to be a philosophical treatise, nor was Jeffers a

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[133] Ibid., pp. 14-16.

philosopher by vocation. He was a writer, and that writing for which he had a special interest was poetry, but for Jeffers poetry went back into antiquity. At present the intent in the study is to show the age that died for Jeffers in 1914. To do that Hegel was chosen as the pivotal figure, but before the age as it unfolded after Hegel is presented, the relationship between Hegel and the type of poetry Jeffers was to attempt to write will be drawn a little more sharply. This relationship places both in the tradition of permanent truth.

Hegel loved the Greeks; from his study of them he acquired an enthusiasm that remained with him throughout his life.[134] He felt that all that was worthwhile in life--science, art, all that adorns life and makes it satisfying--derived directly or indirectly from Greece.[135] There was a period in his life when he chose Greek religion over Christianity; he even anticipated Strauss and Renan by writing a life of Jesus.[136] In this work he made Jesus the son of Mary and Joseph and ignored the miraculous element. He also anticipated Robinson Jeffers' Dear Judas. Citation was made earlier regarding Dear Judas.

Hegel drew his dialectical theory from the pre-Socratic philosophers. His concern with being and nonbeing goes back

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[134]Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1953), p. 221.

[135]Ibid. [136]Ibid.

at least to Parmenides.[137] His concept of the world as a state of flux,although reflecting the biology and physics of his time, goes back to Heraclitus.[138] His concept of evolution and dialectic is also found in Empedocles.[139] Strangely enough, these men wrote in verse. They wrote at a time when poetry, religion, philosophy, rhetoric were much closer than now. All belong to the tradition of permanent truth.

Parmenides, who was concerned with being and nonbeing, a subject Hegel met in dealing with relation, presented his ideas in an epic poem, a form that had been used by the Orphic poets for recording revelations.[140] He called his poem "The Way of Truth."[141] Heraclitus, the prophet of change, presented his ideas in verse.[142] He was known as "the obscure" and "the dark" because his verses were cryptic like those of the Delphic Oracle, which, as has been noted, were like those of Nietzsche's Also Sprach Zarathustra.[143] Empedocles was thought to be a poet, a fovorite of Apollo, a revolutionary, a prophet, and, by some, a god.[144] Diogenes

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[137]Brumbaugh, p. 50. [138]Ibid., p. 49.

[139]Durant, p. 223.

[140]Gilbert Murray, A History of Ancient Greek Literature (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1915), p. 3.

[141]Brumbaugh, p. 50. [142]Ibid., p. 44.

[143]Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[144]Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, Vol. II: The Life of Greece (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1939), p. 355. He tried to form a synthesis between idealism and materialism. He sought his principle not in a cosmic mind as had Anaxagoras but in inherent forces that made for evolution. His connection to Jeffers is strong, especially his including love and hate as basic elements of the universe.

Laertius quotes Aristotle as calling him the inventor of rhetoric.[145] Jebb explains this by saying it meant that Empedocles was skilled in the use of metaphor.[146] Metaphor, of course, is the figure which grows out of the ability to see similarities in differences. This is very close to Kenneth Burke's definition of rhetoric and lies at the heart of Hegel's system of dialectic. One of Hegel's most radical critics is Caird, and among the things for which he criticizes Hegel the strongest is Hegel's "stringing together senseless and extravagant mazes of words, such as had previously been known only in madhouses. . . ."[147]

Hence, the point is that, as progress is made toward the unfolding of the age which Hegel's philosophy explains, it is pertinent to remember not only his ideas and their sources, but the manner of expression. This manner places him in the tradition when poetry, religion, prophecy, philosophy, rhetoric were all more strongly incorporated, perhaps, into the concept called logos.[148] Jeffers is of this tradition also, as will be seen. A return is made now to note some of the paths that resulted from Hegel's design that unfolded from about 1848 until 1914.

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[145]D. L. Clark, p. 25.

[146]R. C. Jebb, "Rhetoric," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. XXIII.

[147]Durant, The Story of Philosophy, p. 221.

[148]Brumbaugh, p. 46.

In a manner of speaking, one could say that during this period of western civilization, the Platonic ideal was moved from the past to the future. In the area of religion, the doctrine of original sin (a cornerstone of the Puritan faith) was seriously attacked. Man was evolving toward perfection, not trying to regain a status he had lost by the Fall. The doctrine of evolution as it emerged through Lyell, Darwin, and Huxley was to fit well into Hegel's scheme. Long before the famous monkey trial in Tennessee in 1925 (which occurred just before Jeffers wrote The Women at Point Sur), Christianity was meeting the problems posed by a dynamic universe and either adjusting or entrenching to do battle.[149] Many faiths attempted to discard the metaphysics of Christianity but to retain the ethic.[150]

The individual, the single, the sole, the one got lost in the many, and the many became mass. As Irving Babbitt expressed it around the turn of the twentieth century, "With the decay of the traditional faith this cult of humanity is coming more and more to be our real religion."[151] Much of what Babbitt attacked as humanitarianism Jeffers was later

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[149]Schevill, pp. 486-89.

[150]Breisach, p. 45. This is one of the decisions Barclay made early in The Women at Point Sur.

[151]Irving S. Babbitt, Literature and the American College (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908), p. 34.

to call humanity.[152] That is not to say they were kindred spirits, though they might have been closer--but under radically different names--than either would admit, but rather to say that each recognized what he thought symptoms of disease in the times.

From the middle of the century onward the traditional authorities weakened and the rise of the "common man" became more rapid. Various "isms" from socialism to communism coupled with science were to be more and more the developing forces of the grand design and all conflicts among them were good because they were but aspects of thesis and antithesis on the way toward a new synthesis that would eventually result in perfection. Progress became a byword. Comfort which had been found, in previous times, in God was now to be found in mankind, progress, and natural laws. There would be freedom and dignity, but it would come from the mass, the social order. Institutions, dogmas, benevolent world processes governed the period.

"The Age of Confidence" was not without its dissenters. It had its protesters in varying degrees: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson. These are not all, but enough to suggest varying degrees of opposition. However, they were largely unheard. Breisach sums up the period by

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[152]An extra point of interest is that Babbitt in the work just cited, and Jeffers in the work by Adamic express about the same opinions on Rousseau and Tolstoi. Babbitt and Jeffers are rather alike in their diagnosis but their prescriptions for a cure are different--at least in name.

saying: "The true revolutionaries were ignored by a people who suddenly woke up only when the cannons of the First World War dispelled their pleasant dreams."[153]

Having seen the age that developed from the kind of thought illustrated by Hegel's philosophy, and that Jeffers felt died in 1914, we look at that philosophy more closely, and at Jeffers' objections to the age. Jeffers did not object to the concept of world spirit that seeks self-realization. This concept was not unique with Hegel.

Jeffers is "pantheistic." For him, as for Hegel, God is world spirit that seeks self-realization. God is everything; therefore, God can spend God's energy, exclusively, on God. This is a kind of echo of Aristotle's Prime Mover who is unmoved. However, no single human is God. Therefore, a human has more to spend his energy on than just himself. In the same vein, man, as a class, is not God. Man is but a small part of all that is. Thus, man, as a class, should not spend its major energy in contemplating itself. Yet this is precisely what Jeffers thought happened to man, as a class, in the age that he felt died in 1914.

In the age of confidence, it was felt that science would reveal all the answers. The answers would be for the best. Evolution and scientific determinism shattered Christian metaphysics. Man, as a class, was thrown back on the ethic of love. World War I shattered this ethic for

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[153]Breisach, p. 12.

western civilization. It will be seen that it also shattered the ethic for Barclay in The Women at Point Sur.

What Jeffers objected to in the age of confidence was the belief that man, as a class, could find salvation exclusively on the basis of each individual loving each individual or loving all the individuals collectively.

Perhaps it could be said that by the time he saw, if not the death, the shattering of "The Age of Confidence," Jeffers had witnessed, at least vicariously through his father's teaching, the death of two ages, that of "The Age of Faith" and that of "The Age of Confidence." Perhaps the shattering of these two ages helped to drive him to find the enduring aspects among the ephemeral, the truth, reality shining forth.

In an effort to fuse the varied ideas involved in the blending of Jeffers, our concern turns to his pivotal idea, truth. When Jeffers was speaking in the foreword to his Selected Poetry in 1938 about the direction his ideas relative to poetry was taking, he mentioned another formative principle. He said:

> Another formative principle came to me from a phrase of Nietzsche's: "The poets? The poets lie too much." I was nineteen when the phrase stuck in my mind; a dozen years passed before it worked effectively, and I decided not to tell lies in verse. Not to feign any emotion that I did not feel; not to pretend to believe in optimism or pessimism, or unreversible progress; not to say anything because it was popular, or generally accepted, or fashionable in intellectual circles, unless I believed it; and not to believe easily. These negatives limit the field; I am

not recommending them but for my own occasions.[154]

Some of Jeffers' critics have taken this quotation and used it as a basis for concluding that anything said by any character created by Jeffers reflects Jeffers' personal opinion. Such a conclusion is naive. It does not allow for other possibilities. For instance, Jeffers may very well permit one of his characters, or his narrator, to say something in a work. He truly believes that this character, or this narrator, would make such a statement because he has created each the way the character is. It does not follow from such a situation that the beliefs of any character, or the narrator, have to be the identical beliefs of Robinson Jeffers.

This study assumes otherwise and probes deeper into Jeffers' concept of truth. In another place Jeffers refers again to Nietzsche and to lies.

> "The poets lie too much," Nietzsche wrote with brief contempt; he knew, for himself was one. Their profession is to tell the exciting truth; but a lie is an easier way to excitement; reality is always so much more stubborn, so much harder to digest. Sometimes the lying becomes epidemic with them; then it is called a poetic tradition or a new movement; sometimes it becomes matter for cynical confession, and a man writes on his title-page "mundus vult decipi"--"people want to be fooled"--Barnum's motto. A poet is a specialist highly developed in a few issues and deficient or at least repressed in others. . . .[155]

If a poet is deficient or repressed in some areas, it seems logical to believe that his truth is fragmentary; it

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[154]Jeffers, The Selected Poetry. . ., p. xv.

[155]Quoted in Powell, p. 207.

is incomplete. He sees through a glass dimly or he sees through a veil of fiction. He is like Cassandra. His truth is cryptic, and maybe should be presented in that fashion as did Parmenides, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Hegel, Nietzsche. Such thought gives Jeffers a much broader base. It puts him in a very ancient tradition, that of permanent truth. Although Jeffers quotes from Nietzsche, it seems logical, because of his academic background in classical culture, to assume he knew Plato. The statement by Plato to the effect that the poets lie is one of the old chestnuts of literary criticism. Hence, when Jeffers speaks of truth he is thinking a long way back, perhaps to the time when poetry, philosophy, prophecy, religion and rhetoric were merged, merged in logos.

It may seem a bit facetious to have just made the preceding statements and then to offer a composition by Jeffers in support, but that is what is proposed at this point. It is being offered, not to suggest that what is said is Jeffers' personal opinion (it may or may not be) but it is being offered to show that Jeffers has thought about the concept of truth. It is being offered, also, as a method of relating what has been said regarding events and ideas of Jeffers' life to The Women at Point Sur. It focuses some of the issues that will be treated there. The selection is "Theory of Truth." Arthur Barclay, mentioned at the beginning, is one of the major agents in The Women at Point Sur.

I stand near Soberanes Creek, on the knoll over the sea, west of the road. I remember
This is the very place where Arthur Barclay, a priest in revolt, proposed three questions to himself:
First, is there a God and of what nature? Second, whether there's anything after we die but worm's meat?
Third, how should men live? Large time-worn questions no doubt; yet he touched his answers, they are not unattainable;
But presently lost them again in the glimmer of insanity.

How many minds have worn these questions; old coins
Rubbed faceless, dateless. The most have despaired and accepted doctrine; the greatest have achieved answers, but always
With aching strands of insanity in them.
I think of Lao-tze; and the dear beauty of the Jew whom they crucified but he lived, he was greater than Rome;
And godless Buddha under the boh-tree, straining through his mind the delusions and miseries of human life.

Why does insanity always twist the great answers?

Because only tormented persons want truth.
Man is an animal like other animals, wants food and success and women, not truth. Only if the mind
Tortured by some interior tension has despaired of happiness: then it hates its life-cage and seeks further,
And finds, if it is powerful enough. But instantly the private agony that made the search
Muddles the finding.
Here was a man who envied the chiefs of the provinces of China their power and pride,
And envied Confucius his fame for wisdom. Tortured by hardly conscious envy he hunted the truth of things,
Caught it, and stained it through with his private impurity. He praised inaction, silence, vacancy: why?
Because the princes and officers were full of business, and wise Confucius of words.

Here was a man who was born a bastard, and among the people

That more than any in the world valued race-purity,
chastity, the prophetic splendors of the race of
David.
Oh intolerable wound, dimly perceived. Too loving to
curse his mother, desert-driven, devil-haunted,
The beautiful young poet found truth in the desert,
but found also
Fantastic solution of hopeless anguish. The carpenter
was not his father? Because God was his father,
Not a man sinning, but the pure holiness and power of
God. His personal anguish and insane solution
Have stained an age; nearly two thousand years are one
vast poem drunk with the wine of his blood.

And here was another Saviour, a prince in India,
A man who loved and pitied with such intense compre-
hension of pain that he was willing to annihilate
Nature and the earth and stars, life and mankind, to
annul the suffering. He also sought and found
truth,
And mixed it with his private impurity, the pity, the
denials.

Then
search for truth is foredoomed and frustrate?
Only stained fragments?

Until the mind has turned its love from
itself and man, from parts to the whole.[156]

The tone of "Theory of Truth" is strongly suggestive of the phrases that have been noted that Jeffers used to describe Jesus in the excerpt taken from the selection in which Jeffers spoke of adapting Dear Judas to the stage: "beautiful simplicity," "as if unintentionally in wonderful glimpses," "through objective narrative," "deep," "beautiful," "powerful," "strangely complex," "not wholly integrated."[157]

To clarify Jeffers' religious ideas, before the study gets caught up in Oriental mysticism, it might be wise to

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[156]In Jeffers, The Selected Poetry. . ., pp. 614-15.

[157]Supra, pp. 26-27.

get a clearer statement of beliefs from Jeffers, in a sample of his writing which he did not intend to be a poem. Jeffers explained his "pantheism."

> Another theme that has much engaged my verses is the expression of a religious feeling, that perhaps must be called pantheism, though I hate to type it with a name. It is the feeling--I will say the certainty--that the universe is one being, a single organism, one great life that includes all life and all things; and is so beautiful that it must be loved and reverenced; and in moments of mystical vision we identify ourselves with it.
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> This is, in a way, the exact opposite of Oriental pantheism. The Hindu mystic finds God in his own soul, and all the outer world is illusion. To this other way of feeling, the outer world is real and divine; one's own soul might be called an illusion, it is so slight and so transitory.[158]

It is obvious to note the parallel among Jeffers, Hegel, Schopenhauer--though Jeffers said he did not read Schopenhauer[159] but read his sources--, Bergson, Poe, Whitman, Arnold, Emerson. There are important differences, but it should be very obvious at this point that, when Jeffers speaks of truth, he has much more on his mind than simply not telling lies.

This section of the study has attempted to do several things. It has attempted to acquaint the reader with the formative years of Jeffers' life, the age until 1914, and with some of Jeffers' thought. It has established that Jeffers' background contained religion of a special kind, a

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[158]Taken from the lecture Jeffers gave while reading his work at several universities and quoted in Bennett, p. 182.

[159]Bennett, p. 89.

religion having as one of its core ideas the problem of determinism and "free will." These opposites are in the tradition of permanent truth and are aspects of the sublime tradition.

The pattern of Jeffers' education, moving through trivium and quadrivium to philosophy, science, theology, revealed the tradition of permanent truth, and it contained aspects of the sublime tradition. This section has established that Jeffers rejected modern (1914) trends in poetry and sought to reclaim "old freedoms." This meant he wished to treat philosophic and scientific ideas in verse. Through Jeffers' testimony, some idea has been gained concerning what he felt poetry should treat and why. The "what" and "why" revealed the tradition of permanent truth and aspects of the sublime tradition.

It will be seen in the analysis that those factors which have been the concern of this section (in fact, this chapter) are the concern in The Women at Point Sur. Critical comment will now be employed to further reveal the tradition of permanent truth and the sublime tradition. It will help to attach Jeffers more firmly to both.

## Jeffers: his Critics

This section, also, attempts several things. It reveals the attitude of some of Jeffers' critics and uses their testimony to relate Jeffers more firmly to the tradition

of permanent truth and to the sublime tradition. When the critics make direct statements, the connection is obvious. When they do not, it is not. However, the epithets that the critics employ while speaking of Jeffers or of his work (even the adverse critics) are adjectives, nouns, descriptive phrases that are found in the tradition of permanent truth and in the tradition of the sublime.

It also seeks to bring together the tradition of permanent truth, Hebrew poetry, and the sublime tradition. By doing so, it makes their relationship to Jeffers even stronger, when one considers this relationship in view of what the previous section has revealed about Jeffers' background.

Finally, it suggests that the three divisions of the sublime tradition, from which the method for analysis will be abstracted, can be seen in Jeffers' critics, when one does not allow genre to be a consideration. In the sublime tradition, genre is not a consideration. Sublimity cuts across all of the arts. However, the divisions are only suggested not explained in this section.

The initial assumption is that all of these critics and commentators are honest and sincere in their statements. The study does not question that they detect certain elements in the works of Jeffers. It does at times question the interpretations they make of these elements. Hence, it will pause to comment where it seems pertinent to the analysis

to do so, and then it will at times expand ideas that are suggested by a particular critic where it seems that to do so will be advantageous to the analysis.

While Jeffers received attention from one established critic, Oscar W. Firkins, when his second volume, Californians, appeared in 1916, he was not really discovered until Tamar. This was the second work that he had had printed at his own expense. The book club of California, which was preparing an anthology of verse, Continent's End, invited Jeffers to contribute. Through this association he met the editors: George Sterling, James Rorty, Genevieve Taggard. Jeffers sent copies of Tamar to Rorty and Sterling. Rorty, when he went back east, persuaded Mark Van Doren of The Nation and Babette Deutsch of The New Republic to review it.[160] Thus, in 1925 Jeffers was discovered by Rorty, Van Doren, Deutsch. By 1927 the Jeffers cult was thriving.

James Rorty in his review of Tamar in the New York Herald Tribune, March 1, 1925 said:

> It exhibits the maturity of a remarkable talent--I am convinced that no poet of equal importance has appeared on the American scene since Robinson . . . A narrative style of extraordinary intensity and resourcefulness. Nothing so good of its kind has been written in America. . . . America has a new poet of genius.[161]

Babette Deutsch placed Jeffers in a mystical setting by quoting from Whitehead's discussion of science and

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[160] Breaking into Print, p. 89.

[161] Quoted in Klein, p. 7.

religion. She points out that Jeffers' work has the "supreme value that Whitehead accords to religion."[162] She quotes at length from Whitehead and concludes that Whitehead allows us to identify religion with the poetic approach to the world. The tone is suggestive of Arnold's "surrogate" idea. She concludes by saying: "The work of Jeffers gives us precisely that: 'a vision of something which is real and yet waiting to be realized'."[163] She grants Jeffers the philosophical outlook, and she is willing to place Jeffers in the religious stream of poetry. Her awareness of the vision aspect is not out of keeping with the oracular aspects of the poetry of antiquity.

Sara Bard Field noted similar characteristics when she said:

> To me the thunder of his poetic message to humanity is Hebraic. His manner of utterance is more philosophic and less moralistic than the prophets of Israel but the "mass power" which he worships, to which he commands the attention of his young sons is akin to ideals of racial righteousness, the beauty of national holiness which was the loud dream of Amos and Isaiah and, in its failure, the loud lamentations of Jeremiah. . . .[164]

That Jeffers was aware of the Hebraic element in his work is evident from his themes, and also from the fact that he recommended "some Old Testament poetry, for the Hebrew verse to face the work," in his advice to the beginning student of poetry.[165] It is evident from paternal influence. It is

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[162] Ibid., p. 9.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Quoted in Powell, p. 200.

[165] Supra, p. 49.

evident also from his statement regarding Hebrew parallelism.[166] It may be worthwhile to note the Hebrew relationship to the tradition of permanent truth and to the sublime tradition, the basis of the method that will be utilized in the analysis of The Women at Point Sur.

T. R. Henn points out that there are several streams to the sublime tradition, rather than one stream, because Longinus' work was both mistranslated and misunderstood. He thinks the confusion came from Longinus' quotation from the book of Genesis: let there be light. . . . He states the issue thus:

> Perhaps the whole trouble started with Longinus' own quotation from Genesis. Can we reconstruct the argument? "He goes to the Bible for his most famous quotation: we can find hundreds of examples of the same kind--Job, Isaiah, the Psalms, Ecclesiastes. They embody the qualities of divinity, power, simplicity. Only Hebrew poetry is truly sublime. Milton is its chief exponent, within his theological framework. But Ossian, too, has produced this vagueness and terror; Gray, too, the The Bard. All these are full of the high seriousness of Aristotle. The grand style is the common ground."[167]

Henn adds that by adopting this attitude, Longinus' point was missed by Blair and Burke. Whether this is true or not will be dealt with when the method for analysis emerges. At present, it is sufficient to note the elements which Henn has named that are contained in the sublime tradition. Note particularly the references to the books and characters of the Bible, to the qualities of divinity, power, simplicity, to Milton, to Ossian, to Gray, to the high

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[166]Supra, p. 51. [167]Henn, p. 127

seriousness of Aristotle, to the grand style, to Hebrew poetry being the only true sublime. Jeffers knew the theological framework of Milton.[168] He knew the Bible. He imitated Milton and Shelley.[169] He was aware of Wordsworth and Poe.

If Hebrew poetry seems to be a strong element in both Jeffers' work and one stream of the sublime, and the sublime tradition is the approach that will be employed to assimilate The Women at Point Sur, it will be wise to speak of some of the elements of Hebrew poetry. Edward J. Young points out that, basically, there are three poetical books in the Old Testament: Psalms, Proverbs, Job.[170] He says these are designated by the mnemonic word Emeth meaning truth.[171] He says that, for the most part, the poetry of these three books is didactic and lyrical with traces of epic and drama. Job is epic.

He points out that the principle feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. The parallelism of which Young speaks is parallelism of thought. He gives three kinds: synonymous, in which the same thought is repeated in almost the same words; antithetical, in which the thought is expressed by means of contrast with its opposite; synthetic, in which the second member completes or fills out the thought

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[168]Supra, pp. 21-22. [169]Supra, p. 37.

[170]Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 307.

[171]Ibid.

of the first.[172] He points out that there is also some chiastic parallelism, where an arrangement of a b b a occurs as in the following from Psalms: 51:1.

> Have mercy upon me, O God,
> according to thy loving Kindness:
> according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
> blot out my transgression.[173]

He adds that acrosticism, assonance, alliteration do appear in Hebrew poetry but all are minor characteristics. He also points out that while meter does appear, not enough is known to discover any definite metrical system. Where meter does appear it is "somewhat accidental or secondary." Young sums up by saying:

> From what has been written above concerning parallelism it will be seen that the balance in thought is all-important. Indeed, every other pecularity or characteristic of Hebrew poetry must be regarded as secondary to this parallel expression of thought. This phenomenon lends a peculiar intensity of force and beauty to the poetry of the Old Testament and admirably serves as a vehicle for the communication of truth.[174]

Jeffers concern for truth has been noted previously.

It was noted earlier that Jeffers felt a person beginning a study of poetry should study some Old Testament poetry "to face the Hebrew verse like an echo in the mountains."[175] Hebrew poetry seems to be that of impassioned direct address. One hears the voice of the speaker in it. The viewpoint, the

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[172] Ibid., pp. 308-309. [173] Ibid., p. 308.

[174] Ibid., p. 309. See also Powell's quotation: supra, p. 8-9.

[175] Supra, p. 49.

narrator, is not objective. The voice is intensely involved in the ideas being presented. This poetry equates well with the qualities of Alcaeus, Heraclitus, Parmenides, the Delphic Oracle, the chants of Gorgias, the dithyrambs. There is thunder in Hebraic poetry. Whether there is in Jeffers, as Sara Bard Field thought, remains to be seen.

Rudolph Gilbert saw Jeffers in the prophetic tradition. He said:

> Jeffers' poetic conceptions are typical of prophets imbued with a mastering sense of their mission. The force of his creative imagination disrupts the reader like an electric drill boring into a rock: all is chaos and disorder in reading Jeffers for the first time. It is only when the current of the too powerful tension is switched off that one gets the proper perspective of the poet's vision. He is prophetic; he sees beyond the bounds of humanity into the future. Besides, the poet Jeffers is a man in whom creature and creator are united.[176]

The prophetic vision is not out of keeping with what has been seen thus far concerning Jeffers. The doctrine of inspiration, which it has been assumed that Jeffers had in mind when he spoke of having to go imitating dead men, was seen by Longinus to compare to the trance and vision of the Delphic Oracle,[177] the oracle of Apollo, god of truth. Gilbert relates Jeffers, who was acquainted with the work of Freud and Jung, to this tradition and to modern psychology when he says:

> This spontaneous activity of the mystic poet's psyche, so Jung informs us, "often becomes so intense that

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[176]R. Gilbert, p. 34. [177]Supra, pp. 40-41.

> visionary pictures are seen or inner voices are heard. These are manifestations of the spirit directly experienced today as they have been from time immemorial." Jeffers' is not the beatific but the apocalyptic vision--" as if it were a mountain burning with fire cast into the sea." He belongs to the philosophic-minded mystics.[178]

Kreymborg compared Jeffers to Whitman and called both prophets.[179] He states that both wrote in the grand manner and that each reflected his own period. Further on he gets more specific about Jeffers when he says: "He is a splendid novelist, dramatist and moralist by turns. Whenever the moralist emerges, he writes fiery speeches and makes the actors recite them."[180] One is reminded here of Aristotle's statement that a drama is a group of speeches. This reflects the line of thought that through most of the middle ages and longer was the kind of education a poet received. It has been noted that Jeffers' father was a "scholar of the old school." He trained his son. This tradition moved a poet up the stairs of difficulty from pastoral to epic. Often the poem was written out in prose and later changed to verse. This in some way suggest the "grand style" stream of the sublime.

Southworth, in discussing Jeffers, touches the Ossianic qualities and speaks of style. He is discussing Jeffers' use of figures.

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[178]R. Gilbert, pp. 49-50.

[179]Kreymborg, p. 624. [180]Ibid., p. 626.

> But as I have already suggested, the heightened figures, as vague and romantic as any in Ossian, create an emotional mood that intensifies the general impact of his long narratives. It is only when the reader has finished and returns to examine the means by which Mr. Jeffers has created his effect that he feels that the means are, or verge on, the meretricious. The twentieth-century werthers will revel in the emotional orgy made possible, but the serious student of poetry will hesitate before bestowing final approval. He will be forced to admit, however, that Mr. Jeffers has given him a sense of the vastness and grandeur of the California scene.[181]

To complete his point Southworth goes on to say:

> The mature reader, although he may be carried along by Mr. Jeffers' often powerful rhetoric, will not be deceived by it, especially if he is at pains to analyze it. To achieve his effects he uses everything except rhyme, which he early discarded. Figures of speech thickly stud his work, similes and metaphors being applied with so lavish a hand that one is reminded of a young poet at work rather than an artist who has learned to use ornamentation sparingly. Passages abound in which every line contains a metaphor or simile.[182]

He goes on to discuss Jeffers' verse pattern and long line. He contends that "too frequently this line degenerates into prose. . . ."[183] However, since the initial concern in the study is not whether Jeffers is a poet or a rhetor, and the sublime tradition is not limited by genre, Southworth's observations are worth nothing. He goes on to say that "actually the rhythms do not vary greatly from prose rhythms. They

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[181]James G. Southworth, Some Modern American Poets (Oxford: Basil Blackwell and Mott, Ltd., 1950), p. 109.

[182]Ibid., p. 117.

[183]Ibid., p. 118.

are essentially those of rhetoric.:[184] He adds that Jeffers uses repetition, alliteration, word phrases to compensate for the freedom of the line.

If one observes Southworth's comments without regard to genre, it is possible to see the three divisions of the sublime that will be the foundation of the method for analyzing The Women at Point Sur emerge. Southworth's mention of the Ossianic qualities and the "vastness and grandeur" of the California scene suggests the stream of Dennis, Blair and Burke. This could be, loosely, called the "gothic" stream. Southworth who calls Jeffers' use of figures and his rhythms those of rhetoric suggests the "grand style." The third stream, loosely called the Longinian stream, is a bit more difficult to expose. In order to bring it to light a return must be made to T. R. Henn. However, the sublime tradition is being suggested, not explained, at this time.

It was noted that Henn felt that Blair, in particular, and perhaps Burke, to some extent, as a follower of Blair, had missed the point of the sublime as stated by Longinus. In speaking of Blair, Burke, and Bradley, Henn notes that the concept of the sublime narrowed with Blair--as it had also with Dennis--and with Burke, but extended somewhat with Bradley.[185] However, all three were concerned with the idea of power and the Hebraic conceptions of divinity. He notes

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[184] Ibid.

[185] Henn, p. 126.

that they yearn after glimpses of the incomprehensible and lose "themselves in a reverential and awe-struck state of mind."[186]

However, Henn points out that for Longinus the sublime is not necessarily limited to the terrible, the obscure, the calm, the solemn, but may be held to cover all literature of "striking" beauty and power.[187] "Striking" is a key term. For Longinus sublimity is a composition of words as music is a composition of notes.[188] This means that when one criticizes he can not isolate certain phrases and criticize them as a unity in themselves, as a mosaic; he must criticize in a context of place, manner, occasion, and purpose.[189] Southworth does recognize that, in context, Jeffers' phrases and figures do carry along even "the mature reader." Only when this mature reader goes back to analyze does he feel, as Southworth says "That the means are, or verge on, the meretricious." As Henn points out, Longinus is well aware of the fact that the very kind of faults that Southworth mentions in Jeffers are pitfalls of the sublime, but that these faults can be redeemed just in the way that Jeffers has done; rhythm and setting can make what would appear to be a defect very effective, because artifices cease to be artifices when

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[186] Ibid. [187] Ibid. p. 12. [188] Ibid., p. 69.

[189] Ibid., p. 12. This is suggestive of the concept of stasis and Chapter 25 of Aristotle's Poetics, and of Kenneth Burke's dramatistic pentad.

form and thought are fused.[190] The function of imagination is to illuminate, and in the white hot fusion of imagination artifice becomes illumination.

Hence, the third stream of the sublime, that which is called in this study the Longinus stream, is a matter of a firm grasp of ideas, and of vigorous and inspired emotion. Each of these may be obtained in various ways. But the intensity of Longinus is not the amplification of what is "commonly" called the "grand style." Amplification for the latter is "language which invests a subject with greatness." For Longinus, amplification is "an accumulation of all the parts and topics inherent in a subject, strengthening the fabric of the argument by insistence."[191] Thus, the third stream of the sublime for this study will be found in a firm grasp of ideas and vigorous and inspired emotion. A work can be sublime on the basis of one or more of these.

The divisions of the sublime tradition will be described, in detail, in the following section. The intent here has been to show that they are suggested in Jeffers' critics if one does not allow genre to be the major consideration as he consults the critics. Southworth, recognizing the intensity with which Jeffers wrote, says "Mr. Jeffers takes himself far too seriously. On the other hand, were he not always so

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[190] Ibid., pp. 19, 40, 41.

[191] Ibid., p. 28.

intensely serious his rhetoric would degenerate into burlesque."[192] This is the other extreme for anyone who seeks to acquire sublimity in writing. The writing can very well leave the reader "cold."

John G. Fletcher in evaluating the writing of Jeffers concluded that "of the qualities that go to make up a supreme poet: a Homer, a Shakespear, a Milton, an Aeschylus, or a Goethe, he possesses only some."[193] But Fletcher granted him some and placed Jeffers in the permanent truth tradition. Taylor related that " . . . whatever else this poet may deny he never denies the joy of living."[194] Walton called Jeffers a moralist, a didactic poet, and a prophet.[195] Hughes stated that if his "magnificent narratives were written in prose, his place among our foremost novelists would be assured."[196] Hughes goes on to speak of Jeffers' language. He states:

> Its most characteristic quality is his outstanding power of terrific, declamatory, tragic speech. It has no rival among his contemporaries: to parallel

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[192]Southworth, p. 120.

[193]John Gould Fletcher, "The Dilemma of Robinson Jeffers," Poetry, XLIII (1934), 339.

[194]Frajam Taylor, "The Hawk and the Stone," Poetry, LV (1939), 43.

[195]Edna Lou Walton, "Beauty of Storm Disproportionally," Poetry, LI (1938), 210- 11.

[196]Richard Hughes, "But this is Poetry," Forum, XXCIII (January, 1930), vi.

it one must return to the Elizabethans.[197]

Benjamin de Casseres, one of Jeffers' most open admirers, speaking of Jeffers in 1927 said:

> Robinson Jeffers is barely forty. He is the greatest event in American literature since Whitman. He is a colossus, and already is an immortal--at least among those who instinctively feel the difference between the men of the hour and the men of the century.
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> In his work there is a wild disheveled, remote beauty and the music of an infernal but contained madness.[198]

Time magazine, one of his more severe critics, in 1938 said of him:

> Because his words are impersonally grandiose instead of personally grand, Robinson Jeffers, who in another place and another time might have been a prophet is here and now a vasty poetaster.[199]

Roddy, speaking of Jeffers' composition, says:

> In the metrics and mechanics of composition Jeffers is all straightforwardness and simplicity. Unlike many of his contemporaries he has never aimed to divorce poetry from reason, fashion it to a form like a tonal music, and ultimately produce what would look like sheer gibberish but would be pure poetry.[200]

In this connection, several critics have noted that Jeffers did not like music. Perhaps this is true, but not without some qualification. Melba Bennett states that Jeffers

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[197] Ibid., p. vii.

[198] Benjamin de Casseres, "Robinson Jeffers: Tragic Terror," Bookman, LXVI (November, 1927), 266.

[199] Time, December 26, 1938, p. 41

[200] Roddy, Theatre Arts, XXXIII, 36. See, supra, p. 37.

loved simple harmonies, but he did not care for opera or symphonic music or involved compositions.[201] She added that he had an exceptional rhythmic sense although Una said he was tone deaf.

Winters, about whom more will be said when The Women at Point Sur is directly considered, has been Jeffers' most severe critic. He stated:

> Now Mr. Jeffers, as I have pointed out, has abandoned narrative logic with the theory of ethics, and he has never, in addition, achieved a distinguished style: his writing, line by line, is pretentious trash. There are a few good phrases, but they are very few, and none is first-rate.[202]

Winters, firing his salvo, discusses The Women at Point Sur and speaks of the possibility of a lengthy poem being a series of lyrics. He speaks in a manner suggestive of Poe who said the Iliad was actually a series of lyrics and who applied this thinking to Milton's Paradise Lost. Winters then says of Jeffers' lyrical ability:

> Mr. Jeffers has no method of sustaining his lyric, other than the employment of an accidental (that is, a non-narrative and repetitious) series of anecdotes (that is, of details that are lyrically impure, details clogged with too much information to be able to function properly as lyrical details); his philosophical doctrine and his artistic dilemma alike decree that these shall be at an hysterical pitch of feeling.[203]

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[201]Melba Berry Bennett, Robinson Jeffers and the Sea (San Francisco: Gerber, Lilienthal Inc., 1936), p. 6.

[202]Winters, Primitivism . . ., p. 19.

[203]Ibid.

Working from the initial assumption that all of Jeffers' critics are honest and sincere, it may be worth noting what Winters is saying. He is, in effect, saying that Jeffers is without plot or that his plots are episodic and that Jeffers is compelled to keep the incidents in the episodic plots moving at a hysterical pitch. Perhaps what Winters sees is quite accurate, but perhaps his initial premises are not applicable to Jeffers, and, maybe, even if his initial premises are applicable, his final conclusions are wrong. Perhaps Jeffers does have a way of sustaining both his lyrics and his accidental series of anecdotes. It may be that his method of sustaining these grows out of the very motif in which he works. It may be a method that arises out of antiquity and reaches into the psychology of Freud and Jung and into religion and touches the philosophy of Berkeley, J. G. Fichte's Ego and non-Ego, and Hegel's world spirit that seeks its own self-realization. In simple terms, it may be that the action in Jeffers' work always takes place inside the narrator. It may be a method that an oral interpreter is, by his training, equipped to uncover. However, that will come later. It is important here to note that Winters has tried to show that Jeffers is neither a narrative nor a lyric poet--in fact, no poet at all. At this point the present study could agree, but will withhold taking a position, for it does not assume that Jeffers is any kind of

poet, or rhetor, or prophet. The study began from the fact that Jeffers wrote and is progressing toward an analysis of one work.

William Rose Benét tended to supplement Winters' views of Jeffers but not so vehemently. He said that "one must have a strong stomach for life not to be too heavily depressed by his view of life."[204] He placed Jeffers as a dramatic poet in the primitive tradition but criticized him for the loose and prolix quality of his lyrics.[205] He concluded:

> One wrestles with a Proteus so far as his style is concerned. This constitutes my doubt that he is a great poet, for he certainly possesses certain qualities of greatness. We have to judge him by higher standards than we apply to most poets. The range of his ponderings and the power of his language necessitates that.[206]

Bernard DeVoto said that Jeffers "begins with the sound principle: know thyself. But he comes out with a neurotic principle: Therefore kill thyself."[207] Morris is kinder, and along with Gilbert, Powell and others, at least partly, placed Jeffers in the line of the mystic writers of India.[208] However he pointed out what he thought was a

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[204]William R. Benét, "Roundabout Parnassus, "Saturday Review of Literature, January 16, 1932, p. 461.

[205]Ibid. [206]Ibid.

[207]Bernard DeVoto, "Rats, Lice, and Poetry," Saturday Review of Literature, October 23, 1937, p. 8.

[208]Lawrence S. Morris, "Robinson Jeffers: The Tragedy of a Modern Mystic," New Republic, May 16, 1928, p. 388.

difference between their affirmation and Jeffers' terror. He noted that Jeffers felt "that truth is double-edged and dangerous."[209] In 1948, Rodman noted that "Jeffers, whatever one may think of his philosophy, remains as close to a major poet as we have. We have much to learn from him."[210]

This fact, "We have much to learn from him," is the guiding spirit of the present study and it echoes what was said by Morris in 1928, a time nearer to The Women at Point Sur. Morris said:

> After twenty years of preparation and writing in obscurity, Robinson Jeffers has published in swift succession three volumes of poetry of such intensity, passion, and scope of thought that American readers have not yet been able to assimilate them, nor even to realize with any precision their talent. His fellow poets have praised the demonic music of his lines; the public in general has been baffled, or revolted, by his apparent themes. And both poets and public have found his meaning obscure.[211]

Morris goes on to add:

> Yet because of the magnitude of his effort, he must be reckoned with as no minor poet. If not, as yet, a major poet, he has at least dared to risk his sanity in considering those things which a major poet sings. While others are more or less decoratively cultivating the human garden, Jeffers is struggling in an agony to smelt down time, space and God himself inside one fiery skull; though failing tragically to extract a single ray of pure perception that he craves.[212]

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[209] Ibid., p. 389.

[210] Rodman, Saturday Review of Literature, pp. 13-14.

[211] Morris, New Republic, p. 386.

[212] Ibid., p. 387.

This final thought, "Jeffers is struggling in an agony to smelt down time, space and God himself inside one fiery skull; though failing tragically to extract a single ray of pure perception that he craves," may be the center of Jeffers, his work, and the tradition of permanent truth from which Jeffers finds his roots. This one thought may also sum up the tradition of the sublime.

## Bases of the Method for the Study

This section describes the three streams of the sublime tradition from which the method that will be applied in analyzing The Women at Point Sur will be abstracted. It begins with what seems to be a rather obvious relationship between Jeffers' writing and oral interpretation; it moves through the three streams of the sublime tradition that have been suggested, attempting to explain the basis of each, and trying to relate each to what has been said by and about Jeffers. It ends by suggesting how the oral interpreter's plan of delivery grows out of the approach intended to help the interpreter assimilate the work.

One of the early observations made in this study was that Jeffers read his work aloud as he labored over it.[213] Jeffers asserted that, at least in his mind, the original intention of poetry was that it be heard. Poetry was to be spoken. This means that sight rhymes and acrostic placement

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[213] Supra, p. 11.

on a page were not part of the original intent of poetry as far as Jeffers was concerned.

The oral tradition of poetry begins deep in antiquity; so does the tradition of the rhapsode, a forerunner of the oral interpreter.[214] It has been shown, or at least suggested, that Jeffers looked to the time when poetry, philosophy, religion, rhetoric, and prophecy merged. It can be asserted that a common quality of these was they had a voice. They were meant to be heard. The words were addressed to an audience. Jeffers was much aware of an audience, even though his audience was unborn and would live a thousand years in the future. He knew Alcaeus, who was a monodist very much aware of saying his words to a listener, and of being very personal in his address. Jeffers and the ancients were much aware of the spoken word; the spoken word implies a speaker. Frequently, because of this quality of Jeffers' work, critics have assumed that Jeffers, himself, rather than a narrator was the speaker, and by doing so they have, perhaps, missed some implications that may explain, or help to explain, his work. This study does not assume that the voice heard and felt in Jeffers' writing is that of Robinson Jeffers. As a matter of fact, when stating the qualities of the ideal poet, Jeffers listed as one of them that the ideal poet would keep himself, his personal identity, separate from

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[214]See Plato's Ion, quoted in A. Gilbert, pp. 8-23.

the character he creates.[215] He almost defined poetry as passionate speech.[216] He says poetry sings. He states that if you like it, listen to it, if not let it alone.[217]

All of this has been said not just to try to relate Jeffers to the oral interpreter, but to point out the quality of spoken language, the personal quality, that permeates the tradition to which he gave his allegiance in 1914. The quality of passionate speech and that of his personal address have been factors that have given critics problems in trying to classify Jeffers. Note, for example, the comments by Winters and Benét.

However, the terms that critics have employed to describe Jeffers' work are terms that are found quite commonly in the tradition of the sublime. This tradition does not confine itself to genre. Allan H. Gilbert tells us as much, and suggests the beginning of the method to be employed in the present analysis, when he introduces Longinus in his Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden. Gilbert in discussing Longinus, says:

> Longinus attained what he did partly by bursting his bonds. His first purpose was to write something of value to public speakers; not poetry but rhetoric was his concern. But by a process that Sidney was later to reverse, he has strayed from oratory to poetry, thus emphasizing the resemblances between them, and showing that there are fundamental similarities in all types of literary composition.[218]

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[215] Supra, p. 56

[216] Supra, p. 57

[217] Supra, p. 57.

[218] A. Gilbert, p. 145.

Whether there are such similarities or not--or at least enough to make up a body of universal principles--is an open question.[219] For purposes of this study, the assumption is that there are. By employing the sublime tradition, the study need not concern itself with whether Jeffers wrote poetry or not. He did write. One work will be analyzed. The first stream of the sublime to be employed has been, loosely, labelled as the Longinus stream. This will now be dealt with.

The work attributed to Longinus has been variously translated as "On the Sublime," "On Elevation," "On Greatness in Writing," "On the Sublime and the Beautiful." The varied translations have helped to create what this study is calling the sublime tradition. The problem in translation has helped to create the diversity of thought from which three streams are to be drawn and then narrowed for this study. The translated title that best fits the sense of what this study calls the Longinus stream is that of Gilbert: "On Literary Excellence!"[220] Elder Olson, following the thought expressed in this title, points out that for Longinus the sources of sublimity, literary excellence, are to be found in

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[219] This is an old chestnut of criticism. See, for example: Lessing's The Laokoon and Babbitt's New Laokoon.

[220] A. Gilbert, p. 146. This study is aware of the Longinus controversy and uses the name as a label for the work and the tradition not to denote the author of On the Sublime. Authorship is uncertain.

the faculties of the author and not in the subject-matter.[221] This is true because sublimity is not a function of the entire discourse and thus is not a function of any particular form of writing.[222] Thus a definition of literary species in the Aristotelian manner is not applicable. For Longinus, also, the discourse is kept largely separated from the subject-matter, and, thus, no criteria can be devised from subject-matter in the manner of Plato.[223]

Henn gives a summary statement of Longinus' concept of the sublime:

> "The sublime" is a term used of literature which is the product of a great and noble mind, presenting its ideas in an organization which is remarkable for its instantaneous appeal, producing in men's minds a range of emotion similar to that which inspired the artist, the result of this emotion being a "valuable" state of mind; hence necessarily inexplicable, but referred to by means of a series of conventional terms.[224]

Jeffers has all of these qualities.

If one examines Olson's statement and Henn's summary and concedes their accuracy or assumes it, he can draw certain conclusions regarding Longinus' ideas. Sublime writing is produced by a great and noble mind. ["Great," in this context, is equivocal. It means many things among which are magnitude, scope, depth, subtlety, superior, distinguished, proficient.]

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[221]Benedict Einarson, Longinus on the Sublime (Chicago: Packard and Co., 1945), p. xii. The introduction to this work is by Elder Olson.

[222]Ibid., p. xiii.

[223]Ibid.

[224]Henn, p. 15.

Sublime writing is instantaneous in its appeal. It strikes a reader and moves him in spite of himself. It produces a gestalt, but it also includes the pleasure that comes with the gestalt. It is not limited to a particular genre; it is not limited to any particular subject; by inference, it is not bound to probability or necessity of plot, although it may have either or both of these. For Longinus, sublimity, excellence in writing, depended on what qualities the writer possessed and how these qualities are reflected in the handling of his material. It depended on conception.

Evidence of the author's conception is to be found in the work itself. Greatness of conception is revealed through evidence of a firm grasp of ideas; evidence of vigorous emotion which may be a product of passion or intensity or a combination of both; figures; notable language; dignified arrangement.[225] If a man were following these ideas, perhaps he could evade some of the problems Poe posed regarding the long poem as a contradiction in terms. Perhaps, if the foregoing is retained as a focal point, Longinus' ideas could be placed under the term "conception."

In this study, the Longinus stream is embodied in that term. This means that, when The Women at Point Sur is viewed on the basis of conception, an effort will be made to observe, in some measure, what ideas Jeffers has brought together from what sources, how he has managed to fuse them in

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[225]A. Gilbert, p. 153.

the white heat of his imagination to produce instantaneous appeal, to produce a sudden glimpse of illumination. This means there can be no preconceived notions about expecting to find a unified plot of the variety described by Aristotle.[226] The present definition of "conception" is very close to Coleridge's idea of the secondary imagination and takes one away from the mosaics that Jeffers has stated he could not, or would not, abide.[227] "Conception" is the guiding term for the Longinus stream of this study.

The second stream of the sublime tradition that will be employed in the present study will be called "gothic." This, too, needs description. For this description, a beginning is made with Boileau. Boileau introduced Longinus to Europe, although Longinus was known, if not extensively, before him. Boileau's edition of Longinus came out about 1674. Boileau emphasized the difference between the sublime style of rhetoric and the sublime.[228] He asserted that an idea may be expressed in the sublime style and not be sublime. For Boileau the sublime became almost entirely thought, but with the effect remaining the same: great thought awakening the emotions. He titled his translation in a way to permit two

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[226]At this point the reference is to Winters' attack on Jeffers and its relation to attacks on Euripides who did not always follow plot structure based on principles recorded by Aristotle. This will be expanded later.

[227]Supra, p. 38.

[228]Jules Brody, Boileau and Longinus (Genève: Librairie E. Droz, 1958), p. 37.

aspects: the sublime and the beautiful. This thinking was contrary to prevailing neo-classical literary standards in France, and not much was done with the work there. In England a series of articles appeared. One was by Dennis.

Dennis went so far as to make passion the identifying characteristic of poetry.[229] He named two kinds of passion: the vulgar and the enthusiastic. Vulgar passion was that whose cause is clearly comprehended by him who feels it. It arose from the objects themselves or from ideas of the objects in the ordinary course of life. Enthusiastic passion was that whose cause was not clearly comprehended by him who feels it.[230] One could almost insert here "puzzling strangeness." Enthusiastic passion was latent, to Dennis. It was moved by ideas in contemplation or by the meditating of things that belong not to common life.[231] All men are moved by the vulgar passions; so the poet, to some extent, writes to all.[232] Dennis, following Boileau, felt all enthusiasm rose from thought, and thus from the subject. The sublime for Dennis became a great thought expressed with the enthusiasm that belonged to it.[233] On this basis, he grounded

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[229]John Dennis, "Advancement and Reformation of Poetry," The Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. Edward Niles Hooker (2 vols; Baltimore, Md.: The John Hopkins Press, 1939), I, p. 215.

[230]Dennis, "Grounds of Criticism in Poetry," Ibid., p. 338.

[231]Ibid. [232]Ibid., p. 339.

[233]Dennis, "Advancement and Reformation of Poetry," Ibid., p. 222.

his theory of the sublime on religious (he admired Milton) subjects that produce reactions of admiration, joy, terror, horror, sadness, desire.[234] For Dennis, it was not what was done with the subject but the subject itself that produced the reaction.

Joseph Addison set up a difference between the sublime and the beautiful, although he did not use the term "sublimity." He associated "great" with "the sublime." He felt imagination loved to be filled with great objects, and, with him, the sublime took on qualities of magnitude, the unapprehended.[235] Blair and Burke, taken together, although they had differences (Blair did not lean as strong to terror as Burke) continued and, more or less, completed the work of Dennis and Addison. Burke's stress on terror aided the graveyard poets.[236] The sublime added elements of pain, pleasure, self-preservation. When danger and pain are too close (reflecting Lucretius) they are incapable of giving delight. Obscurity, power, and magnificence repudiated the neoclassical idea of clearness. A clear idea became a little idea. In this process, the organic aspect of Longinus got lost. Blair

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[234]Dennis, "Grounds of Criticism . . .." Ibid., p. 338.

[235]Samuel Hynes, English Literary Criticism: Restoration and 18th Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962), pp. 177-78. See also: pp. 184-94.

[236]Ibid., p. 241-42. See also: pp. 242-71 for excerpts from Burke's "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful."

believed Longinus had used the word in the wrong sense.[237] An end result of the stream from Boileau through Burke was the gothic novel.

Thus, while for Longinus sublimity depended on the faculties of the author as these were reflected through the treatment of his material, sublimity for the group just mentioned was different. For this group sublimity was a product of the objects, or ideas of the objects considered apart from the author. More specifically, only certain kinds of objects, or ideas of objects, were capable of producing sublimity. Only subject-matter capable of producing in the reader feelings of terror, fear, pain, pleasure, awe, and the like was considered fit for the sublime. This meant writers chose subject-matter dealing with divinity, the supernatural, the grandeur of nature, the obscure, the dark.

There is some overlap between the Longinus stream and the gothic stream of the sublime. There is room in the Longinus stream for the gothic. Gothic elements may be found in a work that Longinus would call sublime, but the work would be sublime, for Longinus, in spite of and not because of them. For Longinus, the source of sublimity is in the author. For the gothic, the source is in the subject-matter treated. Thus, for purposes of this study the gothic stream of the sublime will embrace subject-matter dealing with divinity, the supernatural, terror, fear, pain, pleasure, the

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[237]Henn, p. 109.

obscure, vastness, etc.

The third stream of the sublime to be employed in the present study will be that of the "grand style." This will be a rather arbitrary classification. It will be remembered that Boileau, not Longinus, separated the sublime from the sublime style of rhetoric. Blair made a similar distinction. He felt the first two of Longinus' five fountains related to the sublime: a firm grasp of ideas, vigorous emotion. The other three, he felt, had no more relation to the sublime than to other kinds of writing. He had lost the organic part of Longinus which this study seeks to retain in its first stream.[238] Blair expressed himself thus:

> As for what is called the sublime style, it is for the most part, a very bad one; and has no relation whatever to the real sublime. Persons are apt to imagine that magnificent words, accumulated epithets, and a certain swelling kind of expression, by rising above what is usual or vulgar, contributes to, or even forms, the sublime. Nothing can be more false. In all the instances of sublime writing which I have given, nothing of this kind appears. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." This is striking and sublime. But put it into what is commonly called the sublime style. "The Sovereign Arbiter of nature, by the potent energy of a single word, commanded the light to exist"; and as Boileau has well observed, the style is raised, but the thought is fallen.[239]

Obviously, Blair's second example is not what is meant by "grand style" in this study. His example is more nearly what Jeffers has called euphuism,[240] and deserves the

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[238] Ibid., p. 110.

[239] Quoted in Henn, p. 113.

[240] Supra, p. 6.

same fate. In a Longinus context, the term "grand style" is almost useless. However, this study will, remembering the voice in Hebrew poetry, use the term "grand style" in an effort to approach Jeffers' language in general and his prosody in particular. It will assume that the grand style of classical rhetoric and poetic comes closer to Longinus' intent than does Blair's second example. Each of Longinus' five fountains is found in the grand style, and the principle of decorum is also found there. It will be this principle of decorum that directs the term in this study.

The third stream of the sublime tradition will be that of the "grand style." This will be employed as a loose term that will permit of many facets from which to view Jeffers' prosody. The term "grand style" should be considered nebulous for the present. Thus, the study takes three streams from the sublime tradition as a basis for the method through which to view The Women at Point Sur. Through these, it will be possible to avoid genre since all three, more or less, admit sublimity into writing in many forms. As a result, the study is not preordained to anticipate plot structure or fable in the sense of probable or necessary, as stated by Aristotle. The study is free to think of "conception" in its broadest sense, free to view gothic elements, free to observe prosody and other elements. Thus, "I" can be heard and held as a central or unifying factor. It will, then, be logical to follow "I," "the voice," into a plan for

the delivery of The Women at Point Sur. This will focus the attributes of the "puzzling strangeness."

## CHAPTER III

## THE FIRST APPROACH: ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze The Women at Point Sur. This will be done by abstracting a method from the three streams of the sublime tradition that were revealed in the previous chapter and applying it to the work. Longinus stated that sublimity flowed from five fountains: a firm grasp of ideas; vigorous and inspired emotion; figures; notable language; and fitting and dignified arrangement. The analysis will treat all of these, but it will focus on the first two. The Longinus stream section of this chapter and the gothic stream section will focus on the first fountain, a firm grasp of ideas, from different vantage points. The "grand style" section will focus on the second fountain, vigorous and inspired emotion. All three of the sections will interweave Longinus' last three fountains: figures; notable language; fitting and dignified arrangement.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one constructs a background to the work by utilizing what has been said previously; by using comments of critics and reviewers that apply specifically to the work, and also

place Jeffers more strongly in the tradition of permanent truth, and in the sublime tradition; and by utilizing explicit statements of intent made by Jeffers.

Section two approaches the work through the Longinus stream. It treats with Longinus' greatness of conception. It does this by revealing the "thought line" of the work. It seeks to reveal the varied ideas from many sources that Jeffers fused into the work. It shows that Jeffers' grasp of ideas was firm.

Section three approaches the work through the gothic stream. It treats those elements named by Dennis, Addison, Blair and Burke. It treats subject-matter and reveals that Jeffers' grasp of ideas was firm.

The fourth section approaches the work through the "grand style" stream. The term "grand style" is to be considered as nebulous for the present. It is used arbitrarily, as will be explained when the section begins. However, the section will treat of the prosody, because the prosody reflects vigorous and inspired emotion.

The application of this method, which is abstracted from the sublime tradition, is the method that is employed in order to help the oral interpreter assimilate the work, in order to begin to understand the elements, in order to act as the basis for a synthesis that has its matrix, its core, in the "I," the central intelligence, the voice, which is to be animated through oral reading.

## Background of The Women at Point Sur

The Women at Point Sur contains only one composition. There were no short selections offered with it as there were in Jeffers' publications before and since. It runs to 175 pages containing approximately 3400 lines. It is divided into two parts: Prelude, and The Women at Point Sur. The prelude contains 210 lines. Most critics that have spoken of it treat it separately. They acknowledge its beauty, but never get very specific. Kreymborg, who could not read the body of the work, goes as far as to say he preferred the prelude over what he was able to read of the body.[1] He does not seem to have been able to get by the incest in the body of the selection.

This study offers the possibility that it is neglect of, or a misunderstanding of, the prelude that has caused much of the misunderstanding about the entire composition. The prelude holds the key to the body and controls what subsequently unfolds. It is indispensable, a part of the organic unity. It offers the basis for Jeffers' conception.

Throughout most of 1925 and into 1926 Jeffers worked on a long project. He wrote to Donald Friede, who had been appointed by the publishers to act as liaison correspondent with Jeffers, that he was abandoning it because every story that had ever occurred to him got involved in the one work, and it had become too long, too complicated and was neither

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[1]Kreymborg, p. 625.

clear not true.[2] However, he promised that he would have a manuscript ready for publication in the spring of 1927.[3] This was The Women at Point Sur.

In December of 1926, he wrote Friede that he was writing under pressure to meet his promise, but it would take two weeks longer and that "if 'Tamar' was any good I think this will be better and perhaps you'll find it worth waiting for. I'll never promise anything again until it's finished."[4] Finally, on February 9, 1927, ten months after he began, Jeffers wrote that the work had been finished three or four days before and he was typing it. He said:

> I understood the importance of doing it well as possible, especially since the theme and dimensions make it--for a poem of this century--rather like a dinosaur in a deer park.--I think it will do.[5]

In a postscript he added:

> I see (through the bore of copying) that "The Women at Point Sur" is a bit longer than "Tamar." But don't let that alarm you; if it's as long as a novel it's as interesting as a good novel, besides being--I dare say--the Faust of this generation.[6]

Jeffers' awareness of the length of The Women at Point Sur relates to what has already been noted regarding Poe and the long poem.[7] This may be why Jeffers compares the selection to a novel on the basis of its being "interesting." This equating of his selection with a novel on the basis of

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[2]Bennett, The Stone Mason . . ., p. 115. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 116. [5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., p. 117. [7]Supra, pp. 47-48.

"interesting" suggests Henry James.[8] Carpenter has related Jeffers to James.[9] Moss has related Jeffers to James and pointed out that, as James has indicated of any writer, Jeffers must be granted his donnée.[10] The only obligation which may be required of a novel in advance, without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be "interesting."[11] That Jeffers is interesting is a fact to Carpenter, and the initial assumption of this study.[12] In the foreword he wrote for Powell's book, Jeffers acknowledged that he chose his themes because they were interesting and rather commonplace in literature.[13]

Jeffers' comparison of The Women at Point Sur to Faust relates well to the fact that he had enrolled in a German class (the class where he met Una), because, in that class, Faust was to be read.[14] Faust is complex, but it has points on which most people agree. Whatever else may come to mind when the Faustian theme is mentioned, one usually thinks of man's desire to transcend his physical limitations, to gain immortality.[15] It is reminiscent of the

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[8]The work, "The Art of Fiction," appeared in 1884 and is quoted by Wilson and Clark, pp. 541-61.

[9]Supra, p. 5. [10]Moss, American Book Collector, X, 13.

[11]Ibid. [12]Supra, p. 2.

[13]Powell, p. xv. [14]Supra, p. 32.

[15]Calvin S. Brown, ed., The Reader's Companion to World Literature (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1956), pp. 163-66.

Wandering Jew,--but not in the same way, perhaps.[16] One thinks of man's desire to find answers to the ageless questions that Jeffers mentions in "Theory of Truth."[17]

The dialectic in heaven between God and Mephistopheles over the soul of man in Goethe's Faust parallels the same idea in Job. The concept is of epic proportion, and, by many, Faust and Job have been called epic on the basis of scope in theme. This is not out of keeping with the epos or epic tradition of the Greeks. Gilbert Murray tells us that there were different kinds of epics such as gnomic and religious.[18] Nor is the scope of Faust and Job out of keeping with the Edda of Old Icelandic and Old Norse poetry and mythology in which "all characters move to their doom with compulsive persistence, accepting as inevitable the suffering and tragedy of human life,"[19] and in which Odin, the all-father of the gods, has achieved his wisdom at the cost of an eye and a persistent mysterious pain.[20] The point is that when Jeffers said that The Women at Point Sur could be the

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[16]This theme is well-known in literature from Goethe through Shelley. Shelley uses it quite extensively in Queen Mab. The major work is probably that of Eugene Sue. For an interesting description of the legend and its relation to literature, see: Joseph Gaer, The Legend of The Wandering Jew (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1961).

[17]Supra, pp. 71-72. [18]Murray, pp. 3; 73-75.

[19]Brown, p. 142.

[20]Ibid., p. 141. Odin's eye has caused trouble for Jeffers' critics. Some think Jeffers is speaking of his own eye which was injured at birth; see: supra, p. 5.

Faust of his generation, he was not just making small talk. He was quite conscious of what the Faust theme included.

Although Jeffers was frankly and favorably inclined toward this work, Bennett says "Its intent was almost universally misunderstood."[21] Jeffers states his intent in a letter to Albert Bender:

> The book concludes a train of thought that began with Tamar; it was meant to complete the ideas but also to indicate the dangers and abuses of them, which it does pretty thoroughly. Just as Ibsen wrote the Wild Duck to show how his ideas could be perverted by a fool: I set a lunatic to work with the same object in mind. It puzzles people; but will be understood eventually.[22]

The train of thought that began with Tamar (and before 1919 or so[23]) was the idea of "breaking out of humanity." This study has shown the concept of humanity as it emerged in the age that Jeffers felt died in 1914.[24] It is this concept that concerned him. He worked with it in Tamar, stated it in The Roan Stallion and quoted it in The Women at Point Sur. He said:

> Humanity is the start of the race; I say Humanity is the mold to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, the atom to be split.[25]

This idea is crucial to The Women at Point Sur. An understanding of it is vital to all that follows. Jeffers

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[21]Bennett, The Stone Mason . . ., p. 120.

[22]Quoted in Ibid.

[23]Supra, p. 4.

[24]Supra, pp. 65-68.

[25]Jeffers, Roan Stallion . . ., p. 13.

says the germ for the idea came to him from a statement made by Christ. It is the statement where Christ says to love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and thy neighbor as thyself. Jeffers felt the "as thyself" could mean greatly or hardly at all depending on how one should feel about himself. It has been seen that, in Calvinism, self was not to be loved too much.[26] In fact, in most of Christian history, the doctrine of self-denial, of dying to self to live in Christ, or God, is rather central. Under such an assumption, one should love self hardly at all. Another way of saying much the same thing would be to say: avoid narcissism.

If one thinks of humanity as a single organism, or a group mind, or as a self, in much the same way that modern states have been thought of, or corporate structures in American jurisprudence have been thought of, and applies Jeffers" idea, he sees a narcissic condition for the corporate structure, the modern state, humanity. Jeffers said:

> Narcissus, you know, fell in love with himself. If a person spends all his emotion on his body and states of mind, he is mentally diseased, and the disease is called narcissism. It seems to me, analogously, that the whole human race spends too much emotion on itself. The happiest and freest man is the scientist investigating nature, or the artist admiring it; the person who is interested in things that are not human. Or if he is interested in human beings, let him regard them objectively, as a very small part of the great music. Certainly humanity has claims, on all of us; we can best fulfill them by keeping our emotional sanity; and this by seeing beyond and around the human race.

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[26] Supra, p. 21.

> This is far from humanism; but it is, in fact the Christian attitude:--to love God with all one's heart and soul, and one's neighbor as one's self: as much as that, but as little as that.[27]

A fact worth noting, and not completely tangential to the present consideration, is that Milton works with the idea of narcissism in Paradise Lost. It seems overly obvious that this work deals with the creation of a new race: Adam was not the same after the Fall as he was before the Fall. He had changed. Part of the logic of the Fall is contained in the narcissism idea. In book four of Milton's work, Eve tells Adam of her first awareness. It was of her own image on the surface of a pool. She was quite taken with it and would have loved it had not Adam appeared. She never quite forgets it, and it is through her vanity that Satan finally seduces her. Jeffers knew Milton and he knew the Bible. He was not without precedent for his idea of falling in love with God, "in love outward," and discarding humanity.

He has precedent for treating humanity as a stage of growth for the human spirit. The idea of the human spirit (Faustian theme) shedding the body is not without precedent. Adam, as the race of man, was different before and after the Fall. Much of Christian belief rests on the assumption that the human spirit will be given a new body when it gets to heaven. Hesiod in his Theogony speaks of the five ages of

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[27]From a lecture in which Jeffers discussed themes in his work, quoted in Bennett, The Stone Mason . . ., pp. 184-85.

man. Each age represented the human spirit breaking with one age to move to another. The idea of ages of gods and men dying and being reborn again is very common in antiquity. It is common in Norse mythology. It is also common in beginning anthropology where students are taught of the different ages of the earth and the kinds of men who inhabited it (the Folsom man, the Piltdown man, the Neanderthal man, etc.). Thus, Jeffers is not without ample precedent. He is in the tradition of permanent truth that has been building from the beginning of the study. This tradition was either not seen or was neglected by most of the critics who reviewed the book. It has been, more or less, neglected since, in approaching The Women at Point Sur.

The Women at Point Sur was published June 30, 1927. It was widely reviewed "and controversy over the book flared into hot words, as critics were swept from their safe moorings by this Jeffers' tidal wave."[28] The critics who had discovered Jeffers now groaned under the burden of that discovery. Several critics are quoted to establish the tone of the criticism and to begin to acquaint the reader with the work.

Gilbert said of the book:

> Baffling reader and critic, thrilling with the wild, earthy music of hills, mountains, deserts, the sea, and the solitude of the skies, Jeffers's Dionysus is disguised as a prophet standing, not before the palace at Thebes declaiming a new religion, but the Rev.

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[28]Ibid., p. 117.

Dr. Barclay preaching from a rock.[29]

Powell said of the work:

> Of all Jeffers' work, it is this long and complex poem which most puzzles the general reader. Certainly it calls for careful reading. Like Browning, Jeffers does not intend his poetry as a substitute for an after-dinner cigar or a game of checkers. Thoroughly modern in its use of science for poetic material and in its frank, realistic concern with sex, The Women at Point Sur is evidence of the poet's intention to put his world into a poem, as Dante did.[30]

Emanuel Eisenberg in his review of the work said:

> Those who are unable to see life as an incessant effort to satiate frenzied passion (lesbian, incestuous, and otherwise) should steer clear of "The Women at Point Sur." They would only be intolerably oppressed, unspeakably vexed. "Lust thou art, to lust returneth," I kept muttering through the book.
>
> The story of the Rev. Dr. Barclay's sudden abandonment of his church and family and his eventual half-insane assumption of godhood is told in the winding free-verse rhythms already familiar to many through "Roan Stallion," Jeffers' last volume of poetry. The lean athletic lines leap and pant with a throb more unnerving than even that of "The Tower Beyond Tragedy." Taut, yet savagely uncontrolled in its tautness, the bitter song of despair and unhappiness--but never melancholia and misery--is cried in an exultant chant.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "The Women at Point Sur" is an electrifying poem and an unforgettable story, surging with vigor and heat and pain: but it is only for an eclectic minority of persons.[31]

H. L. Davis in reviewing the book said:

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[29]R. Gilbert, pp. 111-12.

[30]Powell, p. 43.

[31]Emanuel Eisenberg, "A not so Celestial Choir," Bookman, LXVI (September, 1927), 102.

> The most splendid poetry of my time. Nothing written by this generation can begin to come up with it. Every page--every line, even--is a triumph. I can not praise it more than it deserves. And yet, the poem itself is dead, as lifeless as a page of Euclid.
>
> It moves to an end too determinedly, hammering with feverish energy to drive home to the hilt a truth which was clearly predicted in the first five pages.[32]

It may be that Davis is faithfully reacting, but he is interpreting his reactions in the wrong way and he is, like Winters, viewing from the wrong position.

Carpenter describes the book thus:

> The Women at Point Sur tells the story of a Christian minister who has lost faith and retires to the wild country of Point Sur to proclaim that God is dead and that all laws have been annulled. Denying his Messiah, he himself seeks to become the new Messiah: instead of "breaking out of humanity," he seeks disciples and new power over humanity. This is the perversion of Jeffers' idea: the hero who believes himself "falling in love outward," actually falls in love inward; and he symbolizes this delusion by committing incest with his daughter "April." Meanwhile he encourages a multiplicity of perversions among his disciples--who, it must be admitted, never needed much encouragement in the first place. The second half of the poem degenerates into a particularly ugly witches sabbath.[33]

That Jeffers has Barclay deny the Messiah is without question. Whether Barclay denies God remains to be seen.

Carpenter's summary statement and the one by Squires, that follows, are offered, specifically, to show how critics who are friendly to Jeffers perceive The Women at Point Sur.

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[32]H. L. Davis, "Jeffers Denies Us Twice," Poetry, XXXI (1928), 274.

[33]Carpenter, pp. 72-73.

Their views are not, necessarily, those of this study. However, they do serve to familiarize the reader with some of the elements in the work, and they, as do the others, set up some of the views of the work that have led to its being universally condemned as a failure. That this study questions those views should be quite obvious.

Squires summarizes the plot:

> Simplified as much as possible, the narrative assumes the following outline: "The Rev. Dr. Barclay" finds suddenly that he has nothing to say to his congregation and, deserting his pulpit as well as his wife and daughter, he wanders to Point Sur where he takes a room at the house of Natalia Morhead whose husband has not yet returned from the war. In Morhead's absence his father ("Old Morhead") has become a bedridden cripple, and Natalia has entered into a homosexual relationship with Faith Heriot, a waif who has suffered as a result of male brutality. Barclay ambles about the hills and in his incremental madness attracts disciples. To them he preaches Jeffers' Inhumanism adulterated with his own insanity and repressions. Meanwhile, his "private impurity" compels him to seek a sexual liaison with Maruca an Indian woman. When his daughter, April, arrives with her mother to look after him, he contrives successfully to rape her. April bears the brunt not only of her father's difficulties but also of Rand Morhead's; for Randal returns at length from the war and falls vaguely in love with her. At the same time Faith Heriot becomes jealous of April because she thinks that Natalia's affections have been transferred to her. Eventually April deranged by her rape and thinking that she is her brother Edward (killed in the war), determines to kill her father but kills herself instead. Barclay wanders on; his hypnotized disciples fall off one by one, and he dies of exhaustion alone in the wilderness.[34]

Squires has stated some of the events, and, if what Squires has summarized could be called plot or fable or myth,

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[34]Squires, pp. 33-34.

the selection is plotless and as Davis thought: dead. However, if one goes behind the instances to what is here called conception, a different picture emerges as will be seen.

The reviews and comments that have thus far been presented were written by those who were either ardent admirers of Jeffers or by those who were, at least, disposed to be kind to him. However, not all were so kind. Many were quite uncomplimentary in their assessments. For example, Winters was caustic in his comments. Particular attention should be given to his comments regarding plot (assuming he sees the plot much as Squires has summarized it) and lyrics. Perhaps Winters saw accurately but was looking at the wrong things or beginning from the wrong premises. Such is the position this study takes and will seek to reveal as it unfolds.

Winters said:

> The Women at Point Sur is a perfect laboratory of Mr. Jeffers' philosophy. Barclay, an insane divine, preaches Mr. Jeffers' religion, and his disciples, acting upon it, become emotional mechanisms, lewd and twitching conglomerations of plexi, their humanity annulled. Human experience, in these circumstances, having necessarily and according to the doctrine no meaning, there can be and is no necessary sequence of events; every act is equivalent to every other; every act is at the peak of hysteria; most of the incidents could be shuffled around into varying sequences without violating anything save, perhaps, Mr. Jeffers private sense of their relative intensity. Since the poem is his, of course, such a private sense is legitimate enough; the point is that this is not a narrative, nor a dramatic, but a lyrical criterion. A successful lyrical poem of one hundred and seventy-five pages is unlikely, for the essence of lyrical expression is concentration; but it is at least theoretically possible.[35]

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[35]Winters, Poetry, XXV, 281.

If Jeffers had other premises in mind than those from which Winters operates, it would be quite possible for what Winters says to be true but not applicable to Jeffers, on the basis that Winters attempts to apply it. Perhaps, if Jeffers were starting from a premise that used a different unifying factor--say the shining forth of truth--Winter's observations would be most useful to an understanding of Jeffers. Such will prove to be precisely the case.

Winters criticizes Jeffers' lyrics for being nonlyrical and his narratives as being non narrative. However, in the sublime tradition and in this study, genre is not a consideration. Poe, as Jeffers was well aware, called Paradise Lost a series of lyrics. Many call this work narrative. Others call it epic. Alcaeus has been seen to have been a monodist. Most of Hebrew poetry is monody. Truth from the Delphic Oracle, the pre-Socratic philosophers and from the Hebrew prophets was monody. Jeffers learned from these. He also learned from Greek drama. The pattern of Greek drama is episodes mixed with choral lyrics.

Jeffers wove all these elements into The Women at Point Sur. The pattern is God carrying on dialectic with God in which God seeks God's self-realization. God is learning through suffering. The episodes of the work reflect the irrational elements of God's nature and the lyrics represent the clear, logical elements. However, the logical elements never lose control even in the episodes. This is true

because the episodes are narrated rather than allowed to be dramatic. Everything in the work is filtered through the "I," the voice, the central intelligence of the work.

The pattern of presentation is that of one voice speaking. It is the pattern that an orator, who is using prosopopoeia and ecphrasis, would use in making a speech. It is the pattern of a preacher relating a sermon on the creation or about the book of Job. It is like the pattern that a movie or television camera uses to present a story. In Jeffers it is a central intelligence speaking. Hence, Winters saw accurately, but his interpretation was wrong.

The reviews of The Women at Point Sur drew no defense or justification from Jeffers until Mark Van Doren's review appeared. He had been one of Jeffers' discoverers and one of his more sympathetic critics. Van Doren said, in part:

> For in the first place he is a powerful poet and hears thunder naturally--thunder that we could not make if we tried. And in the second place his ideas carry their own death. If it is madness to consider humanity in itself, as doubtless it is, it is also madness to consider humanity out of itself. Mr. Jeffers thus far has found no way of resolving the great paradox. That he feels it so strongly is evidence of his quality as an artist. That he cannot get round it is evidence that he may, if he keeps on going, give us poems we cannot bear to read. "The Women at Point Sur" is unbearable enough. I have read it with thrills of pleasure at its beauty, and I shall read everything else Mr. Jeffers writes. But I may be brought to wonder whether there is need of his trying further in this direction. He seems to be knocking his head to pieces against the night.[36]

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[36]Mark Van Doren, "First Glance," The Nation, July 27, 1927, p. 88.

The review by Van Doren touched Jeffers deeply. It caused him to attempt an explanation. Only very rarely did Jeffers ever attempt to explain any work he did. This was one of the times. He wrote several letters--one of which, to Albert Bender, was quoted at the beginning of this section--in which he tried to clarify his intent in The Women at Point Sur. Perhaps the most comprehensive is the one he wrote to James Rorty. It will be quoted here in some detail for parts of it serve as a guide in discovering the conception of The Women at Point Sur. Jeffers said to Rorty:

> You were right evidently about the need of an explanation. I have just read Mark Van Doren's article, and if he, a first rate critic and a poet and a good friend of my work, quite misunderstands the book, it is very likely that no one else will understand it at present.
>
> You remember a couple of letters ago I spoke of morality--perhaps I said old-fashioned morality--implied in Point Sur. Tamar seemed to my later thought to have a tendency to romanticise unmoral freedom, and it was evident a good many people took it that way. That way lies destruction, of course, often for the individual but always for the social organism, and one of the later intentions of this Point Sur was to indicate the destruction and strip everything but its natural ugliness from the unmorality. Barclay incited people to "be your desires. . . flame . . . enter freedom." The remnant of his sanity--if that was the image of himself that he met on the hilltop-asks him whether it was for love of mankind that he is "pouring poison into the little vessels?" He is forced to admit that if the motive seems love, the act is an act of hatred.
>
> Another intention, this time a primary one, was to show in action the danger of that Roan Stallion idea of "Breaking out of humanity," misinterpreted in the mind of a fool or a lunatic. (I take the idea to be what you expressed in "the heart is a thing to be broken," carried a little farther perhaps.) It is not anti-social, because it has nothing to do with society, but just as Ibsen in the Wild

Duck made a warning against his own idea in the hands of a fool, so Point Sur was meant to be a warning; but at the same time a reassertion.

Van Doren's criticism assures me that I was quite successful in this intention and in the one about morality;-only I proved my points so perfectly that he thinks--and therefore other intelligent people will think--that they are proved against me and in spite of me. So I have written in these two respects well but not wisely. For the rest of the book was meant to be:

1) An attempt to uncenter the human mind from itself. There is no health for the individual whose attention is taken up with his own mind and processes; equally there is no health for the society that is always introverted on its own members, as ours becomes more and more, the interest engaged inward in love and hatred, companionship and competition. These are necessary, of course, but as they absorb all the interest they become fatal. All past cultures have died of introversion at last, and so will this one, but the individual can be free of the net, in his mind. It is a matter of "transvaluing values," to use the phrase of somebody that local people accuse me quite falsely of deriving from. I have often used incest as a symbol to express these introversions, and used it too often.

2) The book was meant to be a tragedy, that is an exhibition of essential elements by the burning away through pain and ruin of inertia and the unessential.

3) A valid study in psychology; the study valid; the psychology morbid, sketching the growth of a whole system of emotional delusion from a "private impurity" that was quite hidden from consciousness until insanity brought it to the surface.

4) Therefore a partial and fragmentary study of the origin of religions; which have been necessary to society in the past, and I think necessary whether we like it or not, yet they derive from a "private impurity" of some kind in their originators.

5) A satire on human self-importance; referring back to (1).

6) A judgment of the tendencies of our civilization, which has very evidently turned the corner down hill. "Powers increase and power perishes." Our literature, as I said in answer to the New Masses questionnaire, is not especially decadent (because in general it is not especially anything); but our civilization has begun to be.

(Some of you think that you can save a society; I think it is impossible, and that you only hasten the process of decadence. Of course as a matter of right and justice, I sympathize with radicalism; and in any

> case I don't oppose it; from an abstract point of view there is no reason that I know of for propping and prolonging the period of decadence. Perhaps the more rapid it is, the more rapid comes the new start.)
>
> There were more intentions, but these are the chief ones that can readily be said in prose. Too many intentions. I believe they all carry over to an intelligent reader, as results though not as intentions, but no doubt I was asking him to hold too many things in his mind at once. I had concentrated my energies for a long while on perceptions and expression, and forgot that the reader could not concentrate so long nor so intensely, nor from the same detached and inclusive viewpoint.[37]

Adamic, commenting on the foregoing statement by Jeffers, felt that The Women at Point Sur was obscure because of too many intentions. He felt a reader was justified in thinking Jeffers discovered the intentions after completing the book.[38] This study presents a different position. It assumes the intentions were in Jeffers' mind as he wrote. It assumes the intentions can act as a guide to an understanding of Jeffers' conception, the Longinus stream.

## The Longinus Stream

This section deals with conception. For Longinus greatness of conception was revealed through a writer's firm grasp of ideas, through vigorous and inspired emotion, through use of figures, through notable language, through fitting and dignified arrangement. This section places attention on the first: firm grasp of ideas. This is done because The Women

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[37]Letter to James Rorty quoted in Bennett, The Stone Mason . . ., pp. 118-19.

[38]Adamic, p. 472.

at Point Sur is difficult to manage. It is presented in bits and pieces. In the prelude "I" says that "scraps" and "match-ends of burnt experience human enough to be understood" will be the way the action is to unfold. The work unfolds just that way. Hence, to focus on figures, or notable language, or arrangement would be a Herculean task. Thus, what this section attempts is to reveal Jeffers' grasp of ideas by using the foundation that has been constructed in previous chapters. This section presents the "thought line" found in the work. The flow of ideas has been pieced together out of the "scraps" and "metaphors" through which it came. The section tries to relate this "thought line" to the tradition of permanent truth into which Jeffers has been placed by this study.

Constantly, in what has preceded, the intent has been to emphasize that Jeffers turns his thought into the past.[39] Carpenter has suggested that Jeffers can be understood by treating his work as myth.[40] It was said earlier that Jeffers' description of Jesus ("beautiful simplicity," "as if unintentionally," "in wonderful glimpses," "through objective narrative," "deep," "powerful," "beautiful," "strangely complex," "not wholly integrated"[41]) also describes Jeffers' work. It also describes the tradition of permanent truth in almost any culture, if one goes back far enough. It also

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[39] Supra, p. 38.

[40] Carpenter, p. 56.

[41] Supra, pp. 26-27.

describes points of sameness in the concept of truth to which both Plato and St. Paul subscribed.[42] It also describes Odin, in Norse mythology, who was the all-father god, god of truth, poetry, magic, prophecy.[43] Odin, also, was the god of the runes, through which he achieved rejuvenation after a period of self-torture, self-imposed, by hanging on a tree (the tree of life and knowledge) whose roots go down no one knows how far. In Greek mythology and history, these elements seem also to merge. In Christian doctrine there are two trees: the tree of knowledge (rational) and the tree of life (imagination). They are keys to "truth."

The pattern of language in which "truth" is displayed seems obscure, cryptic, ambiguous, deceptively simple. "Truth" usually appears as double-edged (like the god Apollo from whom it comes), polarized between two opposites, in a flux of darkness as in Parmenides, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Hegel.[44] The clash of opposites is found in the Faustian theme when the man of the middle ages and the man of the Renaissance come into conflict, when the Neoclassical and the Romantic come into conflict, when reason and imagination clash,[45] when the dying old man, or age, conflicts with the

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[42]For a statement by St. Paul that reflects Plato, see: I Cor. 13.

[43]Pierre Grimal, ed., Larousse World Mythology (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1963), p. 369.

[44]Supra, p. 63.

[45]Brown, pp. 130-31.

new man, or age, being born.

If one thinks of originality and imitation in the way they have been suggested by Aristotle, Longinus, Coleridge, and if one thinks of inspiration as outlined by Plato, by Longinus, by Norse tradition, and by Hebraic tradition, as inspiration deriving from God or the gods, he begins to approach the conception of Robinson Jeffers.

If one notes that, in most of the idylls and sagas and Homer, the conflicts are among the gods, between men, and sometimes between men and gods; if one notes that, in the Faustian tradition, the conflict is between God and the Devil, and between man and the Devil; if one notes that in Paradise Lost the conflict is between God and Satan, and between man and Satan; if one notes that in Robinson Jeffers' The Women at Point Sur, the conflict takes place within the mind of "I"; then it becomes possible to see why this study stated earlier that this voice is the key to unlocking the singularity, the "puzzling strangeness" of Jeffers. One can also see the pertinence of the quotation from Morris, that "Jeffers is struggling in an agony to smelt down time, space and God himself inside one fiery skull. . . ."[46] Jeffers is trying to do just that. He is trying to put his "world," or better, the essence of his "world," into a poem.[47]

However, the mind is not that of Robinson Jeffers, the man, but the narrator, the voice of The Women at Point Sur.

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[46]Supra, p. 92. [47]Supra, pp. 47, 116.

It is a voice that an oral interpreter, whose concern is with how a selection should be read, is, by training, ready to listen to. It may be that "I" is the only human character Jeffers ever creates. This may be why Jeffers' critics, even the sympathetic, have criticized his characters for not being life-like.[48] They are not supposed to be. Only the voice, and the mind it reflects, is real, for these are the voice and mind of God and/or of man from deepest antiquity until now, seeking answers to what are, perhaps, unsolvable questions. The characters are more nearly like those beings in Hesiod's five ages of man, or bodies and concepts temporarily containing the human spirit which always grows.

The preceding is full of assumptions and it will be the task of the study to show the evidence, or, at least, the basis for them. Toward that end, this section of the present chapter of the study focuses on the prelude of The Women at Point Sur and follows what is revealed in the prelude through the body of the selection, in order to reveal the conception, the Longinus stream of the sublime tradition.[49] The study follows the prelude as it is written

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[48]See, for example: Waggoner, Heel of . . ., p. 118; Bennett, Robinson Jeffers . . ., p. 118; Powell, p. 68. Both Powell and Bennett point out that the language Jeffers' characters use is not the kind of language these people would use in real life. It is too educated and poetic for them. The Women at Point Sur reflects this observation. Jeffers does not follow Wordsworth in diction. He more nearly follows the principles given in Aristotle's Poetics.

[49]For ease of reference a copy of the prelude is added as an appendix to the study. The lines are numbered to correspond to references in this and following chapters.

and attempts to relate it to the foundation that has been constructed. After the prelude is completed, an attempt is made to give a statement regarding the conception, the "thought line," of the body of the work. Then an attempt is made to explain how the instantaneous appeal, which is requisite to Longinus' concept of the sublime, was achieved.

The very first word of The Women at Point Sur is "I." It is emphatically placed. The "I" is the narrator, the voice, and the first twenty-one lines treat of his state of mind and set his attitude. In the first eight, he, like Jeffers, is situated on the Pacific Coast and has, like Jeffers, planted trees to the east to secure his solitude. However, by doing so, while he does achieve quiet, he does not achieve solitude, because "imagination, the traitor of the mind," has taken his solitude and slain it. He has "no peace but many companions, hateful-eyed and human-bodied." He offers these to whoever loves multitude. All this occurs in the first eight lines. They are simple, straight-forward and loaded.

For example, imagination, the traitor of the mind that has slain his solitude is a clear statement of the neoclassical attitude.[50] That age feared the imagination, distrusted it. Imagination represented fury and passion, the wild, Dionysiac, one side of Apollo, viewpoint. It represented

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[50]Brown, pp. 310-14. Even Bacon, prior to 1625 makes imagination subordinate to reason in his definition of rhetoric.

the furor poeticus, the result of drinking Odin's hydromel of the poets.[51] The "I" is calm, clear, logical as a good neoclassical mind should be, but a battle is coming. The "I" has quiet, but no solitude. Hence, his quiet is a particular kind of quiet. In "Theory of Truth," Jeffers mentions Lao-tze.[52] The kind of quietude into which Jeffers places his narrator is the "creative quietude" of Taoism.[53] This attitude combines within an individual two seemingly incompatible conditions--supreme activity with supreme relaxation. It is the creativity of the artist. It is the basic quality of a life in tune with the universe. Thus, Jeffers is setting the stage for the conflict that will follow: the battle between reason and imagination. The clash of two opposites is being set up. The dialectic is on its way. This is suggestive of the dialectic between God and Mephistopheles in Faust and between God and Satan in Job. On a small scale, within the limits of the work, the voice of "I" is, on one level of thought, the voice of God. God is having dialectic with God.

In Taoism, this attitude of creative quietude is not given by birth. It is achieved after long struggle. Smith

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[51]Grimal, p. 369. Hydromel was the mead, the elixir, that brought on the divine frenzy, the vision or inspiration. It parallels the vine of Dionysus.

[52]Supra, pp. 71-72.

[53]Houston Smith, The Religions of Man (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1958), p. 189.

says, "Clarity can come to the inner eye, however, only in so far as man's life attains a quiet equaling that of a deep and silent pool."[54] Such a condition comes after long and hard thought reminiscent of Dennis' "Enthusiastic passion"[55] and of the "recollection in tranquillity" of Wordsworth.[56]

The clash between opposites that is to occur has already happened in the mind of "I." He has experienced it. He has entered the state of creative quietude and imagination will not let him rest until he relates what he has received from the Muses, the hydromel, or from wherever he draws his inspiration. But reason is not that easily halted. It sees no reason to relate what has been experienced. That is part of the struggle: to speak or not to speak.

"I" asks why he should make fables again. Lines nine through twenty-one seek to given an answer. His first answer is that he has no vocation. "Vocation" means a calling. He has no calling. If one thinks of the mind of "I" as being cosmos, then "I" is the ruler; there is nothing, or no one, above God to give God a calling. The reason to write or not to write must come from himself. Thus, his first answer is lame; it is an excuse. He hesitates to give the reason why he writes. It may be that the reason he writes is that he, himself, can not leave man alone. He can reject humanity, but he cannot reject the human spirit. Love of man is part

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[54]Ibid., p. 192. [55]Supra, pp. 100-101.

[56]Allen and Clark, p. 189.

of his motivation for what follows, but he hates humanity, multitude. This may appear insignificant at the moment, but it becomes crucial to the conception as will be seen as the study unfolds. It is reflected in St. Paul's attempt to escape the body.

The elements of the physical world (nature) make him ashamed to "speak of the active little bodies, the coupling bodies, the misty brainfuls of perplexed passion." This leads him to the conclusion that "humanity is needless." It is important to note that he says "humanity," not a particular human being, not the human spirit. For Jeffers, this is a permanent establishment forever renewed--but humanity can be a stage of man like one of Hesiod's ages. The human spirit, however, is eternal, for it is life.

"I" remembers his previous assertion that "Humanity is the start of the race. . . ."[57] The task of breaking out of humanity is done. It has been accomplished but not in a fable. It has been accomplished in the thinking, in the experience of "I." His love of the human spirit and his imagination motivate him to relate that "discovery's the way to walk in" now that humanity is discarded. The language which he chooses to relate the experience will be "match-ends of burnt experience human enough to be understood." He will use "scraps" and "metaphors." This is a description of the language pattern of "truth" that has been used to describe Jesus

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[57]Supra, p. 112.

earlier and the pattern of language that appears in the motif to which Jeffers has been associated. He ends by saying "The wine was a little too strong for the new wine skins. . . ."

The allusion here is to the passage in Matthew. Christ is speaking and he says: "Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; if it is, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."[58] Jeffers has changed the new wine to old. The implication is that his idea of breaking out of humanity is very old. He has changed the old wineskins to new. The implication here is that the agents who will appear in what follows will not be able to absorb the old idea. The agents will be destroyed. What follows is to be a destructive situation. Whether there will ever be agents able to carry the concept or not remains to be seen. These will not be. That they will not be is in concord with what Jeffers stated when he tried to explain his intent to James Rorty.[59] It agrees with the body.

Lines twenty-two through twenty-nine present a shifting of thought, or, rather, a returning to the nature part of the comparison introduced in line eleven. In a sense, they represent a calling forth of the Muse, who in this case is storm. If one thinks in terms of the Euripidean prologue, and considers this a second scene, or considers it a second

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[58]Matt. 9: 17. [59]Supra, pp. 122- 24.

monologue, it can be introducing a second element to be considered and to be fused into the composition.[60] This element would be nature as seen in the comparison introduced in line eleven. Such thinking would establish parallels between the world of the spirit and the natural world, reflecting the mind of "I."

The calling of storm, as muse or as the divine power, acts both as a transition and as a fusing device, for it changes the thought, and at the same time reveals the strain of atoms in the rock under the house, and the strain in the mind of "I," and the strain of the message of breaking out of humanity which will erupt to destroy the agents created to carry it, the new wineskins. Thus, at this point, there is present strain on three levels: the strain of opposites involved between reason and imagination in creative quietude, the strain in the agents to be created who will not be equal to the message they hold, the strain in the elements of nature: rock, hills, ocean, hearted with sacred quietness. All are fused in storm which, or who, as it assumes both human and physical characteristics, becomes the manifestation of God.

The connection between the storm and God becomes clear in lines thirty through thirty-seven. "I," who has moved under the influence of inspiration or imagination, calls down

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[60]G. M. A. Grube, The Drama of Euripides (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1941), p. 70.

one of the great dancers from the Aleutian rocks that are "pivoting counter-sunwise, celebrating power with the whirl of a dance." Two possibilities, at least, enter here, both of which fit. The image here, of a whirlwind, or tornado, or water-spout, is suggestive of the physical world as pictured by Anaximenes which Aristophanes has one of his characters in The Clouds strike at by saying "Zeus rules no more; the whirlwind rules instead. . . ."[61] It also suggests the voice out of the Whirlwind that spoke to Job.[62] Another way of putting this is to say that, in a dynamic universe, force is a manifestation of God. From physics and psychology, one learns that strain is always present in the molecular structure, a state of uneasy equilibrium even in ionization; and strain is always present in the human structure, even in creative quietude which is a state of uneasy equilibrium; for man always seeks, is never satisfied. That is the Faustian spirit.

Lines thirty-eight through forty-seven offer several possibilities. They can be "I" addressing the reader, or the logical part of "I" addressing the imagination, or the moral addressing the natural man, or the imagination addressing the agents that are about to be turned loose. It is probably the reasoning part of "I" addressing the imagination in which the agents are caged like tigers. If so, art, through reason, is the bars of the tigers' cage. "I" has

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[61]Brumbaugh, p. 27. [62]Job 38:1-40.

asserted that "art's root cut" and "culture's outlived" and "discovery's the way to walk in." The agents are about to be turned loose. The beast that has been kept under represents the Dionysian elements of man; the oubliette window suggests the dungeon or the cave in which the Titans are confined, or the Furies, when they are not free to roam. The lions that roam the night are held in check by the rational, the Apollonian spirit, which is the crust that holds sanity and civilization. These lines could have come out of Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy,[63] or the work of Taine.[64]

All of these forces are in uneasy equilibrium which produces an unbearable strain, but storm, the manifestation of God, which is "kind, kind violence" will, through its force, release the strain. It begins with the introduction of Onorio Vasquez, young seer of visions, a seventh son, who is to be Barclay's prophet, but Barclay is not introduced or named in the prelude.

Onorio never sees things to the point, watches his brothers crucify and torture a hawk with a broken wing: Jew-beak. In the hawk is a Christ symbol. The hawk is not dead but dying. Onorio gets a vision of a gigantic, naked woman, suggestive of Venus, who walks the ocean, weeping because she had only one son, and because the strange lover never does come anymore when Joseph is at synagogue. These facts are revealed in lines forty-eight through seventy-six. There

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[63]Allen and Clark, pp. 513-23. [64]Ibid., pp. 487-93.

will be no more saviors out of Mary. This one is being crucified on a barn door, and no replacement has appeared. Metaphysics are falling; the crust of civilization is breaking.

Through it creeps Myrtle Cartwright in lines seventy-seven through 112. Myrtle, too, is in a state of agitation. It is early autumn, about the time of year and the type of situation that Alcaeus borrowed from Hesiod and expressed in the poem quoted earlier in this study.[65] The strain of loneliness and of unfulfilled desire presses her until the strain gathers. Jew-beak grows weak; the strain increases; the low roar of thunder is heard; the crust breaks a bit more.

Faith Heriot, an agent of more importance, who will become a symbol of death, emerges in lines ninety-three through 112. She is wild for a lover; her mother sickens with cancer of the womb; the strain presses, gathers in the air; Jew-beak grows weaker. In lines 113-129 storm gathers; thunder and lightning streak the sky. Through the night the storm roars and cracks and Onorio sees the trees bending north, pushed by the high wind. On a cliff in the north, line 159, a strange lover shines and calls. Onorio sees a vision of Barclay's coming.

In lines 155-168, the storm brings release to the physical universe by releasing the strain. As a result, flood comes; the rivers rise and flow to the north. The trees bend to the north. Lightning strikes the oil tanks at

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[65] <u>Supra</u>, p. 55.

Monterey; the atoms split, marrying the air, gaining sweet release. Myrtle Cartwright decides to go to Rod Stewart while her husband is gone, but her strain is not yet released, for she has not yet had a physical orgasm. She must do two things: first she had to decide; second she has to act. The oil tanks only reacted to secure their release. Onorio begs his brothers to torture him, to give him the stigmata: Jew-beak dies in the night and someone must be fastened with nails. Here the prelude ends. The characters have been released. It remains to follow the breaking of the crust, to see the drop of terror, the pinch of desolation. This has to follow, for the wine (the message of breaking out of humanity) is too strong for the new wineskins. The agents are not human, nor are they meant to be. A new kind of man will be necessary to hold the concept that "I" has experienced, which has given him his state of creative quietude, the experience he will relive through Enthusiastic passion.

Several other things have been happening also. The allusions to the Titans, to the Dionysiac elements in "I," the agents presented, the bending of the trees to the north, the flowing of rivers (in flood) to the north, the deliberate ambiguity in viewpoint, the dying of Jew-beak--all point to the coming of a new god. In Alcaeus' "Hymn to Apollo," Apollo does not go immediately to Delphi; he goes instead to a northern country and takes the law and stays a year. During

this year, he gives the laws to the Hyperboreans, and instructs them in its application. He finally comes to Delphi from the north. Rivers rise, overflow their banks, and flow north to announce his coming.[66] Euripides' Dionysus comes to Thebes from the north. He comes as a stranger. Odin comes from the north, replacing other gods. Rivers flow from south to the north and freeze-over chasm and chaos to create a new world.[67] Jeffers' quote from Dear Judas, introduced early in this study, spoke of "blond savages" from the north.

Hence, all the events in the prelude, even the strain between the reason and imagination of "I," point to the coming of a new god. However, he is to be only an interim god, for neither he nor the other characters are strong enough to carry the truth of breaking out of humanity. The prelude is in the spirit of Hesiod and his different ages of man.[68] It is in the spirit in which Uranus overthrew Cronos and was overthrown by Zeus.[69] It is also in the spirit of the ages

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[66]Denys Page, Sappho and Alcaeus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 247. In Alcaeus, contrary to general Aeolian custom, Apollo appears as a lawgiver to mankind. Alcaeus' Apollo is the patron of music and poetry from the beginning. He delivers the law as a prophet. The inspiration of poet and prophet are regarded as different activities of the same faculty. The farther back one goes, the more closely the two attributes are associated. Pindar, the poet, was also regarded as a prophet of Zeus. Orpheus and Cinyras were both seers and singers. Olen, the first singer of Apolline hymns, is equally renowned for prophecy and for poesy.

[67]Grimal, p. 362.

[68]Stringfellow Barr, The Will of Zeus (New York: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1961), pp. 43-47.

[69]Edith Hamilton, Mythology (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1959), pp. 24-25.

of different kinds of man in anthropology. It will be seen later that the prelude took place, and the dying of Jew-beak took place, when Barclay learned that his son had been killed in France, two years before the body of The Women at Point Sur opens.

Thus, from the prelude one learns that gods die and are born again; races of the "hateful-eyed and human bodied" die and are born again. One learns that even the earth is not static; it groans in change, and storm releases strain. Permanent things like earth and grass and human passions are forever renewed.[70] The permanent aspect is change: "Zeus rules no more; the whirlwind rules instead. . . ."[71]

What will be seen in that which follows is the appearance and destruction of images, not human characters,--nor intended to be--who are too weak to live outside humanity. There should be emerging in the mind of the reader an awareness that Jeffers is concerned with much more than the sequence of events that has been summarized by Carpenter and Squires and criticized by Winters.

Viewed from the position this student has assumed Winters took, many of the events that appear in The Women

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[70]Supra, p. 43.

[71]Barr, p. 356. Taking the phrase from Aristophanes, Barr points to some of the parallels in the religious, social, and philosophical conditions in Greece. The philosophy of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, perhaps, helped to destroy the Olympians who had destroyed or caged the Titans. Perhaps this gives a better understanding of the charges against Socrates. Socrates sought truth.

at Point Sur are neither necessary nor probable. Other events could have been substituted and not much would have been lost. Some events could be changed to different places in sequence and not much, or anything, would be lost--within certain limitations.

Those limitations will be imposed by one part of what this study is calling conception. Some events were necessary to reveal the conception, and, while the choice of events is not rigid, in terms of plot, as Carpenter, Squires, Winters seem to see plot, the choice is quite rigid within the terms of conception. Jeffers seems more nearly to follow Euripides who chose events to illustrate ideas rather than arranging events to produce ideas.[72] Thus, in many ways, Winters is right in judging Jeffers, when viewed from Winters' premises.[73] That relationship will become clearer as a more explicit statement of the "thought line" is made. It follows.

Having seen in the prelude the flood that came to the physical universe with the breaking of the strain by storm,

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[72]Grube, pp. 80-87. Grube feels that Euripides would have disagreed with Aristotle on the importance of plot or fable. He points out that Euripides' The Trojan Women has no plot or action in the Aristotelian sense. Instead, incidents are chosen to illustrate the suffering of the vanquished. Other incidents could have been chosen just as well. The play has no unity of plot. Now, The Women at Point Sur is not a play and is thus not bound by standards governing drama. Aristotle was well aware of the differences between tragedy and epic; so was Robinson Jeffers.

[73]Supra, p. 89.

the study now views the human flood that was released by that same storm and by the death of "Jew-beak," the symbol of the dying god. Through this process the sine qua non of Jeffers' conception is revealed. From what has been said of the prelude it should be clear that there are religious implications in what follows. Such being the case, and using Jeffers' statement of intent as a guide, a beginning is made with the religious intent, and then progress will be made toward the psychological; the attempt to unseat the human mind from itself; the satire, and, finally, the tragedy.[74] There will be some overlap as the beginning is made, between the religious and the psychological, for the basis of the religious intent in Barclay proves to be psychological. The instantaneous appeal that Longinus considered a sign of great conception[75] will be largely absent from the early stages of this exposition, but a growing awareness should heighten respect for Jeffers' grasp of ideas, and, near the latter part, some effort will be made to suggest the instantaneous appeal. It will help if the reader will compare and contrast the thought outlines that emerge here with the modified summary statements given by Carpenter and by Squires.[76]

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[74] Supra, pp. 122- 24.

[75] Supra, p. 97

[76] Supra, pp. 117, 118.

The body of The Women at Point Sur begins in medias res, in the middle of things.[77] The Rev. Dr. Barclay, who has held his pastorate for ten years, during part of which he has "sunk the myth to swim by the ethic" of Christianity is denouncing his creed.[78] He calls the story of Christ as the Son of God lies, "the wash of Syria." However, he does not proclaim that God is dead. He simply moves away from the trinitarian position. There is no serious doubt in his mind that there is a God. As a matter of fact, his quest is to find God and to force God to recognize him. He tells his parishioners as much. What motivates his explosion is not explicitly stated. There is a hint, a "scrap," that the motivation lies in the death of his son, killed two years before in the war, and in his own love-starved and sex-starved life, and in the jealousy he feels for the love his children, twins, a boy and a girl, Edward and April, had for each other. Love and sex are suggested, but not stated, as motivating forces. Barclay leaves his church having renounced Christ and humanity.

Having cut himself off from humanity, he goes to his summer cottage, sits on a hill, contemplates. He wants to discover God. God thinks through action; how else can man

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[77]Robinson Jeffers, The Women at Point Sur (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927).

[78]Ibid., p. 19.

but through action. All of what he sees and feels (earth, sky, ocean, plants, men etc.), all of this show, is God thinking the "thing" out to its conclusion. One is left to speculate on "thing." He wishes to run down "some deer of perception out of the dark." He is touching Pascal's great void at this point. No one down all the blind millenniums has known anything; no one has broken through "appearance" to touch or be touched by God. His concept of God suggests Hegels' world spirit, Bergson's elan vital, to a large degree Schopenhauer's will to live, Bishop Berkeley's idealism, and some of Aristotle's prime mover unmoved. God is a dynamic force; manifestations of whom are seen in all that is. The universe is Heraclitan.

Barclay feels that Christ died blind asking why God had forsaken him. He vows that he will not go the same way. He will use his life to find God, to discover God, if it means his own destruction--perhaps he secretly wishes death but will not take his own life. He intends to take God by violence, but he realizes that his feeling is the hybris that in the tragedy brings destruction. The thought occurs to him that he has lost the feeling of almost breaking through, that he had had when he was in the crowd. The suggestion is that God (force) burns brightest, comes the closest to breaking through, in human brain. Whatever he feels, when he tries to focus on it, to think about it,

vanishes; he must be mad enough to act. He must quit thinking and do.

As this thought strikes him, he sees a messenger coming up the hill and almost simultaneously the thought flashes through his mind that to kill this man and bury his body would be a monstrous act (Moses did the same thing with the Egyptian, and God spoke to him about it). He pulls a piece of paper from his pocket on which he has written what it is he wishes to discover. His mind is coming and going between sanity and madness; hence, the paper. He wants to know:

> First, whether there's any . . . what the vulgar
> call God . . . spirit of the universe.
> But spirit's a more contaminated word than the
> other. Life, then, one life
> Informing . . . no being: why, this is evident.
> Second, is there anything left after we die but
> worm's meat? Third how should men live?
> I have something to solve![79]

These questions, generally, govern everything else that follows. They are like the text around which a sermon is constructed, or an oration is built. The elements chosen from this point on are chosen to illustrate the bringing of these ideas to fruition. The events that follow relate to each other not on the basis of necessity, nor on the basis of probability (plausibility), but on the basis of how they help to illustrate, to expand, to complement the ideas stated on Barclay's piece of paper. Given what is on the paper,

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[79] Ibid., p. 25.

everything else in the entire work fits like the demonstration of a geometrical theorem.

Actually, they have been the governing principles since the opening line of the prelude. As Barclay reads the paper, the messenger delivers a letter from Mrs. Barclay. Now, when Barclay renounced his creed, he stepped outside of humanity and has not gone back; the messenger is important, because he represents humanity being thrust back upon Barclay. Barclay tells the messenger that he is going south, and that Mrs. Barclay can follow, if she wishes. He is not concerned with his wife and this raises the question why. However, no answer is given until later. Yet, a great deal of concern is suggested--on the evidence of space allotted to each--for his daughter, April. His concern for April is suspect. What he says to the messenger does not seem, in that context, to be entirely the kind of thing a man should say to a stranger about his own daughter.[80] He loves his daughter more than he loves his wife, and the kind of love is open to question--but not to condemnation at this point. The parallel to Shelley's Cenci is both obvious and intended.[81]

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[80] Ibid., p. 26.

[81] Thomas Hutchinson, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 274-337. This work contains notes by Shelley and a letter relating Shelley's intent to stage the drama.

The messenger leaves, and Barclay starts to go south; at that instant, a reason for his going south "pops" into his mind, but as a thought not a reason: One who seeks God must have disciples. This statement brings into focus the previous statement that dealt with God burning brightest in the human mind, and explains his remark about his nearness to breaking through when he was in the crowd at his church. [When the reader connects these, his reaction is instantaneous. He experiences Jeffers' conception.] Also in Barclay's mind are the germs of thought for sacrifice through a monstrous act. With these ideas bombarding him, he breaks, momentarily, into madness (he has broken through sanity) and thinks that he is God creating the world.

He wanders south as a stranger (like the coming of Apollo or of Dionysus) seeking God or being God. He is not quite sure which, and neither is the reader; nor is the reader sure why he is going south--unless he has read the prelude--except in some vague way to find, to discover, God, for "discovery's the way to walk in," outside humanity. However, he is not now completely outside humanity as he was when he left the church, for he has left open a door to his wife, whom he does not love, and to his daughter, whom he does. In this state he wanders south.

He takes a room at Morheads, a ranch being run by a woman, Natalia Morhead, with a four year old child, a crippled father-in-law, a husband, Randal, son of Old Morhead, who is still in the army almost a year after the end of the

war. Natalia Morhead is involved in a lesbian relationship with Faith Heriot, a girl introduced in the prelude, who appeared at Morheads a few months after Randal joined the army. Randal was not drafted.

Barclay wanders the hills collecting his mind and feeling hopeless. He has lost the feeling he had in the church. He feels he is getting no closer to God and turns from his own thoughts because he can not find a way to God. Immediately, upon turning from his thought, the idea flashes:

> There are only two ways: gather disciples
> To fling like bullets against God and discover him:
> Or else commit an act so monstrous, so irreparable
> It will stand like a mountain of rock, serve you
> for fulcrum
> To rest the lever. In vacancy: nothing.[82]

One recognizes that both of these have been suggested before, in Barclay's feeling of a sense of loss when he left the crowd, and when he first glimpsed the messenger. One also remembers his concern, and the quality of his concern, for his daughter, and begins to think of Abraham and Isaac and the sacrifice of Iphigenia by Agammenon. The possibility of April as a sacrifice becomes part of the situation. Barclay begins to preach to the cattle [Apollo owned cattle, coincidence, perhaps, but maybe there is a connection.] and to try to collect disciples. He is white-headed, fifty years old, but during his wandering his beard is growing a

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[82]Jeffers, The Women . . ., p. 33.

youthful brown. He is aging backward and sexual desire becomes a factor. He seeks out Maruca, the Morhead servant, an ugly, massive, Indian woman. He will not admit to himself that his act is for pleasure; to do so would be contemptible. He offers her four dollars. He calls the act an act of deliverance that takes him back to puberty. For some reason, he doubles the sum. The satire comes through, for the next opponent of God, the man who is to break through appearances, buys a seduction, which she would have given free, for eight dollars. The name Maruca is satirical, a "devilish" nickname (in Spanish) for Mary or Maria.

Putting monstrous act, sexual act, and daughter together, one sees Barclay's two directions. He seeks disciples and he intends to rape his daughter as the monstrous act. He intends to make contact with God if it destroys him, for if one touches God only for an instant, he has lived immortally. The rocks and trees have their nature, but a man may become a God (an Emersonian idea), and, in moments of delirium, Barclay thinks he is God. However, to his potential disciples he asserts that he is God's messenger, the new Apollo, the law-bringer from the north. He announces that all laws are overthrown. The ten commandments are shattered. People are to be their desires. There is no sin; all things are permitted. He knows that what he is saying is lies. He knows that what he is pouring out is poison,

but he desires to find God and needs disciples. Still, he is somewhat unsettled; he does not know whether he wishes to find God or to be God. At this point, the question of motivation becomes paramount. The suggestion creeps in that Barclay seeks God because he needs God. He needs God to love or to be loved by, or he needs to become God in order that people will love him. The motivation is not clear, but just suggested, a scrap.

Except for a fragile tie with his wife and daughter through the messenger, Barclay is outside humanity. He has not really acquired any disciples yet, although he has spouted his poison. He has not yet sacrificed his daughter. He is existing in a kind of valueless freedom. He has not yet committed himself to action. In a moment of insanity he meets his image on the mountain, his Magus Zoroaster.[83] In much the same manner as Christ[84] wrestled with the Devil on the hill after his own baptism, when the Devil offered him the world and Christ rejected it, turning to love man because His kingdom was not of this world, Barclay takes counsel with his image. Here are excerpts of the conversation:

> Barclay climbed upward the slope. High up the gray fog
> Was split in tongues, and over the bald summit blue sky. A man approached him

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[83]The parallel to Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, as Dr. Powell has pointed out, is intended.

[84]Matt. 4:11.

And said, "You've got outside humanity: you will not return.
Oh, let them feed and clothe you, you have money: but neither in love nor instruction
Lean to that breed." "Love?" he said, "what is love?" But to the other: "To what purpose
Have you been dropping wine and fire in the little vessels?" When the buried sun
Rosed an arched banner of the mist, then Barclay saw the lean face, the stub of brown beard, the bar of the eyebrows,
His own mirrored; and the image: "If you did not love them would you labor to lead them?" He shaking and smiling:
"I see the devil is short of faces." It answered, "You could not fool yourself utterly. Your very body
Cries for companions; you stood like a moose bellowing for love. I listened all the while with secret laughter
The time we persuaded ourself we wanted disciples to bait the God-trap: their sweet persons you wanted;
Their eyes on our eyes. A filthy breed to refer to." And Barclay, "Here you are, madness.
The Magus Zoroaster thy dead . . . Where else does consciousness
Burn up to a point but in the bone lamps? I should be lonely." It laughed, "As the tragic child?" "He includes them.
And I though I choke, old portrait . . ."
. . . . . .

Barclay on the dome of the hill: "Old counterfeit,
Eye-thing, the hand would go through. Before I annul you
With one finger's experience: tell me what's the magic in bipeds? I see the stone and the tree
Through sheet crystal." "Ah, that's our private impurity: but look at the majesty of things, a race of atomies
Obsess you? Except them till the stars are counted,
The bad crumb will digest, the apes that walk like herons
Nook themselves in." But Barclay looked at the sky, the long tassels of the fog reddening recurved;

At the earth, the bits of quartz in the stubble;
and a shiver of laughter
Twitched in his nerves. "Oh that's," he said
twitching, "confession. Single-hearted is
clean of laughter:
What is it that I dare not think of?" He thought
Faith Heriot had moods of feature like April's . . .
"Why," the image answered,
"Of your own mind hypnotized by the accidents of
birth and begetting. Because you have coupled
and are budded
Of couplers: humanity the only pillar on every
horizon?"
. . . . . .

. . ."Out of love destruction.
There was not one word but savored of sudden
burning: but all for love's sake." And Bar-
clay, "Have it then, I love them."
"And feed the loved poison? You knew they were
not stone but paper fagots to the fire of
your saying.
Love that destroys?" Barclay looked right and
left like an animal
Driven on a trap, the funnel of the high stockade
narrowing. He muttered quickly, lowering his
head:
"If they were finished: peace, peace. I have both
the desires. May not one hate
The loved, love the hated, where does this fountain
from?" When he looked
The inquisitor was dim; only the face, and that fading,
hung opposite his eyes
On no stalk, and dissolved. There was a dizzy
fugitive sickness at heart and the whirling had
stopped,
So that he said gathering his functions to life,
"Love requires martyrs: seal it with martyrdom:"
he remembered
That both his father and his son were dead. "Love
of humanity: the enormous picture of familiar
passions.
I have conquered the tempter: who came in the image
of the most hated: I am conquering the loved."[85]

When Barclay makes his decision to turn to love man, he has turned back into humanity. He will not be the

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[85]Jeffers, The Women . . ., pp. 66-70.

beginning of a new race of men. He is committed to the old. His love of humanity has been his flaw even as the love of the human spirit has been seen to be the motivating force behind "I," making him speak what is presently being examined.[86] However, love of humanity and love of the human spirit are not the same thing, as has been previously emphasized. Barclay is in love with humanity. He is still committed to discovering God, but not for his own sake.

At this point, the "I" heard in the prelude becomes very strong. This is the point where the prelude is reaffirmed.[87] These images, agents not beings, these "new wineskins" that "I" has fashioned, are unequal to the task. Also, if one omits the prelude, as most critics have done, Barclay had a chance up to this point. However, by beginning with the prelude, one sees that Barclay never had a chance. All that has happened has been preordained in the best Calvinistic or deterministic manner. The determinism here is as rigid as that in Sister Carrie by Dreiser, or by almost any naturalistic writer.

The reader looks into the mind of "I"; by doing so he has seen God in microscopic scale, and if The Women at Point

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[86]Supra, p. 131.

[87]Jeffers, The Women . . ., pp. 72-73. This is the section that Powell has stated has been mistaken for the Bible when read aloud and is quoted in its entirety on page 221 of the present study.

Sur is meant to be allegorical, one gets a conception of God of the Macrocosm. In the microcosm one has also been able to see the opposites that are by nature in God's make up, if God is all. If God is all, he must be pleasure and pain. He must be opposites. This explains the pleasure-pain of Barclay's coupling with Maruca.[88] The road from here to the end is sealed for Barclay. "Jew-beak" has died and Barclay will have to take his place, for as has been stated, someone must bear the stigmata. Someone must be hanged with nails. Barclay escaped from the net of humanity, but he loved humanity, and his love trapped him. Thus, the agents created by "I," the vessels are "crackled" and will "stammer the tragedy" to its end.

When April and Mrs. Barclay arrive, Barclay has planned to use April as a sacrifice to use to bare God. She becomes a symbol of humanity. He rapes April and God does not seem concerned. He does not reveal himself to Barclay. When Barclay recognizes that his act has failed he has a horrible moment. To say horrible is really hyperbolic understatement. He looks into the future and recognizes that he can never be destroyed. Science tells him that matter can neither be created nor destroyed; it can only change. God has not hit him

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[88]"Coupling" for Jeffers means much more than copulation. It carries the sense of joining as in copulation, but it carries the sense of joining in a broader sense, clear into electric particles and opposable elements of dialectic also.

with a thunderbolt; God has not spoken from the burning bush; God has been devastatingly silent. Utilizing the concept of eternal recurrence, Barclay realizes that, if change is certain, time is infinite, but matter finite, he will relive his act. The possibility that memory is immortal strikes him, and the nature of his incestuous act drives him closer to total insanity. He has one chance left. He can hurl his disciples like bullets against "appearance" to bare God. He spouts his poison and drives his followers into Dionysiac frenzy. God is unmoved. Failing in both attempts, for one brief moment, Barclay realizes he has failed. His failure, together with his love for humanity--a love that has been unrequited for him--drive him into complete madness, and into taking the last step: he becomes God.

He calls himself "Heauton timoroumenos," the self-tortured, the self-hanged god of several mythologies, equating especially well with Odin in the Edda, and goes off north to find a cave in which to die, while screaming that he will be born again. Maruca, whom he seduced for eight dollars, is with child, but she has been sleeping with others, in addition to Barclay; so the reader is left not knowing who fathered her child which she intends to call the son of Barclay: the son of God.

The foregoing is a statement of some of the religious elements in The Women at Point Sur; more will be added when

the gothic stream is considered. At present the religious elements are important to the study not as subject-matter, but as they help to reveal the conception. What has been given is not intended as a plot summary, for it does not reveal all the events nor all the agents. What has been presented here has been pieced together from "the scraps and metaphors" that have been the method of presentation that reveals the "I" in whose mind the entire experience is taking place. What has been presented might be loosely termed the "basis" of the conception, or, maybe, one vein of the conception. More will be revealed as Jeffers' second intent is employed: the psychological.

Once again, the psychological and the religious intertwine as do all of the intents he stated, but some effort will be made to keep them relatively discrete. What follows will be presented as a kind of case study of Barclay. It, too, has been pieced together from the "scraps and metaphors."

Note particularily, as the details unfold how frequently the number nine appears in facets of his life. Nine is the number that surrounds the god Odin, the self-tortured, in Norse mythology. The Rev. Dr. Barclay was born in 1869. His children, twins, Edward and April were born in 1899. His wife was a frigid woman, either because of religious convictions or for some other reason. She is presented as the

same type of character, exactly, and in the same vague way as the mother in the old Scottish ballad: "Edward."[89] She has the same unexpressed hate for her husband as did the mother in the ballad whose hate is never explained. She has the same guile and cunning. When the twins are five (1904), she denies her bedroom to Barclay. For the next fifteen years he does not possess a woman. Maruca will be the first, in 1919. He loves his children, but they are turned against him by the mother. He loved the mother, but she froze him away. He has his love and his sexual desire trapped within himself. The strength of the sex drive and the force of love will be revealed in the relationship between Natalia and Faith Heriot, and this relationship contrasts with the state into which Barclay is forced. That relationship will be discussed presently.

In his desperation, Barclay turns to God. He pours all his love and all his affection into religious fervor, but the prevailing views in the world have shattered the Christian metaphysics,[90] and he is left only with the ethic: love them that hate you; do good to those who despitefully use you. In this state of uneasy equilibrium he lives in the pastorate that he accepts in 1909. He watches his

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[89] Quoted in Charlotte I. Lee, Oral Interpretation (2d ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959), pp. 506-508.

[90] Supra, p. 65.

children grow up and they reflect the love and devotion to each other that most twins seem to have. He, because of his repressed sex urge, wonders how far their relationship has gone. He loves them both, but they hate him--or think they do.

Driven by his hate, Edward joins the service and goes off to war prior to 1917. The exact date is vague. Barclay is left in the house with no outlet for his urges, with a frigid wife, and a daughter who is seventeen or eighteen and becoming a beautiful woman, whom he loves as a father should, and maybe a bit more.

In 1917, Edward is killed. Barclay can no longer trust his ethic. He finds it impossible to love his enemies. He has "nooked" himself in, to use the phrase Jeffers has used to describe the human race. He felt he drove his son to go to war, and, by doing so, he is responsible for his son's death, or at least, shares the guilt with enemies, whom he can no longer love. His country is at war, having entered April 6, 1917, and he is unable to love his enemies; and who would listen if he did. He has no place to put his love, his sex urge. He has lost the metaphysics of his belief and his ethic. "Art's root-cut"; "culture's outlived." His mind snaps. He will shake the glove of humanity, drop it. He will turn and find God, someone to love, some motivation for existence. He quits his pastorate in 1919 when the body of

the work begins.

Once he decides to collect disciples or to commit a monstrous act, he has precedent. Most religious founders have collected disciples, and many god-sick men have sacrificed their most cherished gifts to move God. Abraham loved God so much that he was willing to slay Isaac on the altar to prove his love. Job, who lost all his children, was willing to lose them, and to die trusting God, even if God slew him. Barclay's most cherished jewel--even though poisoned against him by her mother--was April, born in that month. She was his child and the focal point of his dreams, some of which he would not admit, even to himself. One line of thought would suggest that Barclay moved out of his creed just to seduce his daughter. That seems incredible. More probable is that he was confused and having started with the notion of sacrifice and made his decision on the hill, he took what that freedom brought and used it in an effort to discover God.

After the rape had occurred and in a moment of sanity, he saw clearly what he had done, and he looked into the future and saw immortality, although he did not see God; he realized his estrangement from God, and from humanity. He could not stand the pressure of loneliness.[91] Adam had a

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[91]For an excellent account of this theme in the world of the twentieth century see: Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Ferris Printing Co., 1941).

similar problem; God gave him Eve. Barclay had no Eve--one would hardly consider Maruca that, although one would consider her an earth symbol. Barclay had no place to go but mad. He went.

The foregoing is the gist of the study in psychology that is intended in The Women at Point Sur. There is a parallel in the relationship between Natalia and Faith. On one level this relationship is raw sex, and it does contrast and compare to heighten Barclay's position, but it will be utilized when the tragedy, to strip down to bare essentials, is treated. Thus, it will be ambiguous enough to serve two purposes.

It cannot yet be said that the conception of The Women at Point Sur has been revealed, but the reader's awareness of the Jeffers' grasp of ideas should be growing and elements of The Women at Point Sur should be emerging. Perhaps a consideration of the efforts to unseat the human mind from itself and the satire will bring the conception closer. Since Jeffers thought of these two as being very closely related, they will be treated collectively. Some suggestion has been made in the unnecessary sum of eight dollars that Barclay, the next opponent--though lover--of God gave for his deliverance.[92] Another is the name Maruca. Other suggestions will appear when the elements and beauty of nature are

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[92]Supra, p. 149.

discussed under the gothic stream, but one passage in particular, perhaps more than others, focuses both these elements and directly reveals a fragment of the conception in The Women at Point Sur. The incident occurs after Barclay has raped April, and "I" has pronounced Barclay's fate. An earthquake has occurred and in his madness Barclay feels he has touched truth, and, perhaps he has, for in his state of prophecy or delirium or whatever it might be named, Barclay says in an extended simile:

> "I have sent the other multitude away. I have put
> them in my left hand. I will show you the face
> of God.
> He is like a man that has an orchard, all the boughs
> from the river to the hill bending with abundance,
> Apples like globes of sunset, apples like burnt gold
> from the broken mountain: . . . the man is a
> madman.
> He has found a worm in one of the apples: he has
> turned from all the living orchard to love the
> white worm
> That pricks one apple. I tell you," he said,
> writing above them, "that God has gone mad.
> What, here on this one fruit, lump of earth-sprinkled
> stone
> With the iron core, this earth you call it,
> There's noble to love:if these mountains were not
> enough he has mountains under the south, the
> condor-
> Nesting Andes, and in Asia Himalaya
> Shining like candles before sunrise hung socketless
> In the night of the air: he has turned away from
> them, he has gone mad, he has turned to love men.
> You greasy foreheads,
> It is not for power nor beauty, what have you got under
> you that I should love you? The cut blue crystal,
> the ocean,
> Has brilliance on its face and broken shadows and
> shinings, and in the heart silence: it is set
> in the continents

For the gold band, it is like the great jewel of the
ring. He has turned and left it, he has turned
to love men,
I tell you God has gone mad, he has broken
The ring not of the earth but eternity, he has broken
his eternal nature: so a doomed man
Changes his mould of nature, a month before death,
the miser scatters the gold counters, the coward
Eats courage somewhere. If he needed flesh
To spend that passion on . . ."
One of the women
flung herself on the rock
Under his feet, crying "Lord, I am here," and
moaning anxiously. Her work-worn hands dug
the rough stone;
Her prostrate body, ridged with the thrusting
corset-bones, like a broken machine
Twitched out its passion.
Barclay continued not looking
downward: "Must he love cellular flesh, the
hot quivering
Sheathed fibers, the blood in them,
And threaded lightning the nerves: had he no choice,
are there not lions in the nights of Africa
Roar at his feet under the thunder-cloud manes? Not
hawks and eagles, the hooked violence between
The indomitable eyes, storms of carnivorous desire
drive over the huge blue? He has chosen insanely,
he has chosen
The sly-minded, the cunning-handed, the talkative-
mouthed,
The soft bodies go shelled in cloth: he has chosen
to sheathe his power in women, sword-strike his
passion
In the eyes of the sons of women . . . I cannot tell
you what madness covered him; he heard a girl's
voice . . ." Barclay
Shook like a fire and cried out: "I am not ready to
call you.
Let no one come to me, no one be moved."[93]

The comparison of man to a worm in a golden apple among all the apples in an orchard causes in the reader an instantaneous reaction of pleasure. This reaction is the

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[93]Jeffers, The Women . . ., pp. 116-18.

result of Jeffers' conception.[94] Frequently through the "scraps and metaphors" of the work from which the "thought line" is being drawn, one gets a similar reaction as he reads. As one continues to get the aspects that are being unfolded here, and carries them through the gothic stream, and the "grand style" stream, and brings them back into the voice of "I," and fuses them through the action of the oral interpreter, the result should be most impressive. At present, little or nothing will be expanded from the preceding quotation. The reader can see for himself, and feel for himself, what is intended; additional talk, regarding man's insignificance, would lose the satire. The study moves now to treat of Jeffers' intent with respect to tragedy.

It was said earlier that the tragic elements also serve to heighten, by contrast, Barclay's psychology. To understand the implications of the tragic intent, we approach through Schopenhauer. Jeffers has stated that he did not read Schopenhauer but read his sources.[95] Whether this is true or not is an open question that is not a concern at the moment. What is of concern is that Schopenhauer helps to explain what Jeffers meant by his statement of tragic intent and throws additional light on the conception of The Women

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[94]The conception really soars when one considers the role that the apple has had in mythology and religion from Paris (through Eris) to Adam.

[95]Supra, p. 73.

at Point Sur.

In what has gone before, reference has been made to Hegel's World Spirit; the whirlwind as Ruler; storm as a manifestation of God; strain coming from force being in rock, tree, sky, man; the dionysiac elements of man; the irrational, the unconscious; Bergsons' life-force. All these are collected by Schopenhauer in the term "will."[96] For Schopenhauer will is God. It is in everything. It comes closest to breaking into view in the mind of man. Durant, explaining Schopenhauer, said:

> Will, then, is the essence of man. Now what if it is also the essence of life in all its forms, and even of "inanimate" matter? What if the will is the long-despaired-of, "thing-in-itself"--the inner reality and secret essence of all things?[97]

This is exactly what Schopenhauer makes will, and is what Jeffers makes God in The Women at Point Sur. However, it should be kept in mind that no attempt is being made to equate Jeffers with Schopenhauer. To do so would be quite misleading. But Schopenhauer's concept of will does explain very well the concept of God in The Women at Point Sur. More explicitly, repulsion and attraction, combination and decomposition, magnetism and electricity, gravity and crystallization are will.[98] Goethe expresses this idea in the title

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[96]Durant, The Story of Philosophy, pp. 227-64. The pages listed here contain Durant's account of Schopenhauer and what is presented regarding Schopenhauer in this study draws heavily from it.

[97]Ibid., p. 238.

[98]Ibid., p. 239.

of one of his novels, when he called the irresistible attraction of lovers die Wahlverwand-schaften--"elective affinities."[99] The force which draws the lover and the force which draws the planet are one.[100] The lower we go in animals the smaller the intellect becomes, but not the will. There is no intellect in inanimate things, but there is much will. The "will" is a will to live. It can bide its time with patience as with dry seeds, or as with the galvanism in copper and zinc, or the "oil in the oil tanks at Monterey aching to burn." But, when conditions are right it erupts, or grows, or explodes.

The "will" is a will to live and its greatest enemy is death. Hence, the will defeats death through the strategy of reproduction and of martyrdom. Every normal organism hastens to sacrifice itself to the task of reproduction. Reproduction is the strongest instinct, for only in reproduction can will conquer death. It is for this reason that reproduction is placed almost beyond the reach of knowledge or of reflection. Schopenhauer makes the preceding clear in excerpts quoted by Durant.

> The will shows itself here as independent of knowledge, and works blindly, as in unconscious nature . . . . Accordingly, the reproductive organs are properly the focus of will, and form the opposite pole to the brain, which is the representative of knowledge. . . . The former are the life-sustaining

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

> principle,--they ensure endless life; for this reason they were worshipped by the Greeks in the phallus and by the Hindus in the lingam. . . . Hesiod and Parmenides said very significantly that Eros is the first, the creator, the principle from which all things proceed. The relation of the sexes . . . is really the invisible central point of all action and conduct, and peeps out everywhere in spite of all veils thrown over it. It is the cause of war and the end of peace; the basis of what is serious, and the aim of the jest; the inexhaustible source of wit, the key of all illusions, and the meaning of all mysterious hints . . . We see it at every moment seat itself, as the true and hereditary lord of the world, out of the fullness of its own strength, upon the ancestral throne; and looking down thence with scornful glance, laugh at the preparations made to blind it, or imprison it, or at least limit it and, wherever possible, keep it concealed, and even so to master it that it shall only appear as a subordinate, secondary concern of life.[101]

Since the will is a will to live, and must live on itself because there is nothing else, each individual as a part of the will is bound by it. Each individual carries in himself a disruptive contradiction; the realized desire develops a new desire (This is the creative quietude that "I" is in as the prelude opens), and so on endlessly. This condition is present because the will is a will to live, and to live, it must conquer death by perpetuating itself from itself.

Thus, the whole "world" with all its phenomena is the objectivity of the one indivisible will. The will as a whole is free, for there is no other will to oppose it, but no

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[101]Quoted in Ibid., p. 240.

part of the will is free. In similar terms, the genus is free but not species; man is free, but not single individual. The race lives on; individuals do not. The will perpetuates itself in multitude. Some individuals are sterile; others commit suicide; but enough live to perpetuate the race. The will laughs at the death of the individual.

Man is at once impetuous striving of will (whose focus lies in the reproductive system), and eternal, free, serene subject of pure knowledge (of which the focus is in the brain). Knowledge of will comes from brain, and highest manifestation of will is in brain of highest organism. But, knowledge of will is pain, and the greater the organism the greater the suffering (someone must be hanged on nails). The human spirit is a part of will. Goethe makes this clear when he says:

> Our spirit is a being of a nature quite indestructible, and its activity continues from eternity to eternity. It is like the sun, which seems to set only to our earthly eyes, but which, in reality, never sets, but shines on unceasingly.[102]

The will, however, can be conquered. It can be killed. It can be killed by stopping the source of life, by stopping reproduction. Durant, quoting excerpts from Schopenhauer makes this clear.

The sexual impulse is to be regarded as the inner

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[102]Quoted in Ibid., p. 242.

> life of the tree (the species) upon which the life of the individual grows, like a leaf that is nourished by the tree and assists in nourishing the tree; this is why that impulse is so strong, and springs from the depths of our nature. To castrate an individual means to cut him off from the tree of the species upon which he grows, and thus severed, leaves him to wither; hence the degradation of his mental and physical powers.[103]

The way to stop will is to stop reproduction; cut off the source of life, and will has nothing left on which to feed itself. Generally, and except in the case of lower species of life, the female is the incubator, the cradle of life, the will. Man is the instigator, but only after he is drawn by the same force that draws the planet.

By noting Schopenhauer's concept of will, the study is now in a position to treat the tragic intent that Jeffers asserted was to be found in The Women at Point Sur. Revelation of this intent will also act to complement the psychological and religious intents that have been treated, in some degree, this far. These are being utilized to get at the conception, the Longinus stream, of The Women at Point Sur.

Jeffers, in stating his tragic intent, revealed that tragedy is "an exhibition of essential elements by the burning away through pain and ruin of inertia and the unessential."[104] Some of this has been seen in the figure of Barclay. More can be seen as the relationship between Natalia Morhead and Faith Heriot is focused.

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Supra, p. 123.

Faith Heriot was introduced in the prelude as a young girl, burning with desire, panting for a lover, whose father was the light-house keeper and whose mother was dying of cancer of the womb.[105] (The mother's disease is symbolic. When this is recognized, Jeffers' conception is seen in miniature.) When Barclay's son dies and "Jew-beak" dies and storm eases the strain and the action begins (before the body of the work opens), Faith finds a lover, Randal Morhead, Natalia's husband. He gets her pregnant and joins the army to avoid the unpleasantness. Faith's mother takes her to a hospital under the pretext of having her own womb cancer removed. Instead, Faith receives a very clumsy operation. Faith's father appears at the wrong time and sees the situation. He drives her out, and having no place to go, she arrives at Morheads, and takes a job caring for Old Morhead, who is paralyzed from the waist down (a kind of castration) because of a fall from a horse.

Because of her operation, and because of her desertion by Randal, and because of her treatment by her father, Faith fears and hates men. But she is still hot-blooded, nymphomaniac. Natalia Morhead was love-starved and sex-starved. Her husband was in the army. She and Faith enter a lesbian relationship. This is one of the relationships that have caused critics so much trouble in speaking of The

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[105] Supra, p. 137.

Women at Point Sur. However, when one considers that Jeffers is reducing to essentials, the relationship is clearer. The lesbian relationship is sterile, a kind of castration. They have symbolically halted the source of reproduction, the means of will's perpetuation. They represent death of the will, death of God. Faith is proud, defiant, woman personified, but cut off from will. At the end of the work, Natalia kills her own four year old daughter because she is a girl, the source of misery. She rejects the will, life, God. Faith Heriot does not. Her action presents a marvelous, but superfically sordid, peripety in the best tradition of Aristotle.[106] She seduces Old Morhead. The act seems sordid because he is old, and stinks, and has been crippled throughout the work. Now he is, momentarily, rejuvenated. The act is marvelous because it represents Faith's acceptance of will, of life, of God. She replaces the source of will's perpetuating itself. She does a complete reversal. The house itself becomes symbolic of the womb that gives birth to him and from which he walks. In the Dionysiac setting where the scene occurs, it seems quite appropriate, and it becomes a gigantic monument to the will, the life-force, the urge to live.

The relationship between Faith and Natalia, as it has been presented here on the symbolic level, is very easy to

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[106] Poetics xi. 52a22.

miss, unless seen in a context like that of this study. Without the context the relationship reads as matter-of-factly, as objectively, and as clearly, as a case out of a Freudian textbook.[107] Near the end of the work, Faith explains how the relationship happened as a teacher would explain it in a lecture. She tells how she learned about such things from the girls in town, why she embarked on it and how it feels. However, soon afterwards, she gets into bed with Old Morhead, quite conscious of what she is doing, because she had read in the Bible that, when David was old, he had warmth creep into him from young maidens. This is her conversion. Through this act she renounces death by opening herself to will, to life-force, to God.

One other sex relationship seems worth noting, while the will to live and how it perpetuates itself are being employed to display the tragic elements. April Barclay goes insane after the rape by her father. A picture has already been given of her mother, and how her mother is patterned after the mother in the Scottish ballad: "Edward." Audis Barclay was frigid. Barclay, in passing, said he got two children out of her in spite of herself. Her character becomes very clear in the present context. She cut herself off from the

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[107]Squires, pp. 77-78. Squires calls the Natalia-Faith relationship as "ludicrously clear . . . as a case history. . . ." He is right in what he sees but his conclusion is debatable.

tree of her kind. She experienced a kind of mental castration. In the context of Schopenhauer, she became death, the enemy of the will. April also relates to the death of the will.

It will be remembered that Barclay thought of her as a sacrifice, a means to find God, the will. His act was motivated by a love of God. On the hill, when he met his image, he was forced to admit that while the acts he was performing (pouring poison into disciples) might be motivated by love, they were acts of hate. The same is true of his rape. The rape drove April crazy. She thought she was her brother and decided to kill Barclay. However, Onorio Vasquez, the prophet of Barclay, saw a vision in which April became the symbol of all of humanity. Now, as a symbol of all of humanity, a female symbol, she approached Barclay, but in her own mind she thought she was Edward. Like the Edward of the ballad, this one wanted to kill his father also. However, unlike the one in the ballad, this one could not. He (she) loved the father and killed herself. On the symbolic level, April, the symbol of female humanity, killed not just humanity but the will. The will is a will to live and lives on itself and reproduction is its means of perpetuation. Without "coupling bodies" there is no reproduction. Without women, there are no coupling bodies; April as a symbol of the entire female species killed god when she killed

herself.

Thus, in The Women at Point Sur, one does get an "exhibition of the essential elements through a burning away through pain and ruin of inertia and the unessential." The agents in the selection are reduced to passions. The passions are the essential parts of the human spirit, a manifestation of will. The force which draws the lover and the force which draws the planet are the same. Jeffers is trying to create essences not people. This fact helps to place both The Women at Point Sur and Robinson Jeffers, more precisely, in the tradition of permanent truth that is being revealed in this study.

Matthew Arnold helps to pinpoint this tradition when he speaks of the relationship between the ancients and the moderns. He is speaking of what it is proper for the modern to treat of concerning the past. The he refers to the modern writer.

> The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Oedipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behaviour in certain tragic situations, which engaged their passions as men; these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern poet as to a contemporary.[108]

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[108] From preface to the first edition of Poems quoted in Daniel G. Hoffman and Samuel Hynes, English Literary Criticism: Romantic and Victorian (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1963), p. 232.

Jeffers has given almost a paraphrase of this passage.[109] In light of these, passions are of the essence, for they are manifestation, in The Women at Point Sur, of will in the process of perpetuating itself.

What has been presented here, beginning with the "thought line" introduced by Barclay's denouncing of Christ and his pastorate and ending with the statement about April's death, does not exhaust the possibilities in The Women at Point Sur, but enough has been given to begin to speak of the conception. By now, the reader should be impressed by the scope and depth of perception contained in The Women at Point Sur. The method of presentation, that this study has used, has robbed Jeffers' ideas of the "instantaneous appeal" that is the reaction which Longinus stated was the badge of recognition of sublime writing.[110] However, there should be little or no question as to Jeffers' grasp of ideas. When it is also considered that all that has been said here is taking place in the mind of "I," and that what is being witnessed there is a kind of confession of "I," of events, incidents, that have occurred before they are spoken of here (in other words, it was all preordained), the strength of conception increases.

That which has been presented here from The Women at Point Sur does not appear in that work as straightforward and clear, as the attempt has been to present it here. What one

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[109] Supra, p. 42.

[110] Supra, p. 97.

gets as he reads The Women at Point Sur is "scraps and metaphors," just in the way "I" said that these would serve to tell the experience.[111] What has been said here has been pieced together from those "match-ends of burnt experience human enough to be understood."

However, they do reveal a mind of scope, depth and some grasp of ideas. That this grasp of ideas, by Jeffers, is quite "firm," in the best Longinian tradition, should become even more apparent as the study progresses through the gothic and through the "grand style." Also, the instantaneous appeal of conception should become more apparent when prosody is discussed under "grand style." This means that style can not actually be divorced from ideas, although this study makes an arbitrary division.

The controlling factor in The Women at Point Sur has not been a series of incidents, each necessary, from which either a central theme or a thesis emerges. It has been the three questions Barclay asked, the first of which was evident. For these questions, incidents were then provided which illustrate, much in the manner of an oration.[112]

When one considers that the amplifying material for Barclay's questions is given, primarily, in bits and pieces, "scraps" and "metaphors," cryptic allusions, and veiled

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[111]Appendix, lines 18-21.

[112]Supra, pp. 71-72, 82, 87-88, 145.

suggestion he sees that the reader gets his illumination in sudden flashes of pleasure. This is what Longinus meant by excellence or sublimity in writing. He also sees how The Women at Point Sur and Robinson Jeffers relate to the tradition of permanent truth. The work unfolds like a message from the Delphic Oracle, or through a glass darkly, or through a veil of "appearance." God is engaged in dialectic, thinking the "thing" out to its conclusion.

An oral reader should be able to take what has been said this far in the study and, by using it, gain a clearer understanding of The Women at Point Sur. This understanding, it is hoped, will increase as the gothic stream is considered.

## The Gothic Stream

The Longinus stream of the analysis was confined to conception. An attempt was made to visualize in terms of scope of idea and perception. Analysis through the gothic stream attempts to penetrate into the kind of subject-matter treated in The Women at Point Sur. Perhaps an analogy will make the process clearer. If the reader will think of a river with rocks projecting from the surface of the water, but made up of water that is not moving, he will get some idea of what is happening. The river represents the Longinus stream; the rocks will represent the gothic stream; the flow of the river, the current, will be turned on in

the "grand style" section. Hence, the gothic stream will deal with aspects (rocks) that serve to enhance the Longinus stream, the "flow of thought."

The gothic stream is concerned with subject-matter that produces a certain feeling in the reader. The feeling may be of several kinds, but it is caused by the objects themselves, or by ideas of the objects recollected in Enthusiastic passion. The reaction may be instantaneous, but, if so, that is incidental in the gothic. The important thing is that objects, or contemplation of objects, and not author's conception is what brings the reaction. This section also focuses on Jeffers' grasp of ideas. However, the focus is on his choice of ideas, the subject-matter, rather than his scope and fusing of ideas as was the case in the previous section.

The gothic tradition, as it has emerged in literature, has produced Frankenstein's monster, Count Dracula, "The Fall of the House of Usher," Vathek, "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and works of that order. It has rambled through medieval castles, built strange gods, forded swollen streams, been spooked by ghosts, dragged chains over floors, slept with dead lover, met incubi and succubi and stoned or hanged witches. In a more restricted sense, it has stood on shore and watched a sea in storm, felt awed by mountains, felt reverence, terror, awe, joy, in the presence of a fiery Jehovah

thundering from the clouds, or knelt in speechless joy before a manger. It deals with the grandeur of nature, or with objects of religion, or attributes worthy of God. This section looks at some of these. Already there is a problem. In The Women at Point Sur, nature is God, for God is will, life-force, storm. God is all. Thus, the study will treat of facets of God. It will begin with the more obvious, and move toward the more obscure. The most obvious, excluding the prelude is Barclay.

Barclay is a very obvious parallel of Bacchus or Dionysus, god of fertility from whose worship tragedy was born.[113] Dionysus comes as a stranger, is a fertility symbol, drives women to frenzy. There is generally a child torn to pieces in his worship, or at least, sacrificed. Sometimes it is a lamb or a goat. His most frenzied adherents are usually women and they wind up in a wild orgy. Bacchus is in some legends the child of Zeus who was given birth by Zeus after being carried during gestation in Zeus' thigh. He was thought by some to be destined to replace Zeus. He is a god of death and resurrection. The juice from his vine brings inspiration, ecstasy, madness. He had two major festivals, spring (about April) and fall (about August). Barclay's daughter and son (twins) were conceived in July or August and born in April. Dionysus usually died in the fall and was born again in the spring. He usually died in a cave.

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[113]Sir James George Frazier, The Golden Bough (New York: MacMillan Co., 1960), p. 836.

The pattern of the coming of Barclay to Point Sur country, and the pattern his stay took in that country; the sacrifice of his daughter, April, as the babe of humanity; the sacrifice of Natalia's four year old daughter, because she was a girl; the wild orgiastic fury, in which Barclay was leading his disciples, as bullets thrown to bare God, near the end of the selection; the rebirth of Old Morhead from age to youth; the mountains on fire and in earthquake; the death of Barclay in the cave--all these fit the pattern of Bacchus. They enhance the religious conception that has been revealed.

Near the end of the selection, when Barclay states that he is "Heauton timoroumenos," he becomes the self-tortured god. Odin was such a god as has already been demonstrated. He, too, was a god of rejuvenation.[114] Pain played a central part in his rejuvenation.[115] Barclay states: "Pain is the foundation." Christ, God of resurrection, had his torture on the tree, and, before it,Gethesemane.

In the old Edda of Icelandic mythology, Odin, although he was the all-father god, did not possess all knowledge. He gained it very painfully. He had to pay an eye to his uncle in order to drink at the fountain.[116] Odin's uncle was Mimir: he who thinks. Odin got the thought process from Mimir but had to renew it, and himself, every nine years. Barclay's life ran in cycles based on nine. Odin acquired his

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[114] Ibid., p. 412.

[115] Grimal, p. 371.

[116] Ibid., p. 369.

knowledge by hanging on a tree (the tree of life and knowledge) whose roots went down no one knew where.[117] Adam and Eve were placed in a garden and told not to eat of the fruit of two trees: knowledge, life. Barclay has many of the elements of Odin that dovetail very nicely with those elements in Schopenhauer that are intellect burning brightest in organisms of the highest order. Barclay felt close to what he sought when he was in a crowd, and away from it he felt alone. The tree going down fits with the castration in the lesbian relationship between Natalia and Faith.[118] Odin, too, had the rivers rise and flow north to cover chasm and chaos and create a new world. Barclay has elements of Odin and is a religious subject in the nature of what is here being called the gothic stream. The self-tortured god idea, the god who embraces opposites, is reflected by the voice of "I" through which The Women at Point Sur unfolds. The reader who experiences this work is experiencing God in a microcosm. Hegel's world spirit has been given human personality because it has been given pain.[119]

The very voice in which the selection unfolds, filtered through strains of insanity, coming through "scraps and metaphors," reflects the smaller pattern in Barclay"s mind which is a reflection of the concept of truth, as truth comes from the oracle, from the prophet, from the poet, through a glass darkly, or from an Ideal world through memory.

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[117] Ibid., p. 371. [118] Supra, p. 169. [119] Supra, p. 60.

These are all religious elements in the gothic stream.

Apollo, who was god of truth, a double-faced god, had his oracle at Delphi. He came as law-giver, as a messenger from Zeus. Rivers overflowed their banks and went north to meet him. Trees bent north to announce his coming. Apollo, also, was a twin. The wolf and lightning are among his symbols. Myrtle Cartwright, an agent introduced in the prelude and a disciple of Barclay at the burning mountain near the end of the work, was figuratively seduced by a wolf of lightning in the prelude before the storm brought release. Apollo was a god of seduction by rape. The women he possessed were taken by force, as was April by Barclay. Cassandra, who refused Apollo, was struck with the gift of prophecy and the knowledge that no one would believe her. Her messages of truth come out in "scraps and metaphors" in the way The Women at Point Sur is presented.

The gigantic virgin, that Onorio saw in his vision while "Jew-beak" was being crucified, was seduced by a God who did not ask her consent, and only came when Joseph was at synagogue. Maruca is a parallel of Mary. These are religious elements, and, in enthusiastic passion, that which is remembered in contemplation, or recollected in tranquillity, add up to experience of fear, awe, reverence.[120] They reflect how helpless man is outside the crust of his knowledge.

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[120] Supra, pp. 100-101.

Barclay's talk with his image on the mountain, when he faced his moment of truth, is a parallel of the same experience Christ had.[121] Christ rejected the offer because His kingdom was not of this world. Barclay refused and turned to love man, because he could not stand the horrible loneliness. Adam, also, even as a companion of God, could not stand the loneliness and had to have Eve. If God is all, as the work suggests, then, he, too, is alone, and the loneliness is part of the self-torture that Odin or God or Yahweh, Jehovah, or "Heauton timoroumenos," or "I" endures. These are religious elements, and are of the gothic stream. What complements these is that this feeling of being alone, of being the one, the single, runs deep through human history and also present day psychology and psychiatry. They are found in the theology of Kierkegaard[122] and in the void of Pascal.[123] They are what an individual or society feels when metaphysics and ethic are shattered.

The visions of Onorio Vasquez, the prophet of Barclay, that appear throughout the selection are of a high supernatural quality. The mystical way that word traveled up and down the coast to inform that God had come to Point Sur is centered in the gothic stream.

When Barclay has his first look at the Morhead ranch house, which was a gigantic thing, of logs and with white

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[121] Supra, p. 150. [122] Breisach, pp. 22-23.

[123] Pascal Thoughts xxv. 17, 18. "The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me."

strips of plaster or cement holding it together, one thinks of medieval castles, and dragging chains. The beautiful roses, with their sharp thorns, growing around the porch steps that are decaying (a fact of which the reader is reminded rather frequently but always incidentally) are strong parallels to the cracks that reveal the weak foundation on which the house of Usher is built. The tall chimney, with bricks coming loose that has to be propped up with a pole, adds to the gothic stream, and acts as a symbol of a wilted phallus that points the sterility of the inhabitants. It is a kind of macabre satire that gives one a laugh, but a laugh such as the drunken porter scene in Macbeth gives. When the chimney falls during the earthquake--itself a gothic element--one feels he is involved in a tale by Poe. But, the very falling of the chimney also points the resurrection of Old Morhead and the return to life, God, of Faith Heriot.

Perhaps the strongest element of the gothic, as far as the house is concerned, lies in its final appearance. This monstrous log house had been built by Old Morhead, and was over sixty years old. In the structure of the work, it had been his tomb since his fall from the horse, shortly after his son went to the army. This would mean it had been his tomb--because the fall had paralyzed him from the neck down and thus castrated him, in a fashion, cutting him off from will, the life force, God--for two years or so. He was

in a state of living death, in a tomb he built himself. When this effect is contrasted with what follows the total effect is horrendously macabre.

When Faith decides to live, to leave her lesbian relationship, to become a woman in the fullest sense of the word, she, as the young maidens did for aging King David, transplants life into Old Morhead. The house that had been his tomb has now become his womb. He has become his own mother, has built the womb that gives him new birth, and, from which, he walks, carrying the dead child of Natalia. The scene is gothic almost to the point of being nasty. The reaction is almost--and what is being described here happens very rapidly--like that which Longinus mentions concerning Hesiod's disgusting statement. Hesiod describes Sorrow thus: "From her nostrils streams of snot were running."[124] Longinus calls the effect disgusting.[125] One would get the same effect from the situation involving Old Morhead, if it were not for one fact. The agents have been stripped down to essentials. This scene is dealing with life and death, but not that of just an individual. It is symbolic of the race; the sheer size of the womb assures that. Hence, in this very gothic scene, intensely religious, if any scene ever were, the effect is not disgust, but rather awe or reverence.

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[124]Quoted in A. Gilbert, p. 155.

[125]Ibid.

However, and this is the important point, this is true only on the level of enthusiastic passion. It is not true on the vulgar level, as Dennis makes the distinction between the two passions.[126] If one is not aware of what the scene signifies, the effect is disgust, and, maybe, no effect at all; for this scene comes after more than a hundred and fifty pages of rather high, but not unbroken, intensity, increasingly insistent.[127]

The most sharply focused elements of the gothic stream are found in the prelude. It has everything. If the two major streams of the gothic are considered to be Addison's concept of magnitude and grandeur in nature, and Dennis' focus on religious matter, then the prelude is truly in the "high serious" vein.[128] It blends the religious with the natural; all are fused by the white heat of imagination into one concept: God. As if that were not enough, the concept of God is then held in the mind of God, for "I," the voice that speaks the experience, which the selection records, is on one level of thought the voice of God.

In the prelude one sees the power and grandeur of nature in the raging storm with its lightning and thunder. One views the beams from lighthouse penetrating a dark sky in short, moving bursts of light--like truth penetrating the

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[126] Supra, pp. 100-101.

[127] Supra, p. 86.

[128] Supra, p. 44.

darkness of not knowing. He feels the heaviness of the atmosphere as Vasquez's boys go to burn off the mountains, a time of year captured from Alcaeus and Hesiod, which has a feeling of pregnancy.[129] Women are lush, heavy with desire; men are drained by the heat. One sees the trees in wild panic bend to the north and rivers rise and turn north.

Momentum increases as awareness increases. This storm is the voice out of Whirlwind. It is God. The awesome power of God is felt, for this is God thinking the "thing" through to its conclusion. It is God gaining knowledge through thought, which is for God a form of self torture, as it is for man. God cannot escape the pain, for God is life and bound by the necessity to live. Jeffers' pantheism begins to emerge. A prophet appears; he sees visions; one form of God dies; a new form is being born. The gothic stream is strong in the prelude. The prelude controls all that will follow in the body.

Having seen the conception, or some aspects of the conception, involved in The Women at Point Sur, and having seen some of the gothic elements that intertwine with it, the study now seeks to reveal how these elements are fused together through "the voice," the "I" of the selection to produce the total impression which the oral interpreter will seek to re-create. This section has been called the "grand

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[129]Supra, p. 55.

style" and the reader has been cautioned to consider it as nebulous. Perhaps the reason will become clear as the grand style section of the study unfolds.

## The Grand Style Stream

The first problem is to clarify what is meant by the term "grand style." It is one of the thorniest terms in literary and rhetorical history. It has been found in the company of low, middle, grand in a context of steadily rising ornament. It has been noted by many that few compositions are ever purely one of the three styles, but are a judicious mixture of all three. "Grand style" has also been found in a context of "inkhornism" as attacked by Thomas Wilson in his Arte of Rhetorique, in the 16th century. The "grand style," for man, came to be associated with heavy ornament, moving into the tradition of beautiful style but no content. This concept developed into Euphuism. Jeffers attacked this style.[130] Blair gave an example of the type of writing that is "commonly" associated with the term "grand style." It has, in many circles, become a term to be smiled at. For that reason, there was much hesitancy about using it. But, some term is necessary to cover what is to be discussed by this section of the study. When Blair gave his example of what is commonly called the "grand style," he, also, gave an

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[130] Supra, p. 6.

example of what he meant by "grand style." He uses the same example Longinus used: "God said let there be light, and there was light."[131] This statement in some way represents what is meant by the "grand style" as it was used by Longinus, by Blair and by many rhetoricians prior to the second sophistic.

Essentially, the grand style, like any style employed by writers during this period, had to have the same characteristics as other types of style, but it had other features also. One concept grew up that style was something to add to a composition to give it adornment, much as a dress enhances the figure of a striking female. This is the thinking that led to euphuism, condemned by Blair, and attacked by Jeffers. This concept departs from the concept of style held by the Greeks: style is inherent in the subject-matter. This is the concept that can be traced through Longinus into English, reflected there in works of many through, at least, Coleridge, Arnold. These are not all, but enough to attach the tradition to Jeffers. This group felt that style was organic as was the composition.

This means that the grand style, like any style, would be clear and would be appropriate.[132] What made it rise above other styles was the subjects of which it treated.

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[131] Supra, p. 103.

[132] Aristotle Rhetoric iii.2.

This is true because these, partly, determined whether it was appropriate or not. The second factor that determined the grand style was audience. Thus "clear and appropriate to or for whom" became guiding features as well as subject.[133] For most of the writers, who have been found in the tradition to which Jeffers is related, from antiquity through Horace, Milton, Arnold, the audience has been the fit though few.[134] Some, as did Dennis, have conceded that, on the level of vulgar passion, a wide audience might possibly be reached at the same time, but if so, this is incidental. The major concern has been with a fit though few audience capable of enthusiastic passion, as Dennis defines that term.

However, what made the grand style for Longinus was the reaction which it drew from a capable reader--not necessarily the subject treated. Matthew Arnold created a kind of blending between the subject believers and the Longinus believers. He said:

> Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness . . .Let us therefore, add to what we have said, this: that the

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[133]J. F. D'Alton, Roman Literary Theory and Criticism (New York: Longman's Green and Co., 1931), pp. 114-17.

[134]Jeffers wrote not for the average educated man, but for the best minds a thousand years or more away. Supra, p. 56.

> substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further, what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior characters of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter. . . .[135]

Thus, "grand style" as the term is to be employed here includes high poetic truth and seriousness, diction, movement, and more. The poetic truth and seriousness have been suggested in the previous sections and will receive peripheral treatment here. Movement will unfold through "I"; the "more" is treated now.[136] It underlies all style. It goes back to the characteristics that Aristotle felt any style should have. It should be clear and appropriate. The focus now is on appropriate. Others have translated Aristotle's meaning with "decorum" rather than with

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[135]From "The Study of Poetry," quoted in Allen and Clark, p. 510.

[136]Diction has been touched earlier, see note 48, supra, p. 128.

"appropriateness." These two words reflect the subject of taste that was touched very early in this study. Whether anything is decorous depends on the context in which it appears, and on who is observing. This is especially true in a dynamic universe, which is the kind that has captured the concern of The Women at Point Sur.

Thus, the "grand style" section seeks to demonstrate that The Women at Point Sur treats of serious subjects of high poetic truth in diction and movement that is appropriate and clear--but to a certain audience, the traditional: fit though few. It should be noted that the term "simple" and the term "clear" are not synonyms. That which is simple is not always clear. Clearness demands some experience of a reader. Clearness is not always simple by any means. Something may be quite complex but not necessarily obscure. What one man enjoys may leave another "cold."

The second fountain from which sublimity flowed for Longinus was vigorous and inspired emotion. Jeffers, following Milton, called this impassioned speech. This study calls it "grand style."

The intent in that which follows is not to keep the suggested categories discrete and to write a paragraph or so dealing with each. The intent is to stay organic. This section seeks to show that the high seriousness, the poetic truth, the diction, the movement, the clearness, rise from decorum. Decorum deals with context. Context includes

audience and what can loosely be termed culture. The audience aspect will be assumed for the present and considered when the problem of the oral interpreter's delivery is considered. The focus is on culture and the meaning of this term should become clear as progress is made. In other words, what this section seeks to do is to demonstrate that everything which unfolds in The Women at Point Sur unfolds on the basis of "the voice" which is the "I" of the selection. To accomplish this purpose, everything that has been said from the opening of the study has been slanted in just this direction.

It has been stated that The Women at Point Sur treats of a dynamic rather than a static world. It is a world in which the voice of God speaks out of whirlwind, for the whirlwind is God. God is not anthropomorphic. God is force, the unconscious, life-force, storm, will. Will rises its highest in the human mind (or the mind of itself in the self-tortured god). Will perpetuates itself through the sex organs. Mind and sex organs are housed in an organism. One such organism is man. Man thinks, and, as Schopenhauer has said, even philosophers have children. However, man neither copulates nor thinks unless he breathes. It is breath that is life. In Old Testament doctrine, man did not become a living soul until God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. It is from the breath that we get speech; maybe logos is the better word.[137]

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[137]Durant, The Story of Civilization, II, 146-48. Durant relates logos to word, reason, energy, Heracleitus.

In the book of John one reads:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.[138]

This sets up a very close relationship between breath and speech when it is considered that the Greek word, logos, translates in many ways, energy, breath, word, logic.[139] It is a very inclusive word. However, in most mythologies, and in most religions, breath is a sacred quality, and so is speech.[140] Now, here is the crucial point: speech (discourse) adapts itself to breath. Breath does not adapt itself to speech. Breath is the more powerful.

Today, in speech departments, this same principle is taught. Speech is an overlaid, a secondary function of the body. The organs involved in the production of speech do so as a secondary function. Each has, as a primary function, some task more vital to the perpetuation of life. This is precisely the thinking that lies behind the old concept of the Greek period. The period in early Greek is not based on

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[138]John 1:1-4.

[139]Brumbaugh, p. 46. Brumbaugh points out that the Roman stoics made logos a breath or spirit present throughout the universe which they identified with God. An interesting note is that The Women at Point Sur reflects some of the stoic attributes of style: conciseness, aptness. This is especially true of the narrator when he is "conducting" his agents.

[140]Frazier, pp. 238, 269. Words are especially sacred, pp. 285-305.

a unit of thought, but is based on a unit of breath, the amount of breath pulled into the lungs on one inhalation and the amount expelled before another inhalation is required. It was not until the time of Isidore that the period became considered as, basically, a unit of thought from which grew the English sentence. This relates well to Jeffers' composition as will be presently seen. It focuses the vigorous and inspired emotion in the work.

Much of Greek poetry and rhetoric begins in the concept of the period as a unit of breath. Thought and speech ride on the breath. Sound and sense are determined by breath. This is a rather different idea than most people are accustomed to accept. Generally, breath is bent to speech and/or thought. It has been seen that Jeffers goes much further back than Isidore. More will be said of this presently.

The connection among breath, speech, thought has long been recognized in ancient poetry and religion, in the chants and hexes and dithyrambs. Gorgias, for example, has long been criticized for his periods, and so has Isocrates, and perhaps by some who were unaware of the sacred quality of breath, speech, word--logos. Sykes felt that Gorgias' contribution has not been fully understood or appreciated.[141] He felt Aristotle, in his rhetoric and poetic, continued the

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[141]E. E. Sykes, The Greek View of Poetry (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1931), p. 33.

work of Gorgias.[142] Sykes points the close relationship of rhetoric and poetry and suggests their attachment to religion. He quotes from Gorgias' Helena.

> There are indeed, "two arts"--of poetry and rhetoric--but the word is of equal value in both. Poetry is differentiated only by its obvious if unsatisfactory definition as metrical speech; its hearers are affected by "shuddering awe and tearful pity and a yearning for sorrow sympathy." The germ of Aristotle's theory is here apparent. There follows a sentence which seems especially, though not exclusively, to define the "magic" of poetry: "the inspired chants uttered by means of words become bringers of pleasure, removers of pain; the power of the chant, joining with the opinion of the soul, charms and persuades and changes it (the soul) by its magic."[143]

Sykes also points out that Pindar was considered a prophet of Zeus as well as a poet. Pindar also speaks of the doctrine of inspiration as it has been quoted from Longinus in this study. The close connections among rhetoric, poetry, prophecy, religion, philosophy, have been asserted throughout this study. The close relationship between these and the Orphic rites has been noted. The birth of drama in worship to Dionysus has been observed as has also the sacred quality of the choral odes. All of these point to close relationships among breath, speech, thought. All are suggested in logos. The relationship between these and The Women at Point Sur should be definite but, perhaps, not clear at this point. By assuming that "the voice," the "I" in the selection is

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[142] Ibid., p. 36. [143] Ibid., p. 30.

meant, on one level of thought, to be God and God is the breath of life, one would expect breath to be a controlling factor in that work. One would also expect breath to be a factor in the Greek theory of rhetoric and poetry--at least in antiquity.

Hence, the first thing to do is to see how one sought to acquire a good style, if he were a Greek, and to see if this way involves breath and if this way is reflected in The Women at Point Sur. D. L. Clark speaks of style in Greek rhetoric. It should be apparent at this point why no assumption has been made that Jeffers is either a rhetor or a poet but only that he is a maker, a writer. The freedom to employ the disciplines of both rhetoric and poetry becomes very valuable.

Clark relates that what is thought of as sentence movement in English was for Latin compositio verborum, for Greek synthesis.[144] In both words the idea of flowing is very strong. The very act of harmony is a blending, fluidity. Aristotle speaks of the concept of the period in his Rhetoric. Demetrius discusses it in his work.

Clark points out that ancient rhetoric, like the modern rhetoric based on it, envisaged two typical sentence patterns: the loose and the periodic.[145] The important thing to note here is that neither of these is based on thought as is

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[144]D. L. Clark, p. 83. [145]Ibid., p. 96.

the case of their modern counterparts in English.[146] For the Greek they were both thought of as running. The figure is running as a brook or stream not a man, or running like the breath stream. Clark summarizes the thought involved in the periodus.

> Briefly, then, the ancient periodus, unlike the modern periodic sentence which terminates when the syntax is complete, aimed at a rhythmic rounding off. Cicero calls the period circuitus (Orator 187); Quintilian prefers ambitus or circumductum (ix.iv.22) Aristotle says of the period and its rounding off: "A sentence should break off with the long syllable: the fact that it is over should be indicated not by the scribe, or by his period mark in the margin, but by the rhythm itself." (Rhetoric 11.8).[147]

This rounded period was built up of shorter units of expression. The shortest are the kommata (Latin incisa); longer units built up of the shorter ones are the kola (Latin membra). Clearly the modern marks of punctuation, the comma and the colon, take their names from the units of expression which they were first devised to set off; the comma to set off brief and incomplete units, the colon longer units, and the period to mark the full stop at the end of the sentence.[148] At least by the end of the fourth century the Artes Grammaticae were teaching the use of marks of punctuation to indicate an opportunity for taking a breath or a suitable pause in delivery at the termination of kommata or kola.[149] Not until Isidore in the seventh century was it

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[146] Ibid., p. 94.

[147] Ibid., p. 97.

[148] Ibid., p. 98.

[149] Ibid.

suggested that the points marked off the sense as well as the rhythm.[150]

This means that before Isidore and before the fourth century, thought did not govern sound nor did sound govern thought. Both were governed by breath. Breath determined how much sound and how much thought could be carried in one unit. This explains why so many Greek orators practiced so long and hard. They were working to extend their breath stream. Literally, they were trying to extend their thought. It explains the admiration, partly, that people felt for the periods of Gorgias. It may explain why Jeffers roamed the hills chanting classical passages.[151] It may, partly, explain why he became the "little Spartan" and explain, partly, why physical education played a vital role in the training of poets, rhetors, all Greek citizens. The flow of breath carried and controlled sound and thought.

Clark presents Aristotle's description of the period, part of which is excerpted here.

> The period of several members is a portion of speech complete in itself, divided into two parts, and easily delivered at a single breath--as a whole, that is; not by fresh breath being taken at the division.[152]

To this one could add that for Quintilian it was not so much the " . . . feet that are to be regarded as the flow of the

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Supra, p. 31.

[152] D. L. Clark, p. 99.

whole period."[153] Basically, the flow depended on breath. This explains the concern for hiatus. Jeffers it will be remembered was also very concerned with hiatus. His favorite punctuation mark is the colon. According to Clark, the ancients recognized two steps in the gaining of a harmonious and rhythmical speech. The first was negative: avoidance of word patterns which create disharmony (a halting of the flow of breath): hiatus, or a clashing of vowels; consonant clashes; undue repetition of similars; jingling rhymes. The second was positive: learning rhythm by imitation, practice, and listening to good examples.[154]

The present intent is not to try to explain, completely, Jeffers' style on the basis of breath, but only to suggest that it may be the basis on which the synthesis of his style depends. Breath offers a connection between his sound and his sense that is not out of keeping with the voice and life-force ideas. It makes the passionate speech. To make the connection firm, two things will be done before returning to The Women at Point Sur. Reference will be noted regarding Jeffers' punctuation, and this together with what has been gleaned from Clark will be related to Dionysius of Halicarnassus who describes style on the basis of flow, and on this basis, forms his three divisions of style. Powell, speaking of Jeffers' manner of punctuating, gives Una's observations.

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[153] Ibid., p. 100. [154] Ibid., pp. 96-97.

> Jeffers' system of punctuation is not altogether orthodox according to his wife, "he . . . places his marks to indicate if possible how the lines should be spoken with regard to rhythms and expression with no conscious thought of grammatical divisions."[155]

This would seem to suggest that the idea of breath is not incredible. The point is that breath is a determining, or governing factor, in the ancient periodus. How much sound and how much thought will appear in the unit depends on the amount of breath a man can inhale and exhale without taking in any new breath at any place where a pause in thought or sound is indicated.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus speaks of three styles in De Compositione Verborum.[156] He confesses that he can not find recognized names for them and that he will, therefore, use metaphorical terms. His terms translate into English as "austere," "smooth" or "florid," and the "harmoniously blended." The last of these quite obviously reflects the flow idea in "harmoniously." The middle is just as obvious, if one reflects that "florid" means flowering,the sense of movement, and "smooth" means free from all that would impede or obstruct progress, with "progress" meaning movement forward. "Austere" is a term of taste, of the mouth; it refers to the

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[155]Powell, p. 134.

[156]Quoted in J. D. Denniston, Greek Literary Criticism (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1924), pp. 145-50. The translator is W. Rhys Roberts.

kind of movement, as rigorous or stern, suggesting overcoming in spite of impediments. Between the austere and the harmoniously blended there lies for Dionysius the style that he approves. He confesses that he can not say how it is formed (perhaps on the basis of decorum, in the broadest sense of the term) because his mind is too divided to know the truth.[157] However, one gets an idea of the third by viewing the components of the two. Each of the two is described in terms of flow, of breath. Excerpts from each style are given beginning with the austere.

> The characteristic feature of the austere is this:-- it requires that the words should be like columns firmly planted and placed in strong positions, so that each word should be seen on every side, and that the parts should be at appreciable distances from one another, being separated by perceptible intervals. It does not in the least shrink from using frequently harsh sound-clashings which jar on the ear; like blocks of building stone that are laid together unworked, blocks that are not square and smooth, but preserve their natural roughness and irregularity.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> In respect of the words, then, these are the aims which it strives to attain, and to these it adheres. In its clauses it pursues not only these objects but also impressive and stately rhythms, and tries to make its clauses not parallel in structures or sound, nor slaves to a rigid sequence, but noble, brilliant, free. It wishes them to suggest nature rather than art, and to stir emotion rather than to reflect character. And as to periods, it does not, as a rule, even attempt to compose

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[157]His allusion of mind too divided to know the truth is from a fragment of Pindar and relates very well to what has been said about Pindar and his relationship to the tradition into which Jeffers has been placed by this study.

> them in such a way that the sense of each is complete in itself: if it ever drifts into this accidentally, it seeks to emphasize its own unstudied and simple character, neither using any supplementary words which in no way aid the sense, merely in order that the period may be fully rounded off, nor being anxious that the periods should move smoothly or showily, nor nicely calculating them so as to be just sufficient (if you please) for the speaker's breath, not taking pains about any other such trifles. Further, the arrangement in question is marked by flexibility in its use of the cases, variety in the employment of figures, few connectives; it lacks articles, it often disregards natural sequence; it is anything rather than florid.[158]

In the preceding style, the breath would show signs of labor. It would show up in hard consonant clusters like "at the last gasp of love's latest breath" or "the harsh rough verse should like the torrent roar." The vigor and strength of breath would be quite apparent. As important as this is for the present study, there is something in the preceding that is more important. It is the fact that this style does not attempt to match the flow of the breath, the period, with the thought. While this is suggestive of the open or closed couplet which is based on thought, it is more suggestive of the flow of breath in The Women at Point Sur as will be seen presently.

Dionysius notes that this style was used by many authors in poetry, history, civil oratory. It was preeminently used in epic poetry by Antimachus, Empedocles; in lyric poetry by Pindar; in tragedy by Aeschylus. The thought relation

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[158]Denniston, p. 146.

between these and Jeffers has been repeatedly suggested throughout this study.

If the reader is unsure, at this point, as to what is being sought, it would be wise to read a few lines of the prelude. By disregarding both sound and sense and thinking only in terms of breath, flowing as a wind and being impeded or aided in its flow by the amount of closure in the vocal tract, he should be able to hear and feel the flow of sound as he hears and feels the wind.

Dionysius describes the other extreme of style in this manner:

> The smooth (or florid) mode of composition, which I regarded as second in order, has the following features. It does not intend that each words should be seen on every side, nor that all its parts should stand on broad form bases, nor that the time intervals between them should be long; nor in general is this slow and deliberate movement congenial to it. It demands free movement in its diction; it requires words to come sweeping along on top of one another, each supported by that which follows, like the onflow of a never resting stream. It tries to combine and interweave its component parts, and thus give, as far as possible, the effect of one continuous utterance. This result is produced by so nicely adjusting the junctures that they admit no appreciable time interval between the words. From this point of view the style resembles finely woven stuffs, or pictures in which the lights melt insensibly into the shadows. It requires that all its words shall be melodius, smooth, soft, as a maiden's face; and it shrinks from harsh, clashing syllables, and carefully avoids everything rash and hazardous. It requires not only that its words should be properly dovetailed and fitted together, but also that the clauses should be carefully inwoven with one another and all issue in a period. It limits the length of a clause so that it is neither shorter or longer than the right mean, and the compass of the period so that a man's

full breath will be able to cover it.[159]

There is more, but enough has been quoted for present purposes. This second type style was used, according to Dionysius, by the epic poet, Hesiod; the lyric poet, Sappho; the orator, Isocrates; the tragedian, Euripides.

Thus, two styles based on the flow of breath have emerged: the austere, in which the breath moves against obstacles and battles it way with vigor and strength; the smooth, in which the breath flows easily and rapidly and almost uninterrupted or un-impeded by closure in the vocal tract. Somewhere between these two (in their harmonius blending, synthesis) lies what, for Dionysius (following Aristotle), is the best style. However, the important factor to note in all three styles is breath. The guiding principle behind breath is how long a man can speak on one exhalation.

If it were to be seen that breath is a guiding principle in Jeffers' writing, and it does in fact equate with the will, or the life-force, or the world spirit, the unity of The Women at Point Sur would depend on the "I," the voice of the work. Such is, precisely, the case. No assertion is made that this is the only factor of style by any means. It is not. All of the elements that Jeffers has said he wanted in poetry are there. Stress and quantity are vital factors

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[159]Ibid., pp. 148-49.

as will be seen when the studies by Klein and Cunningham are introduced and as their relationship to Milton and Alcaeus and the names that Dionysius of Halicarnassus has mentioned above converge in the work of Robert Bridges. However, enough has been suggested here to approach Jeffers through breath. Jeffers writes, probably, the longest line in American letters and the basis of that line is how much a man can say on one exhalation. Before taking a focus exclusively on that breath, a suggestion is given as to how the breath serves to blend sound and sense.

Mention was made earlier of the description that Hesiod gave of Sorrow: "From her nostrils streams of snot were running." Longinus calls this a disgusting figure.[160] It is. There is just such a figure in the prelude of The Women at Point Sur. It occurs in lines 85-88. The reader is told that Myrtle Cartwright is burning with the urge for a lover. Her husband is away. She has burned before and prayed to God, and he saved her each time. She is praying again, and God has sent a little sickness. One line states the symptom of her little sickness: "She suffers from constipation." Viewed in isolation, or read quickly in context, it strikes the reader much as the Hesiod figure does. However, on the level of enthusiastic passion, such is not the case. "Constipation" suggests the catharsis idea of Aristotle. Myrtle

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[160] Supra, p. 184.

Cartwright needs, and receives, later in the work, a catharsis.

Also, if one reads the passage with a view to onomatopoeia, the flow of the sound contradicts the constipation state of the body. Emphatically, the flow of the sound would not permit tightness of intestines. On such a level, the line would be satiric. However, this may not be the intent. When viewed in the context that has been built in this study, of will to live being perpetuated through reproduction, and viewing Myrtle Cartwright as one of those who will be involved in Barclay's Dionsyiac frenzy, and recognizing that life is the core of the work, another meaning emerges. Jeffers studied medicine.[161] He knew symptoms of diseases. Myrtle Cartwright's "little sickness" is her menstrual cycle. She does suffer from constipation, a rather common symptom, but a flow is present also. This fits, in the context of the selection, and the reader's reaction, if he sees the implications is instantaneous. This small incident demonstrates how breath is utilized to blend sense and sound in The Women at Point Sur. The figure, which was disgusting on the level of vulgar passion, when raised to the level of enthusiastic passion reveals conception and, thus, the Longinus stream.

Using what has preceded as a foundation, the study focuses more sharply on the "breath" of The Women at Point

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[161] Supra, p. 33.

Sur. From his study of phonetics, the oral interpreter learns that consonants and vowels in English get their definitions on the basis of placement of articulators (shapers of breath to modify flow) and the amount of closure the consonants impose on the breath stream. Hence, if one approaches the selection purely on the basis of impediments to the flow of breath, and of the vowels that alter the shape of that flow, he can begin to hear, without regard to sense at the moment, a controlled stream of breath moving through the prelude. He can feel it, almost visualize it, as it moves. Its rate is controlled, largely, by the consonant stops but also by all the consonants and vowels. Its quality is determined by the vowels and by the accents. More about this will be added later. Its length is determined by the amount of breath that a man carries on one exhalation. These exhalations set the basis for Jeffers' rhythm as it did for the Greeks, and, to a degree, as it does for French poetry.

When sense is added to this, in the prelude, the actual flow of the oral interpreter's breath, considered apart from the sound and sense it carries, will reproduce the flow of wind that is storm, life-force. When sound is added to this, the sound will also provide the vocal elements one hears in wind. When sense is added to these, they all complement to produce vigorous and inspired emotion. This reflects more of Jeffers' conception. These observations the

reader can experience for himself by reading the prelude in the appendix.

The preceding produces a view that makes good sense in light of Klein's study of Jeffers' prosody. Klein's has been the major work in this area. To understand it--in over-simplified form--an understanding of some of the basics of English poetry are necessary. Yvor Winters states the patterns that measurement has taken in English verse.

> The poetic line as I understand the subject, has at one time or another been constructed according to four different systems of measurement: the quantitative, or classical system, according to which a given type of line has a given number of feet, the feet being of certain recognized types and being constructed on the basis of the lengths of component syllables; the accentual, or Anglo-Saxon, system, according to which the line possesses a certain number of accents, the remainder of the line not being measured, a system of which free verse is a recent and especially complex subdivision; the syllabic, or French, system, according to which a line is measured solely by the number of syllables which it contains: and the accentual-syllabic, or English, system, which in reality is identical with the classical system in its most general principles, except that accented and unaccented syllables displace long and short as the basis of constructing the foot, and that pyrrhic and spondaic feet seldom occur and might in fact be regarded as ideally impossible because of the way in which accent is determined. . . .[162]

The pattern in which the meter is determined by the number of stresses or accents in a line without regard to the number of unaccented syllables was discussed by Coleridge in the preface of the 1816 edition of Christabel. Coleridge

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[162]George Hemphill, ed., Discussions of Poetry: Rhythm and Sound (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1961), p. 60.

said the number of syllables in a line could vary from seven to twelve but the number of heavy accents would be four. Drawing on Coleridge, Robert Bridges discussed Milton's prosody in terms of counting number of accents, and growing out of this discussion, Bridges formulated principles (rules) for stress prosody.[163]

Taking the work of Coleridge and Bridges, a summary of which was made by Arthur Symons, Klein concluded that the key to Jeffers' prosody lies in this system. He believed that Jeffers' prosody can be explained on the basis of alternating ten and five stress lines. Klein said:

> For general, all-round use, involving narration, description and philosophical comment, the most useful pace seems to be the ten-stress line alternating with five. The shorter lyrics seem to require variety which an alternating or otherwise varied pattern will give in small.[164]

In an effort to get confirmation, denial, or comment, Klein wrote to Jeffers mentioning Coleridge, Bridges, and the conclusion that he had drawn. Jeffers replied:

> People talked about my "free verse" and I never protested, but now I am quite touched to hear that someone at last has discovered the metrical intention in it. Thank you.
>
> I never before read the passage you quote from Robert Bridges, but a short essay on Bridge's poetry by Arthur Symons made me familiar with the sense of it, fifteen years or so ago; and no doubt it

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[163]Robert Bridges, Milton's Prosody (Oxford: Henry Frowde, 1901).

[164]Klein, pp. 59-60.

> worked in my mind. Before that I had read a prefatory note of Coleridge to his Christabel, in which the same idea is produced.--I've just looked it out: "Preface to the 1816 edition. - - - meter not properly speaking irregular . . . new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents not the syllables" . . . etc.--of course the principle is not quite new since Anglo-Saxon verse built upon it--probably primitive Germanic verse in general--I don't know. No doubt you are already familiar with these instances.
>
> It seems to me (as you have remarked) that the counting of stresses is not enough, without some regard to the quantities of the unstressed syllables, to make well-sounding lines. But there I can't propose any rule, it is more a matter of ear and rhythmic sense. A line made up of syllables like "many" or "easy" couldn't balance rhythmically with a line made up of syllables like "storm-bent" "oak-trees," though the number of stresses were the same.
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> Several modern poets especially in England--Rupert Brooke for one--have caught Coleridge's and Bridge's thought, or found it out for themselves, but it seems to me that there remains ("an infinite field of rhythm as yet untouched") or hardly touched. English is a language of very diverse and tolerably stable quantities besides being a strongly accented language, great and new things might be done if we had time and ear.[165]

Klein did not attempt to treat of the quantitative elements in Jeffers' verse. However, his identification of the metrical accent was a major contribution. Involved in the problem of quantity is the problem of Jeffers' punctuation. This has been a problem for Jeffers' critics. Klein is not quite sure what to do about it. He offers purely as a hypothesis:

> It may be that the singularly sparse and unemphatic use of punctuation which characterizes--and to some

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[165] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

> people, obscures--all of Jeffers' later poems, may be connected with the need for allowing the sense of the line to make its own rhythm, uninhibited by any grammatical pauses or merely conventional separations. Certainly the meagre punctuation, the "comma blunders," the apparently indifferent use of semicolon or colon, etc. cease to have hindering effects after the familiarity has taken away the novelty.[166]

However, from the amount of material that has been directly quoted in this study from Jeffers' letters and other sources, one thing should be clear; Robinson Jeffers knew the English language. He knew its system of punctuation. He also knew the classical style, as has been suggested earlier through the similarity between his prose style and that of his father. The punctuation system suggested by Klein fits quite well in describing the kind of punctuation that would be needed to govern the flow of breath discussed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus earlier in this section. It fits the system discussed by Clark.[167]

C. C. Cunningham continued the work of Klein and subjected many selections to rigid analysis by graduate students in oral interpretation at Northwestern. The examinations were made on the basis of marking the selections for oral reading, by actually reading them aloud.[168] The readers were not beginners, and more than thirty were used on some of the same selections. On the basis of his study, Cunningham took Jeffers out of the class of free verse writers like

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[166]Ibid., p. 63. [167]Supra, p. 196.

[168]Cunningham, Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXII, 353.

Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg. Cunningham said:

> There is not the constant feel of metrical beat in free verse, but there is that feel in Jeffers' poetry. The poems presented here [those used in the article] do not impart this feeling so much as do his long narrative and dramatic poems, such as "Tamar," "Roan Stallion," "Dear Judas," or "The Women at Point Sur."[169]

There is that constant feel of a metrical beat in The Women at Point Sur. Cunningham, on the basis of his experiments, concludes that Jeffers has invented a new kind of blank verse. It is built on the beat of iambic-anapestic duple meter.[170] It gives the effect of some of Swineburn's verse but without the rime. Cunningham ends by saying that Jeffers has become the voice of his age, the spokesman for its Zeitgeist and has captured its rhythm.[171]

By utilizing Klein's five and ten stress alternating lines, one goes a long way toward understanding the stress in The Women at Point Sur. By employing Cunningham's iambic-anapestic duple meters one can also account for some of the unaccented syllables. However, even by utilizing both, one is still nonplused concerning the quantitative elements. Klein has recognized the complexity of that problem and, as has been seen, suggested a relationship between punctuation and sense to explain it. This study cannot explain the quantitative elements; it can suggest how to read them; it can

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[169] Ibid., p. 356.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid., p. 357.

also point to their basis.

This study endorses the work of both Klein and Cunningham as aids toward understanding the meter in The Women at Point Sur. It takes Klein's idea regarding punctuation, but applies it to breath rather than sense. The punctuation marks are those of the Greek period for controlling the flow of breath. The breath, governed by punctuation, carries the sound. The sound governed by stress carries the sense. The underlying core, however, is the breath as a moving force. It makes the "impassioned speech."

This becomes clearer if explained through French poetry. Winters has stated that one of the four types of meter to come into English was based on the counting of syllables. The French count syllables and hold the line by rime. Also, one finds in French much elision as in, for example, les enfants. The s becomes z and the phrase becomes a continuous flow (and flow is important), much in the same manner as that described by Dionysius in smooth style.

Thus, while the counting of syllables in The Women at Point Sur may not reveal a great deal about meter, it reveals much about the breath that carries both sound and sense. Coleridge said the number of syllables could vary from seven to twelve but there would be four accents. The important numbers are seven and twelve. There is a variation here of five syllables. This gives a poet a great deal

of freedom in unstressed syllables. It would give him more if his accents were five and ten. The twelve of Coleridge is a good number to focus on.

Keeping the preceding in mind, the prelude to The Women at Point Sur is approached. The opening two lines are focused.

> I drew solitude over me on the lone shore,
> By the hawk-perch stones; the hawks and the gulls
> are never breakers of solitude.[172]

The twelve syllables in the first line meet Coleridge's statement precisely. The second line runs nineteen. If each of these lines is considered as a member of a period, and a simple period has two members, one would expect to find periods of twenty-four, thirty-eight, and thirty-one syllables. The last number would be there because lines one and two make a period. These periods would not be the only ones employed, for Coleridge has said twelve syllables in a four stress line. Jeffers employs five and ten. This means fifteen or thirty syllables or more.

The full significance of this period becomes felt when one begins to consult speech texts on breath control. Eisenson, giving advice on breath control said:

> You should be able to count to at least twenty on a sustained exhalation. In any event, continue to practice until a count of at least fifteeen is attained. With continued practice, a count of twenty to thirty (at the rate of two numbers per second) should become possible after a normal inhalation and

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[172]Jeffers, The Women . . ., p. 9.

a full thirty-second count after deep inhalation.[173] Dolman gives twenty-five seconds as the length of time one should be able to sustain a tone on one breath.[174] Brigance thinks in terms of twenty to thirty counts on one breath and beyond without exhausting the breath supply.[175]

In light of breath count, one, by counting the first few lines in the prelude, begins to see the following syllable count emerging: 12, 18, 15, 19, 16, 21, 12, 19, 13, 13, 25, 11, 24, 12, 24, 11, 24, 11, 26, 9, 20. All are well within the limits that have been set. If one thinks in terms of periods, members, parts of members, he begins to really sense the periodicity of The Women at Point Sur.

It should be, at least, partly, evident that breath plays a vital role in the work. As a result, the argument for the voice, "I," as being the unifying factor in the selection becomes stronger. When one adds the basic prosody to the conception vein that revealed the voice of maker, the voice of will, life-force, one manifestation of which is breath, logos, which carries speech, the immediate reaction is instantaneous and pleasurable. This is more evidence of the

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[173]Jon Eisenson, The Improvement of Voice and Diction (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1958), p. 38.

[174]John Dolman Jr., A Handbook of Public Speaking (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1944), p. 116.

[175]William Norwood Brigance, Speech: Its Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1961), p. 345.

conception in The Women at Point Sur.

If, as has been suggested, the "I," the voice, of the selection is the unifying factor, how, in addition to conception and to elements of prosody, does the unity occur? This will now be demonstrated, and it is perhaps the largest contribution to the "grand style." The answer is suggested in one phrase Jeffers uses to describe Jesus: objective narrative.[176]

It has been noted that The Women at Point Sur has been attacked on the basis of plot as not abiding by the principles of Aristotle. However, Aristotle, in discussing plot, was talking in terms of drama, of action being presented purely on the basis of what was revealed in speeches and could be staged. He was quite well aware of the fact that conditions were different for the epic. This does not mean that The Women at Point Sur is epic. It may or may not be. It does mean that it is not exclusively drama. It more nearly approaches what Plato called mixed: partly narrative, partly drama.[177] However, it also goes beyond this, and in Onorio's visions, Barclay's soliloquies and in the narrator's direct addresses, becomes monody, or even dramatic monologue, and oratory. What the preceding means is that firm control is needed to keep the selection from disintegrating into

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[176]Supra, pp. 26-27.

[177]Plato Republic iii.392c; see also, Aristotle Poetics iii.48a19.

chaos. It has firm control. The Women at Point Sur is always spoken through the voice of the narrator, although it may be the imaginative side letting the agents speak; it is always filtered through the consciousness of "I."

In many places, the presence of "I" is felt stronger than in Fielding's Tom Jones or Joseph Andrews. In others the reader becomes so involved with Barclay or one of the other agents that his awareness of "I" is almost forgotten. But, "I" never releases Barclay, completely, even in Barclay's maddest moments. One way to acquire the impact of the "I" is to look at the opening scene of the body. However, as this is done, it is imperative to be aware that, unless the prelude has been read, and in some measure understood, the centrality of "I" is lost; and when "I" breaks the illusion in part XII, unless the reader is acquainted with the prelude, his appearance seems out of place, and a serious flaw in the work.

The most important thing to note in the opening scene is the uneasy state of equilibrium that exists between the narrator and Barclay (imagination).

> The Rev. Dr. Barclay outgrew his profession,
> He stood on the platform, his hands like wires in a wind, silent, the eyes coals
> In the dead face. "I have nothing for you." The face began twitching, he felt it. "I have something to tell you.
> This place is dead, it is dead." He saw the narrow face of Audis his wife shine white by his child's.
> "I am not a poor man, I haven't hung by the salary. I have served here ten years, I have made great

friendships, I've honestly
Done what I thought was due. The creed died in my mind, I kept the pastorate, I thought the spirit,
The revolutionary spirit of Christ would survive, flame the more freely. There are many others
Leaders of churches have sunk the myths and swim by the ethic. Love: and not resist violence: which one of us
Holds to that now? Dared name it this time last year?" The assistant pastor
Was present, and suddenly standing in the aisle: "Dr. Barclay is ill.
The long strain of his pastorate, his labors and bereavement: he must rest . . ." But Barclay twitching his head, the lean face
Like white fire in the dimness through the colored windows: "I am well, and enough rested, this dim air
Has heard enough lies." The other one still attempting to speak, "Sit down, will you, I am not patient."
And he said to the people: "You are kindly and simple, you made war when they told you to, you have made peace when they told you.
You obey the laws, you are simple people, you love authority. I have authority
Here, and no man will hinder me while I make my confession. I have been a blind man leading you blind.
Nobody can build the truth on lies. My blindness is not removed.
I have nothing true to tell you, no profession but ignorance, I can tell you what's false. Christianity is false.
The fable that Christ was the son of God and died to save you, died and lived again. Lies. You'd swallow
The yarns of idle, fishermen, the wash of Syria? You are very simple people. It is time to scour off.
I tell you," he said: but the people were all moving, the great pipes of the organ
Poured into voice behind him, sonorous and ordered
Storm-fall roaring his words down, "repent, repent. Repent," through loops and moments of the noise they heard him
Crying, words glittered like hands through a net, having no meaning. Men moved in the aisles, Barclay remembered
The electric switchboard back of the platform, he strode to the back, threw the main switch, the organ groaned silent.

Like a shot beast.[178]

In this scene, as it opens, the narration and description are delicately balanced. The length of Barclay's speeches establishes that Barclay will, partly, assume expository responsibilities. At the same time, the narrator's description and the narrator's use of the first utterance by Barclay, a short one, and the narrator's use of the assistant pastor, all serve to show that the narrator will be the conductor, the puppeteer, of what follows. However, the objective tone of the narrator is contradicted by his diction. Words like "twitching,""poured," "storm-fall"; four similies, each introduced by "like"--these serve to show that the narrator, "I," has dramatic, emotional elements also. The pace, the actual flow of breath, and the sound, also, serve to give "I" dramatic elements. Hence, in the first scene, the narrator presents himself as predominently rational, but interspersed with emotional elements, and Barclay, the agent, as counterpart or, perhaps, alter-ego, is emotional, but interspersed with rational elements. The telling will be shared, but it will be under the direction of "I," for it is in the mind of "I" that the entire work occurs.

From this opening scene that reflects a situation of uneasy equilibrium between the reason of "I" and his imagination (reflected in his agent), the work moves forward.

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[178]Jeffers, The Women . . ., pp. 19-21.

Barclay is allowed to speak more and more; he is allowed to have the emphasis and, thus, the attention of the reader. However, the narrator breaks those speeches wherever he chooses, to insert bits of description and exposition. These insertions also serve another function. They reveal the narrator's attitude and tone. For example, during one such insertion, Barclay is described.

> He seemed to have passed into a vacuum, no means, no resistance, valueless freedom like a vain ghost's in the air.[179]

This statement (almost a series of statements) does describe Barclay's condition, but it also, through its piling up of phrases and through its simile, reveals that "I" is being effected, perhaps affected, by the details he is presenting.

Hence, the narrator mixes dialogue with exposition, and this mixture, when the rate of presentation and the manner of presentation are considered, serve to reveal the narrator's personal concern. This becomes important as the agents come more and more to the front and the "I" begins to recede. However, "I" never disappears. He acts much like a good symphony conductor introducing each instrument into the performance, just at the precise time and place. He either introduces each speech by an agent, or each scene in which several agents will speak. In the latter case, he will insert his presence in short bits of description or exposition.

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[179] Ibid., p. 23.

When a scene is highly charged, the presence of "I" is seen in short tag lines such as the following: "and Barclay," "she said bitterly," "but Barclay answered," "she said," "then Barclay," "Barclay on the mountain," "and Barclay gently." These tags act as stage direction, but stage direction always revels the presence of a director when it goes beyond the identifying of a particular speaker. These do; not much, but they do go just a bit beyond the identifying of the next speaker. Any tag line, taken alone, would not reveal much but when one considers they are sprinkled like pepper and salt throughout the work, and they occur at the moments necessary to direct the flow of thought, he sees the deceptively loose, but actually very rigid, pattern in which the agents are moving.

Thus, having been alerted by the prelude, and having followed the system through which "I" controls the agents, the reader is not at all unprepared when "I" very forcefully takes the attention back in part XII. This is the scene that occurs after Barclay has met his image on the mountain, and made his decision to turn to love humanity. "I" takes the emphasis and returns the reader's mind to the thought and events of the prelude. "I" says:

> Here were new idols again to praise him;
> I made them alive; but when they looked up at the face before they had seen it they were drunken and fell down.
> I have seen and not fallen, I am stronger than the idols,

But my tongue is stone how could I speak him? My
blood in my veins is seawater how could it catch
fire?
The rock shining dark rays and the rounded
Crystal the ocean his beam of blackness and silence
Edged with azure, bordered with voices;
The moon her brittle tranquility; the great phantoms,
the fountains of light, the seed of the sky,
Their plaintive splendors whistling to each other:
There is nothing but shines though it shine darkness;
nothing but answers; they are caught in the net of
their voices
Though the voices be silence; they are woven in the
nerve-warp.
One people, the stars and the people, one structure;
the voids between stars, the voids between atoms,
and the vacancy
In the atom in the rings of the spinning demons,
Are full of that weaving; one emptiness, one presence:
who had watched all his splendor
Had known but a little: all his night, but a little.
I made glass puppets to speak of him, they splintered
in my hand and have cut me, they are heavy with
my blood.
But the jewel-eyed herons have never beheld him
Nor heard; not the tall owl with cat's ears, the
bittern in the willows, the squid in the rock in
the silence of the ocean,
The vulture that broods in the pitch of the blue
And sees the earth globed, her edges dripping into rain-
bow twilights: eyed hungers, blind fragments: I
sometime
Shall fashion images great enough to face him
A moment and speak while they die. These here have
gone mad; but stammer the tragedy you crackled
vessels.[180]

This statement by "I" seals the fate of the agents and indirectly the fate of "I." It traps them, and him, between the human spirit and humanity. This is precisely the point Van Doren pinpointed in his review.[181] This is the contradiction of opposites found in the Faustian tradition.[182]

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[180] Ibid., pp. 72-73.

[181] Supra, p. 121.

[182] Supra, p. 127.

It is the contradiction found in the self-tortured god who learns by suffering. Man's dilemma is that he sees enough to know there are gods, but he can not be one. "I" spoke because he loved the human spirit but hated humanity.[183] His dilemma is that you can't have one without the other. Without the one there is no many, but without many, one can not live beyond his own life span.

From this point on, the vessels stammer the tragedy, but they also reveal the tragic beauty and the comic beauty of man and of God's situation. The final scene where Barclay goes off to die is quiet and represents an easing of the tension--within "I." The "I," the Maker or the maker, has found new knowledge through suffering--no serious thought is without pain for thought occurs in an organism capable of pain--, a knowledge that humanity dies, but the human spirit goes on.[184] However it goes on in the temporal, the transient, humanity. The human spirit could not live without the death of humanity. The soul needs its bodies. These are the opposable elements in the eternal dialectic, carried on logos.

To this study, no full understanding of The Women at Point Sur seems possible unless the centrality of "the voice," the "I" is realized. "I" furnishes the emotion. The next chapter deals with the problems of making the centrality of "I" the basis for a reading of The Women at Point Sur.

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[183] Supra, p. 131. [184] Supra, p. 43.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE SECOND APPROACH: RE-CREATING THE WORK

The intent of this study, from its inception, has been to reach a clearer understanding of Jeffers' power as a writer by assuming that "singularity," which includes particularity and puzzling strangeness but in this study emphasizes puzzling strangeness, in some way embodies that power. The study has sought to reveal the singularity by tracing it through The Women at Point Sur. Much that the analysis has revealed was suggested by Jeffers in his statement regarding pantheism. Much that the analysis has revealed can be summarized by another statement by Jeffers, which will also serve as additional evidence that the general approach is not without validity.

In 1934, in answer to some questions posed by Sister Mary James Power for her book Poets at Prayer, Jeffers made the following response.

> I believe that the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, influencing each other, therefore parts of the organic whole. (This is physics, I believe, as well as religion). 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. The whole is in all its parts so beautiful, and is

> felt by me to be so intensely in earnest, that I am compelled to love it, and to think of it as divine. It seems to me that this whole alone is worthy of the deeper sort of love; and that there is peace, freedom, I might say a kind of salvation, in turning one's affection outward toward this one God, rather than inward on one's self, or on humanity, or on human imaginations and abstractions--the world of spirits.[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to bring all of the elements that the study has revealed, and all that Jeffers has suggested, into the centrality of "I," "the voice out of the whirlwind," and the voice of The Women at Point Sur. The purpose will be accomplished by formulating a plan for delivery of the work by an oral interpreter. This plan will make it possible for the voice to be felt and heard. The total effect sought is not unlike that which would have been produced by an ancient orator who, among other things, utilized prosopopoeia (the making of characters, agents) and ecphrasis (graphic description) to render his discourse effective.[2] Barclay's three questions are the text that guide the discourse in The Women at Point Sur.[3] The voice is the orator relating what has happened inside himself.

The first section treats of the interpreter's general approach to the selection, raising issues dealing with the interpreter's assets and liabilities, his responsibility to the selection, and his responsibility to the audience. The

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[1]Quoted in Klein, p. 9.

[2]D.L. Clark, pp. 199-203. [3]Supra, p. 145.

second section raises issues that grow out of the interpreter's approach to the delivery of The Women at Point Sur. The third section reveals the plan which seeks to suggest ways of treating the issues that have been raised.

## Approach by the Interpreter

Because the interpreter is to serve as a kind of medium through which The Women at Point Sur receives animation, the interpreter is torn between two duties. He has a responsibility to the work, and he has a responsibility to the audience. When one considers that The Women at Point Sur is in the tradition of the sublime, he sees that the problem of delivery is greatly increased. Dennis included two levels of acceptance in this tradition: the vulgar and the enthusiastic. This means that, before the interpreter can make any decisions about how to read, he is confronted with three facets: the work itself, an audience of vulgar passion, an audience of enthusiastic passion. When it is considered that the terms "vulgar" and "enthusiastic" are not solid, but have varying degrees in each, the problems of approach multiply.

If the interpreter turns his attention from vulgar and enthusiastic to the composition, the problem of approach is just as delicate, just as complex. If the interpreter elects to eliminate the prelude, his approach will be through Barclay. When this happens, the selection loses much of its

philosophical appeal, much, also, of its religious appeal. It falls to the level of Shelley's Cenci and assumes much of the same morbid quality that is so difficult--but not impossible--to overcome. Also, by taking this approach, the interpreter is faced with the problem of how to handle the sudden appearance of "I" in part XII, and other places without destroying ,completely, any chance for unity of effect. If the prelude is excluded, all of the breakthroughs of "I" become direct addresses to the listener, and the listener feels as if he were being preached at. The illusion has been shattered. This problem can be seen quite clearly, if each piece of criticism, that has been offered in this study, concerning The Women at Point Sur, is considered as being representative of a particular audience, personified by that piece of criticism. If each piece is read in an effort to detect the attitude of the critic, one gets an idea of the scope of the problem of approach to delivery.[4]

In addition to the selection, itself, and the two levels of audience, another problem to be considered is the approach by the interpreter. He must consider his assets and his liabilities as a reader. Because he has, basically, nothing more than his voice and body and the manuscript, with which to accomplish his task, he must give ample consideration to these. Assuming that he is normal in voice and body,

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[4]Supra, pp. 115- 20.

he is still faced with the problem of manuscript. In the case of The Women at Point Sur, this is a major problem. A work of some one hundred and seventy-five pages to be animated by a single reader, in which agents must be reasonably distinct because of the way dialog is written, creates a problem of production that almost equals the longer works of Eugene O'Neil. These factors raise the question whether the work can be produced.

In view of the foregoing, it seems practical for this study to say that any single reader will have to decide on his approach on the basis of the demands made by the work, his assets and liabilities as a reader, his audience. This includes the sheer length of the manuscript, which involves, precisely, those problems stated by Poe.[5] This study assumes an ideal interpreter. It will treat of problems this ideal interpreter would face in presenting the selection to various audiences. The process of development will be upward through vulgar to enthusiastic, as Dennis defines those terms.[6] Thus, the final position to be discussed will be that of problems raised for the ideal reader, for an ideal audience, under ideal conditions. And, while recognizing that each interpreter will make his individual approach to the selection, the approach of this study to the delivery of The Women at Point Sur is a graduated approach.

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[5]Supra, pp. 47-48.

[6]Supra, pp. 100-101.

## Problems in Re-Creation

On the most elementary level, the initial problem is that of deciding for whom the selection is to be re-created. On the lowest level of passion, with a vulgar audience piously religious, the problem would be how much, if any, of The Women at Point Sur could be presented. Most assuredly, the religious ideas and treatment of sex would be found to be objectionable or repulsive. They have been. One critic said of the work:

> Not since the later Elizabethans has there been such a witches' dance of incest, suicide, madness, adultery, and Lesbianism.[7]

There would be some embarassment felt by this audience, but there would, also, be attraction. The effect would be somewhat like that felt by a fundamentalist protestant congregation, when the minister takes his text from some of the more erotic passages of "The Songs of Solomon" or "Psalms." The reaction would be similar to some of the popular reaction to the "monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee in 1927, or a trial based on the same issues held in Arkansas in the 1960's, or the current "God is dead" movement. The problem of length would be a large factor, and the high, increasing intensity revealed by the voice would lead to frustration, to puzzling strangeness. For this audience, whether to read or not becomes a very serious question.

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[7]Quoted in Powell, p. 43.

On essentially the same level, but with an audience not religiously oriented, the reaction would be similar to those found in reading Peyton Place, Elmer Gantry, or the popular reaction to The Chapman Report, or the work of Alfred Kinsey and his associates. The passion would appeal, but the intensity of the voice, the allusions, the length, the prolixity, when viewed from this level of audience, would result in tiredness, frustration, puzzling strangeness.

Within these two extremes of vulgar reaction the interpreter would find gradations, but, at this level, the problems to be faced are those created by lack of cultural background, prejudices, and preconceptions, at the most elementary level of thought and feeling. These could be oversimplified and summed up as a lack of background on the part of the audience.

The problem suggested here in the vulgar audience is not new, nor can it be dismissed as of no concern to the interpreter. It is one of the thorniest problems in criticism. It is as old as the concept of the mass audience as opposed to the "fit though few." This problem is central to the concept of style. It is decorum or appropriateness, but to whom? D'Alton speaks of the concept.

> The concept of Decorum was primarily an aesthetic one, rooted in man's sense of the order and harmony that constituted the beauty of the visible universe, but the concept soon came to be applied to the sphere of human conduct, and, particularly by the stoics, was made the norm to guide men in the

> various duties of their lives. In the realm of Art, Decorum, which Milton calls "the grand masterpiece to observe," was regarded as a principle to be respected above all others. As applied to literature, it was considered by many to be the supreme virtue of style. A style that was to be successful in making its appeal, and in carrying conviction, must scrupulously fulfill the precept of propriety. Aristotle, as one would expect from a critic of his temperament, lays chief stress on clearness as the essential element of style, but he is careful to assign a place of almost equal importance to Decorum. Dionysius declares that this virtue is one of the sources of beauty and charm in composition. Hence it is not surprising that the principle of Decorum, in its many aspects was invoked in the criticism of poets and prose writers, and often was made the touchstone of their success or failure.[8]

The principle of Decorum was applied to both poetry and prose, and it was applied to the parts of a selection, to the speaker, to the subject, to the audience.[9] In a word, the principle of Decorum is contained in the third of Barclay's questions. Thus, the interpreter can no more neglect the concept than could the writer. Dennis attacked the problem by attaching "vulgar" to passions that all men have in common, but are the guiding principles of the mass. He attached "enthusiastic" to the passions held by those whom Horace would place in the audience of the fit though few. Even for Longinus, who seemed to think in terms of all men, there was a reservation on the "all." He restricted himself to all men who have had an education of a similar type, the type which this study has demonstrated that Jeffers had. Thus, an

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[8]D'Alton, p. 115.

[9]Ibid., p. 117.

interpreter must, at least, give consideration to the mass, as well as to the fit though few, even though Jeffers wrote for the latter.

On the first level of the enthusiastic audience, the reaction to The Women at Point Sur would be similar to the reaction which is seen in a college English class that has read, or tried to read, William Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury, or a group of college students who have read something by Virginia Woolf, or James Joyce. There is an awareness that something is happening or has happened, and there is a feeling of being moved emotionally, and of being given a conversation piece for the future, but there will be uncertainty and uneasiness as to what or how. With this audience, the problem of length, the problem of obscurity, the problem of intensity, the problem of message being received and amplification being tiring, is present. Much of this is caused by the sheer complexity of The Women at Point Sur. It is to be experienced, not to be absorbed and understood, at the first hearing or reading. The lowest level of enthusiastic passion will get much of the impact of the selection, but it will be bothered by trying to decide how it received that impact. These represent problems for the interpreter.

The upper extreme of the enthusiastic level, and, what is actually, the upper extreme of a continuum, of which four points are being touched, is the level that has been

called throughout history, perhaps, "the fit though few." In history, this audience has been called by many names, for example, Aristocrat, Gentleman, Patrician, Elite, good. Tragically, these terms have also been associated with social status, wealth, and birth. Such is not the association made at present. The audience, suggested, refers to those, who through painful and strenuous application, have made themselves familiar with human affairs, and in the process have developed a kind of split personality which enables them to appreciate what is happening and to be aware, and critical, of how it is happening, and to do these simultaneously.[10] This represents the ideal audience, and, even with it, the interpreter of The Women at Point Sur faces problems.

The major problem is that of length, as Jeffers very well realized.[11] The production time, even at the rapid rate which the selection moves, would exceed several hours. These hours would be packed with emotional tension and mental application. Even for this group, it may be wise to present the selection at two or even three settings, much as was done in the case of some of the epics of ancient Greece. However, this study, for purposes of unity, assumes ideal reader and ideal audience and treats the work in its

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[10]One could almost say those who have gone through the process of Odin, the self-tortured god.

[11]Supra, p. 109. He called it a "dinosaur in a deer park."

entirety, when this study deals with the upper level of the enthusiastic passions.

By assuming the problem of length can be solved, the interpreter could turn his attention to other problems inherent in the selection. The first and most central is unity. The unity of The Women at Point Sur, when the work is viewed in its entirety, including prelude, revolves around the voice, the "I." The major problem faced by the interpreter, who is re-creating for the ideal audience, is to find a way to emphasize the "I." The "I" must be able to take stage center, when necessary. He must be able to fade, but never to disappear, when occasion demands. The presence of "I" must always be felt, sometimes on the basis of dual focus with Barclay.

The voice of "I" carries The Women at Point Sur; it must be heard as well as its presence be felt. The voice of "I" must be heard as the voice through which all agents emerge. This means "I" is the only character that receives intense ethos, intense characterization, in the sense that Aristotle means in his Poetics. The relationship of Barclay to "I" presents a special problem, for on one level, Barclay personifies the imaginative part of "I," as opposed to narrator, who is a personification of reason. Thus, Barclay will need some characterization, but always subordinate to the reason, the narrator, the "I" who controls

the flow of energy, breath, sound, thought, all of which is being filtered through the personality of "I" to listener or reader.

The remaining names are just agents; they are types; they represent the universal but not the particular, not human beings but human passions. They are "new wine-skins," too weak to hold the old wine: the knowledge that men and gods die, but man and God are eternal. They are seen and heard, but should be felt as ideas, as vague shapes through which eternal passions flow. In a manner of speaking, they are allegorical. How to handle them as agents involved in action, but without giving them too many individual qualities becomes a problem for the interpreter. There will have to be contrast between agents, for in many cases they stand as opposites as do Barclay and "I." For example, in the lesbian relationship between Faith Heriot and Natalia Morhead, Faith is the active agent, the male. Natalia is the submissive, the passive. Natalia submits to Randal, her husband; to her daughter; to Faith. She is passim in the sense of "allowing to happen to." In English composition she would be comparable to passive voice rather than active. She acts only when she kills her daughter, which is really a larger kind of submission, for it represents the acceptance of death, the enemy of life-force.

Faith, as her opposite, is active, and when she commits a passive act of submission to Old Morhead, this is

really a positive act, for it represents her negation of death, and her acceptance of the life-force. However, neither Faith nor Natalia is any more than allegorical of a particular passion: Faith to live, Natalia to die. Thus, they are agents not people, and, as such, while they are to be contrasted, they are not to be animated beyond a minimum.

It seems a long road has been traveled to arrive at a very simple conclusion. Everything that has been said from the inception of the present study has been directed toward revealing what is the key problem in the interpretation of The Women at Point Sur. With a restatement of that problem this section of the present chapter closes. The key problem to be solved in the interpretation of The Women at Point Sur is the problem of "I." Once this is done, most of the other problems dissolve or become minor considerations.

## Solution to the Problems of Re-creation

It will be the intent of this section to suggest answers to the problems raised in the previous section. By doing so, the plan for the oral interpretation is revealed. The basic assumptions remain the same. Each individual interpreter will have to make his own decisions on the basis of his own assets and liabilities, on the basis of his particular audience, on the basis of the selection itself and of the length of that selection. However, suggestions can be given to help answer the questions that have been raised.

On the most elementary level of vulgar passion, there is some question as to whether the work should be read for such an audience. One could be reasonably certain that, if a reading were made in a community composed largely of this type, the interpreter could expect adverse criticism, and, perhaps, violent repercussions, both toward the work and toward himself. Both would be called shocking and maybe even ungodly or atheistic. Assuming the attempt will be made to read, the interpreter may ease the tension by having some religious organization as his sponsor, and by having his reading become an example of moral instruction. This is not out of keeping--though a bit strained--with the idea of literature as a teacher. Having placed his reading in this context, the interpreter would read exactly as he would for the ideal audience--but with a fair degree of certainty that the old wine is too strong for the wine-skins into which it is being poured.

For an audience about the same level, but which was not religiously oriented, the interpreter could make some basic changes of text, treating the selection as it was, generally, reviewed. This means he would exclude the prelude, cut out part XII, cut out all other direct addresses by "I." This would eliminate "I" and shift the emphasis to Barclay. Every effort should then be made to characterize the agents, to make them as human as the voice and body of

the interpreter would permit. To do this, the interpreter would give each agent a set of mannerisms that goes beyond mere identification. The net result would be that a different creation--but one that is present--would emerge from The Women at Point Sur. This would be a rollicking good horror story of the Frankie and Johnny variety, but devoid of the tremendous metaphysical or philosophical overtones. It would be a story similar to Shelley's Cenci and with a parallel plot. In this way some of the obscurity would be eliminated and prolixity could be used to enhance mood. By doing so, some of the length could be dissolved and the result would still be a puzzling strangeness. The problem of message being received would be eliminated. A hair raising gothic tale would emerge. The treatment being suggested here would be comparable to that given a play by Shakespear by comic strips. Something is gained, but much is lost.

On the first level of enthusiastic passion, the interpreter could conduct his reading as with the upper level of enthusiastic passion, or as with the upper level of the vulgar audience. If conducted as on the upper level of vulgar passions, the appreciation would be increased, but the critics would be more detailed and caustic. A strong gothic tale would emerge with some religious and philosophical overtones. If, to the same audience, the selection were read in the same way as it would be read to the upper level of enthusiastic

passion, the puzzling strangeness would be strongly felt; a mental exhaustion would create the nullity Poe describes. Length and obscurity would be present, and would not be overcome, although some of the obscurity could be felt as part of the puzzling strangeness. These would help to produce a reaction of quiet shock, or numbness, or the feeling of having wasted one's time.

At the upper extreme of enthusiastic passion, which, for purposes of the present study, represents the ideal audience, the clue to reading The Women at Point Sur lies in the treatment of "I." One way to make the "I" clear is to treat the work as a speech being given by a Demosthenes or a Cicero or a Gorgias or a Protestant evangelist. In this speech, the speaker's personality comes through; his ethos shows. Additionally, the orator makes extensive, concentrated use of prosopopoeia and ecphrasis to make his message clear. This means that the interpreter is advised to let himself, his own personality, become "I." Generally, this is not the best practice for an oral interpreter.

However, in the case of The Women at Point Sur, it seems necessary, if the impact of a single voice filled with passionate sincerity is to be re-created. There seems no better way. The interpreter must become "I." Having done so, he thinks of himself as presenting an oration built around Barclay's three questions. He utilizes prosopopoeia

to create agents to illustrate the ideas and he uses ecphrasis to create backgrounds in which the agents may move, and by doing these things, he puts his ideas before the eyes of the listener.

The factor that makes it possible for the interpreter to become the rhetor making the speech, the "I," without shattering the illusion, or without destroying the aesthetic distance, will be the rhythm, the periods of The Women at Point Sur. Once the speaker falls into the breath units set by the work and reads within their limits, getting the full sweep of the period, this sweep will establish aesthetic distance and help to maintain it. This sweep, the flow of breath that carries the sound, will make clear to the audience when "I" is speaking and when the interpreter is using his own breath and diction pattern. This means that no dialog tags, he said's, can be neglected or lost, as is frequently done by readers, to speed the flow of a scene. These dialog tags need to be emphasized for they are part of the means through which "I" conducts the movement of his symphony.

Perhaps, the individual interpreter will prefer to make other choices. He may not prefer to become "I." Such choices are quite permissable as long as the interpreter, whomever he is, remains true to three guiding principles. First, the interpreter must characterize the "I" in some

manner, to make "I" both particular and universal. To do this, it seems, to this study, easiest for the interpreter to let his own voice and body be the particular, and the periods, in which the selection is written, furnish the universal, since these periods go back in time a long way. Second, the interpreter must work within the breath sweep created by the work, and do so without losing sound, or thought. If a choice must be made, some thought should be sacrificed because most audiences are more experienced in helping to supplement thought than they are in helping to supplement breath. Third, the interpreter can not throw away any dialog tag lines or phrases. It would be better to lose some lines of the agents than those of "I."

If an interpreter will work to maintain these three principles, the rendering of The Women at Point Sur becomes surprisingly simple. He will be able to re-create the singularity, the puzzling strangeness of Robinson Jeffers.

# CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study began by assuming that Robinson Jeffers is an interesting figure in American letters. It assumed that Jeffers wrote with power. It assumed that in some way the term "singularity" (which includes particularity and puzzling strangeness) embodies this power. The intent of the study has been to reveal attributes (facets) of Jeffers' singularity by focusing on a particular work: The Women at Point Sur. The method of focus has been that of interpretative analysis.

Perhaps the first attribute of Jeffers' singularity arises from his erudition. Jeffers was a learned man; he did not hesitate to use the range of his learning in his work. For example, the learning shows clearly in the difference between quiet and solitude that is found in the very opening lines of the prelude. With no previous knowledge, except that of the language, a reader will sense this difference. However, he will not understand the significance of what he feels, unless he knows, or takes the time to investigate, the condition. When he recognizes that the kind

of quiet being described is that of Taoism; when he realizes that this quiet is always paradoxical, always made up of the unity of opposites; when he realizes that Taoism carries over into Japanese Zen Buddhism and that the unity of opposites is there also, and that this is the same idea that is contained in Heraclitus, who thinks in terms of a dynamic universe, where opposites unite; when he realizes that Heraclitus' work is given in cryptic oracular epigrams; when he sees that imagination, the traitor of the mind is one extreme and "I" is the other; the reader, then, sees that Jeffers' erudition is revealed in the first eight lines of the prelude, and so is the essence of the work. Jeffers' erudition is a key factor in his puzzling strangeness.

The second attribute of Jeffers' singularity is revealed in the tradition of thought to which he gave his allegiance. Jeffers was a searcher in quest of God. This requires some explanation. H. A. Overstreet begins to make this tradition clear when he is speaking of mature insights (the word "insight" is suggestive of Longinus and of Gestalt psychology) that man has had and distorted. He is discussing the one God concept.

> Here was a first essential human insight. As long as the belief in many gods prevailed--which was tantamount to a belief in many conflicting sources of truth--man could never free his mind from confusion. He could find no basis for consistent thought, no criterion for ethical evaluation, no ground for unity of judgment. Confronted by a multitude of gods, each claiming supremacy, and each clashing with the others,

> man would continue to live in a world of mental, moral and spiritual chaos.[1]

The man who first conceived of the one God brought a liberating concept to man: "Truth is one because the Source of truth is one."[2] Whether this is a valid insight or not is beyond the ability of this study to determine, but that this insight has been responsible for a long tradition of human thought seems unquestionable. Man has sought for unity. The supreme goal of modern science would be a theory that explains all. The supreme goal of the poet would be one word that sums up the theory. Such a word might be "Om" or "nirvana." Some men have equated God with truth; others have not. However, in either case, God is unity or truth is unity. In other cases, God who is truth is unity. Jeffers belongs to this tradition.

Working from this general foundation, men have sought God and/or Truth in different places. Each has been sought in another world as in Plato and Christianity; each has been sought in the future, as with evolution and Hegel's world spirit; each has been sought in the present as with Aristotle's two realities: the physical and the metaphysical. In all cases, the guiding principle of this tradition has been a quest for unity, for permanence, that contradicts the

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[1]H. A. Overstreet, The Mature Mind (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1954), p. 91.

[2]Ibid.

flux, the fragments, the diversity of concrete existence. The quest has led into all realms of human experience from the mathematics of Pythagoras to the mysticism of the Orphic rites. Jeffers seeks his reality, truth, permanence, God, by donning the guise of Faust or the Wandering Jew, rising above time, looking backward into time and forward into the future and then deciding what there is in human experience that endures. These enduring qualities become his unity, his permanence, his reality. Thus, part of Jeffers' singularity rises from the thought tradition to which he gave allegiance.

A third attribute of Jeffers' singularity arises from the preceding. It involves the question of self-evident truths, the kind of truths stated in the American Declaration of Independence. The question is whether such truths exist, and it underlies the entire concept of proof. It could be stated: Does a man in this tradition speak to demonstrate truth, or does he speak to convince his listeners (to win belief) that he has seen truth? In any case the unity, the truth, the conviction, is seen through a veil of fiction, a bundle of lies, in diversity, through a glass darkly, in moments of clear sanity touched with madness. It is never seen for long, and it comes only after arduous concentration involving pain. What is stated is highly generalized becoming clear only when proper context is finally seen. It

is presented in allusions, condensed statement, for more is always meant than can be spelled out in words. The underlying idea is that words can never really capture all of experience. At best, they can point; they can say little but suggest much. Hence, suggestion becomes the basis and suggestion works best when it points to experience that is common. This raises the question: common to whom, and introduces the concept of decorum.

This study does not attempt to rule on the ultimate Truth of the preceding, but only seeks to show that, as a result of these bases of thought, the truth or God tradition of human experience has tended to present its findings in certain ways. These ways of presentation from deepest antiquity--even in the days of Amenhotep IV, Ikhnaton, who introduced monotheism into Egypt, through sun worship and sang hymns of praise to the one God--have been remarkably like Jeffers' description of Jesus.

The pattern that seems to describe this tradition could be summed up as "wonderful glimpses," "through objective narrative," "deep," "powerful and beautiful," "strangely complex," "not wholly integrated."[3] These describe the tradition as it emerges through the pre-Socratic philosophers, through the Greek tragedians, Plato, Plotinus, the Delphic

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[3]Supra, pp. 26-27.

Oracle, the Bible, and right down to Robinson Jeffers--maybe even including Albert Einstein. Obviously, the phrases quoted above to describe this tradition are relative to a particular audience and to a particular context. The oracles from Delphi, generally, came clear in retrospect and after the passage of time and the occurrence of an event. Of course, the words were usually ambiguous enough to fit another context also. Thus, the phrases used to describe the tradition are relative to an audience and for writers of a higher order, writers in the "high serious vein," the audience is the erudite, the "fit though few."[4] Thus, a third attribute of Jeffers' singularity rises from his language pattern.

A fourth attribute of Jeffers' singularity also rises from the language pattern; it is the long line that Jeffers employs. He writes what is, probably, the longest line in American letters. However, when one considers that the basis of his line is the very old concept of the Greek period, a unit of breath involving a complete exhalation, on which are carried sound in calculated accents, and thought in cryptic figures and veiled allusion, he sees that Jeffers does not have the distinction of being different. He is not without known parallel, but his periods reflect the same puzzling strangeness as the Greek orators, as the Greek chorus, as

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[4]Supra, p. 41.

the Greek oracles, as the Hebrew prophets, as the book of "Revelation"--a puzzling strangeness due to generality that must be placed in a context before clarity is achieved.

Jeffers, as has been noted, was quite well aware of the fact that his themes and ideas were not new, but, rather, were right in the core of a very old tradition.[5] If, as this study asserts, Jeffers' puzzling strangeness is a product of a very old tradition, the tradition of truth or of God or unity, the question becomes: what makes Jeffers original?

The original quality of Jeffers' work is that, as has been stated earlier, he moved his action inside a single individual. What Milton did for his age in Paradise Lost, Jeffers has done for the twentieth century in The Women at Point Sur. Powell says of Jeffers: "His father was a preacher who used the spoken word as a means of delivering his message; the son uses verse to carry on the tradition."[6] However, his message is drastically different from his father's, but his intent is still salvation. As Morris has noted, "Jeffers is struggling in an agony to smelt down time, space and God himself inside one fiery skull. . . ."[7] Once he gets the fusion inside the skull, the result of that fusion is spoken through one voice, a monidist, a passionately sincere voice speaking to listeners a thousand years away.

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[5]Powell, p. xvii.

[6]Ibid., p. 104.

[7]Supra, p. 92.

## APPENDIX

### PRELUDE

I drew solitude over me, on the lone shore,
By the hawk-perch stones; the hawks and the gulls
are never breakers of solitude.
When the animals Christ was rumored to have died for
drew in,
The land thickening, drew in about me, I planted
trees eastward, and the ocean
Secured the west with the quietness of thunder. I
was quiet.
Imagination, the traitor of the mind, has taken my
solitude and slain it.
No peace but many companions; the hateful-eyed
And human-bodied are all about me: you that love
multitude may have them.

But why should I make fables again? There are many
Tellers of tales to delight women and the people.
I have no vocation. The old rock under the house,
the hills with their hard roots and the ocean
hearted
With sacred quietness from here to Asia
Make me ashamed to speak of the active little bodies,
the coupling bodies, the misty brainfuls
Of perplexed passions. Humanity is needless.
I said, "Humanity is the start of the race, the gate
to break away from, the coal to kindle,
The blind mask crying to be slit with eye-holes."
Well, now it is done, the mask slit, the rag burnt,
the starting-post left behind: but not in a fable.
Culture's outlived, art's root-cut, discovery's
The way to walk in. Only remains to invent the lan-
guage to tell it. Match-ends of burnt experience
Human enough to be understood,
Scraps and metaphors will serve. The wine was a
little too strong for the new wine-skins . . .

Come storm, kind storm,

Summer and the days of tired gold
And bitter blue are more ruinous.
The leprous grass, the sick forest,
The sea like a whore's eyes,
And the noise of the sun,
The yellow dog barking in the blue pasture,
Snapping sidewise.
When I remembered old rains,
Running clouds and the iron wind, then the trees trembled.
I was calling one of the great dancers
Who wander down from the Aleutian rocks and the open Pacific,
Pivoting counter-sunwise, celebrating power with the whirl of a dance, sloping to the mainland.
I watched his feet waken the water
And the ocean break in foam beyond Lobos;
The iron wind struck from the hills.
You are tired and corrupt,
You kept the beast under till the fountain's poisoned,
He drips with mange and stinks through the oubliette window.
The promise-breaker war killed whom it freed,
And none living's the cleaner. Yet storm comes, the lions hunt
In the nights striped with lightning. It will come: feed on peace
While the crust holds: to each of you at length a little
Desolation; a pinch of lust or a drop of terror:
Then the lions hunt in the brain of the dying: storm is good, storm is good, good creature,
Kind violence, throbbing throat aches with pity.
Onorio Vasquez,
Young seer of visions who lives with his six brothers
On the breast of Palo Corona mountain looking northward,
Watches his brother Vidal and Julio the youngest
Play with a hawk they shot from the mountain cloud,
The wing broken. They crucified the creature,
A nail in the broken wing on the barn wall
Between the pink splinters of bone and a nail in the other.
They prod his breast with a wand, no sponge of vinegar,
"Fly down, Jew-beak." The wind streams down the mountain,
The river of cloud streams over: Onorio Vasquez
Never sees anything to the point. What he sees:
The ocean like sleek gray stone perfectly jointed
To the heads and bays, a woman walking upon it,

The curling scud of the storm around her ankles,
Naked and strong, her thighs the height of the mountain, walking and weeping,
The heavy face hidden in the hands, the lips drinking the tears in the hollow hands and the hair
Streaming north. "Why are you sad, our lady?" "I had only one son.
The strange lover never breaks the window-latches again
When Joseph's at synagogue."
Orange eyes, tired and fierce,
They're casting knives at you now, but clumsily, the knives
Quiver in the wood, stern eyes the storm deepens.
Don't wince, topaz eyes.
The wind wearies toward evening,
Old Vasquez sends his boys to burn the high pastures
Against the rain: see the autumn fires on the mountain, creeping red lakes and crescents
Up the black slope in the slide of the year: that's Vasquez and his boys burning the mountain. The high wind
Holds, the low dies, the black curtain flies north.
Myrtle Cartwright
Locked the windows but forgot the door, it's a lonely canyon
When the waves flap in the creek-mouth. Andrew's driving
The calves to Monterey, he trusts her, he doesn't know
How all her flesh burned with lascivious desire
Last year, but she remembered her mother and prayed
And God quenched it. Prayer works all right: three times
Rod Stewart came down to see her, he might have been wood
For all she cared. She suffers with constipation,
Tired days and smothering dreams, she's young, life's cheerless,
God sent a little sickness to keep her decent
Since the great prayer. What's that in the west, thunder?
The sea rumbles like thunder but the wind's died down,
Soon it should rain.
Myrtle Cartwright
Could sleep if her heart would quit moving the bedclothes;
The lighthouse-keeper's daughter little Faith Heriot
Says, "Father the cow's got loose, I must go out
With the storm coming and bring her into the stable.
What would mother do without milk in the morning?"
(Clearly Point Pinos light: stands back from the sea

Among the rolling dunes cupped with old pasture.
Nobody'd keep a cow on the rock at Point Sur.)
This girl never goes near the cowshed but wanders
Into the dunes, the long beam of the light
Swims over and over her head in the high darkness,
The spray of the storm strains through the beam but Faith
Crouches out of the wind in a hollow of the sand
And hears the sea, she rolls on her back in the clear sand
Shuddering, and feels the light lie thwart her hot body
And the sand trickle into the burning places
Comes pale to the house: "Ah, Bossy led me a chase,
Led me a chase." The lighthouse-keeper believes in hell,
His daughter's wild for a lover, his wife sickening toward cancer,
The long yellow beam wheels over the wild sea and the strain
Gathers in the air.
Oh crucified
Wings, orange eyes, open?
Always the strain, the straining flesh, who feels what God feels
Knows the straining flesh, the aching desires,
The enormous water straining its bounds, the electric
Strain in the cloud, the strain of the oil in the oil-tanks
At Monterey, aching to burn, the strain of the spinning
Demons that make an atom, straining to fly asunder,
Straining to rest at the center,
The strain in the skull, blind strains, force and counter-force,
Nothing prevails . . .
Oh, in storm: storm's kind, kind violence,
When the swollen cloud ached--suddenly
Her charge and agony condensed, slip, the thick dark
Whelps lightning; the air breaks, the twin birth rain falls globed
From the released blackness high up in the air
Ringing like a bell for deliverance.
Many-folded hills
Mouth the black voice that follows the white eye
Opening, universal white eye widening and shut. Myrtle Cartwright's
One of those whom thunder shakes with terror: head covered
Against the flashes: "If it should find me and kill me

What's life been worth? Nothing, nothing, nothing,
death's horrible."
She hears it like a truck driven jolting through
heaven
Rumble to the north. "And if I die old:
Nothing, nothing."
Vasquez' boys have gone home.
Deep after
midnight the wind rises, turns iron again,
From east of south, it grinds the heads of the hills,
the dunes move in the dark at Point Pinos, the
sand-stone
Lighthouse at Point Sur on the top of the rock is like
an axhead held against a grindstone.
The high redwoods have quit roaring to scream. Oaks
go down on the mountain. At Vasquez' place in
the yellow
Pallor of dawn the roof of the barn's lifting, his
sons cast ropes over the timbers. The crucified
Snaps his beak at them. He flies on two nails.
Great eyes, lived all night?
Onorio should have held the rope but it slid through
his fingers. Onorio Vasquez
Never sees anything to the point. What he sees:
The planted eucalyptuses bent double
All in a row, praying north, "Why everything's praying
And running northward, old hawk anchored with nails
You see that everything goes north like a river.
On a cliff in the north
Stands the strange lover, shines and calls."
In the morning —
The inexhaustible clouds flying up from the south
Stream rain, the gullies of the hills grow alive, the
creeks flood, the summer sand-bars
Burst from their mouths, from every sea-mouth wedges
of yellow, yellow tongues. Myrtle Cartwright
Hears the steep cataracts slacken, and then thunder
Pushes the house-walls. "Hear me, God, death's not
dreadful.
You heard before when I prayed. Now," she whispers,
"I'll make the bargain," thunder leans on the house-
walls, "life's no value
Like this, I'm going to Stewart's, I can't live empty.
Now Andrew can't come home for every canyon
Vomits its bridge, judgment is yours only,
Death's in your hands." She opens the door on the
streaming
Canyon-side, the desperate wind: the dark wet oak-
leaves
All in a moment each leaf a distinct fire

Reflects the sharp flash over them: Myrtle Cartwright
Feels the sword plunge: no touch: runs tottering up hill
Through the black voice.
Black pool of oil hidden in the oil-tank
In Monterey felt the sword plunge: touched: the wild heat
Went mad where a little air was, metal curled back.
Fire leaped at the outlet. "Immense ages
We lay under rock, our lust hoarded,
The ache of ignorant desire, the enormous pressure,
The enormous patience, the strain, strain, the strain
Lightened we lay in a steel shell . . . what God kept for us:
Roaring marriage."
Myrtle Cartwright wins up hill through the oak-scrub
And through the rain, the wind at the summit
Knocks her breasts and her mouth, she crouches in the mud,
Feels herself four-foot like a beast and the lightning
Will come from behind and cover her, the wolf of white fire,
Force the cold flesh, cling with his forepaws. "Oh, death's
What I was after." She runs on the road northward, the wind behind her,
The lightnings like white doves hovering her head, harmless as pigeons, through great bars of black noise.
She lifts her wet arms. "Come, doves."
The oil-tank boils with joy in the north, one among ten, one tank
Burns, the nine others wait, feel warmth, dim change of patience. This one roars with fulfilled desire,
The ring-bound molecules splitting, the atoms dancing apart, marrying the air.
Myrtle Cartwright
Knocks on her door: "Oh, I've come. Here's what you wanted." (In the yellow inland no rain but the same lightning,
And it lights a forest.) He leads her into the barn because there are people in the house.
In the north the oil-tanks
Catch from the first, the ring-bound molecules splitting, the atoms dancing apart, marrying the air.

Don't you see any vision Onorio Vasquez? "No, for the topazes

Have dulled out of his head, he soars on two nails,
Dead hawk over the coast. Oh little brother
Julio, if you could drive nails through my hands
I'd stand against the door: through the middle of the palms:
And take the hawk's place, you could throw knives at me.
I'd give you my saddle and the big bridle. Julio,
With the bit that rings and rings when the horse twirls it."
He smiles. "You'd see the lights flicker in my hair."
He smiles craftily. "You'd live long and be rich,
And nobody could beat you in running or riding."
He chatters his teeth. "It is necessary for someone to be fastened with nails.
And Jew-beak died in the night. Jew-beak is dead."

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