IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF ROBINSON JEFFERS

by

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A Thesis
submitted to the faculty of the
Department of English
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Graduate College
University of Arizona

1949

Approved: Dorothy S. Fields, April 30, 1949
Director of Thesis Date
To Robinson Jeffers

Strength to endure the steel teeth
And the constant claws at the throat;
Strength to match the hawk-wing
And float to the hermit height;
Strength to flower into flame
And endure the intense rose-burning;
But mostly is needed stallion strength to endure
the beauty:
The tide in the ocean,
The night in the stone.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study of imagery is an important one as it provides a concrete as well as an immediate approach to the literature itself. Imagery works largely by the use of analogy; and often by analogy with its infinity of connotations, suggestions, and associations, the poet more truly expresses himself than he could by the literal word. The image is used for more precise qualification and implication of the meaning. I agree with Cleanth Brooks, who says that the poet does not have the relatively simple task of noting down a certain state of mind. The experience which he communicates is itself created by the organization of the symbols which he uses. The total poem is therefore the communication, and indistinguishable from it.\(^1\) The study of imagery is largely a study of the poem. The meaning of the poem is not a paraphrase of it; the meaning is "what-its-ideas-in-that-form-do."

To the reader of Jeffers' poetry, it soon becomes apparent that Jeffers uses one image, such as the hawk, throughout his entire work until its many associations give one a richer, deeper feeling toward that image. The

image becomes a more integral part of the poem. It is through the image that Jeffers says what he has to say.

In discussing imagery, I shall not use the rhetorical approach. Nor shall I use exclusively the classification approach as was my first intention. While the classification of imagery by the image object (Spurgeon)² is worthwhile, the single image without its relation to the whole does not mean much. Images cannot be discussed significantly as if they were mere decorations. And it is difficult to draw contributory conclusions from such a fact as that Jeffers used two mirror images in "Tamar." However, after a complete classification has been made, one may see how a certain image functions in the poem, how through the image the philosophy or idea-substance of the poem is reached. I shall, therefore, limit the thesis to a discussion of the dominant images as revealed by classification. I shall use the classification as a rudder. This method seems especially well suited to the work of Robinson Jeffers as certain images are used over and over to an amazing degree in his poetry.

In order to limit the field, I have classified only what seem to me the obvious metaphors and similes. The

² Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery.
classification system used is my own, adopted after I had tried ineffectually to fit Jeffers' imagery into other classification systems, such as the one used by Caroline Spurgeon in her book *Shakespeare's Imagery*.

The study of imagery is based on the following ten books of Robinson Jeffers:

- *Californians*, 1916
- *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems*, 1925
- *The Women at Point Sur*, 1927
- *Cawdor and Other Poems*, 1928
- *Dear Judas and Other Poems*, 1929
- *Thurso's Landing and Other Poems*, 1932
- *Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems*, 1933
- *Solstice and Other Poems*, 1935
- *Such Counsels You Gave to Me and Other Poems*, 1937
- *Be Angry at the Sun*, 1941

"Tamar," also published separately, is included in *Roan Stallion*; the images in "Tamar" are classified separately. The poems entitled "Descent to the Dead," also published separately, are in *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*. Three of Jeffers' books are not included. His first book *Flagons and Apples*, 1912, is not available at the University of Arizona Library; *Medea*, 1946, is not included because it is an adaptation; *The Double Axe*, 1948, is not included as it was not published until after the classification of images was made, though reference is made to it in Chapter II in connection with the sword image. I feel, however, that the other ten books are sufficient for the purpose of this thesis and represent
a satisfactory foundation for the study of imagery. The book *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* contains excerpts from the other volumes.

From the ten volumes of poetry used for this study, 3,221 images have been classified. The outline used for the classification is the following one:

I. Images of nature
   A. Animals
   B. Birds
   C. Plants
   D. Man
   E. Inanimate nature
      1. Fire
      2. Stone
      3. Ocean
      4. Ice
      5. Heavenly bodies
      6. Others

II. Images of tangible man-made objects
   A. Swords
   B. Ships
   C. Nets
   D. Others

III. Images of intangible or abstract qualities
     excluding the religious images

IV. Images relating to religion and the supernatural

Most of the imagery belongs to the first division, images of nature. The animal group contains such images as mane, snake skin, hooves, fins in addition to animals themselves as the image object. The bird image is classified separately rather than with the animal image because it functions differently in the poetry. Likewise, the bird group contains such images as wings, beaks, and claws and all insects. The insect is included with the bird group because often it is described in flight, and for that reason it seemed more
closely related to the bird image than the animal image.
In addition to plants themselves the plant group includes
images of leaves, fruit, roots, sticks, and buds. The man
group includes all persons and such physical images as eye,
hand, bone, and wound. The last miscellaneous grouping
under images of inanimate nature contains such images as
earthquake, dawn, night, river, and torrent. It is signif-
icant to note that of the 3,221 images classified, 2,456
are images of nature. (See Chart I at the end of this
chapter.)

The second main division, images of tangible man-made
objects, has four subdivisions, the images appearing most
often in the poetry being chosen for the group headings.
Under sword such images as knife, blade, lance, spear, and
axe are included; under ship such images as boat, skiff,
sail. In the last grouping are such miscellaneous images
as house, jewel, clothes, bread, and factory. In this
major division there is a total of 606 images.

The third main division, images of intangible or
abstract qualities excluding religious images, includes
such images as love, thought, rebellion, music, triumph,
jealousy, innocence, fear. Many of these conditions or
qualities are related to man, as they are emotional or
mental, but seem to belong in a separate group rather than
with man under nature, which group includes only persons
and physical parts of man. Only 88 of the total images
belong to the third division.
The fourth and last main division, images relating to religion or the supernatural, overlaps somewhat with the third division as some of the images in this group are also intangible—for example, hell, angels, ghosts; and it also overlaps somewhat with the first division man under nature—for example, Christ, Satan, Judas, and Noah. However, the group is important enough in itself and different enough to stand as one of the main divisions. It also includes such supernatural images as elf, giant, and Pan. Out of the 3,221 images, only 71 belong to the last division. (For a tabled classification of the sub-divisions, see Chart II at the end of this chapter.)

The nature images so greatly overshadow all others that the following chapters will be almost entirely devoted to them. Nature itself seems to be the mother-image of all Robinson Jeffers' poetry. Therefore, the chapter headings will take their titles from the subdivisions of nature imagery: Imagery of Animals, Imagery of Birds, Imagery of Plants, Imagery of Man, and Imagery of Inanimate Nature. In the chapter on animal images, where relationship warrants inclusion, images of the sword and net will be discussed. In a like manner under images of man, Christ images will be discussed.

Nature plays an important part not only in supplying the bulk of the images, but in supplying the setting for
the tragedies. The coast with all its weird beauty and various moods has become an integral part of Jeffers' life, an integral part of his poetry. Most of the narrative poems have their setting in these coastal mountains. The importance of the coast in his poems is verified by Walter Fuller Taylor.

The imaginative lift of Jeffers' poetry is owing in part to his response to the natural grandeur of the California coastal region. His dramas of the emotions are played out under the open sky, against sheer cliffs of world-old granite, beneath huge redwoods, beside turbulent cool mountain streams, in mountain clefts filled with wild flowers, and on the surf-beaten shore of the Pacific. Often winds and rainstorms, beating up from the thousand-mile planet-curve of the ocean, surge across his highlands and about his lonely ranch houses, suggesting the immense, terrible energies of the world; at other times his quiet night scenes reveal only the drenching moonlight or the remote stars. Only in their union with the vastness of such a setting, one feels, could the destructive passions of Jeffers's characters be made fully poetic. The setting of his poems, therefore, is never merely decorative; it is an integral, essential part of his poetic plan.

Jeffers is indeed a nature poet. Yet he does not romanticize nature; rather he describes nature with great accuracy. Perhaps it is the feeling of reality one gets from his imagery that makes it so forceful. Even the topography and natural life of the Carmel region, Monterey County, California, are accurately represented. Most of

the creeks, canyons, and mountains are given their own names. Nature also weaves its way into the dramatic action of the narratives. The most memorable events of the poems occur outdoors, contrasting the sordid lusts of men with the magnificent beauty of nature. On the beach Tamar dances naked at night and is defiled by the ghosts of the region; by the cool Mal Paso pool she seduces her brother. To the mountain top California rides the roan stallion; later she shoots the stallion in the corral, feeling as if she has killed God. Barclay roams the hills chanting his insane visions and nightmares and seeks God through action by seducing his daughter April in the fields at Point Sur. Cawdor jealously pursues his son Hood to the edge of the precipice and sees him in their struggle fall to his death on the rocks below; after admitting his guilt, with a piece of flint he cuts his eyes out. Clare Walker wanders with her dwindling band of sheep over the hills of the Carmel region, crawling at last under a bush to die with her unborn child. On the mountain top the cable rope snaps, whipping Reave Thurso to the ground, writhing like a wounded snake; and in a wild scene on the headland at Bixby's Landing he meets his death. Lance leaps over the edge of the cliff to his death, and Fayne climbs down rock by rock to the beach to kiss his stained mouth and cover
him with stones. Madrone buries in the snow her two children, whose throats she cut to save them from the thickening city life to which their father was taking them. The poems are filled with such scenes. One does not soon forget the fawn caught on the barbed wire fence nor the horse chained by its tongue to be whipped. Nature is revealed vividly with all its wild pain and its wild beauty and its peace.

The seasons of the year often contribute to the setting and the mood of the poems. The tension in "Tamar," for example, coincides with the season. The narrative opens in the winter months when Lee is recovering from his fall down the cliff; in the spring he awakens to his love for Tamar; in the dry summer months under the hateful "masculine sun" their love turns bitter; and the fever of autumn kindles into the wild fire scene which closes the poem. The following lines illustrate Jeffers' strong feeling for the season:

This was the high plateau of summer and August waning;
white vapors
Breathed up no more from the brown fields nor hung in the hills; daily the insufferable sun
Rose, naked light, and flaming naked through the pale transparent ways of the air drained gray
The strengths of nature; all night the eastwind streamed out of the valley seaward, and the stars blazed.
The year went up to its annual mountain of death, gilded with hateful sunlight, waiting rain.
Stagnant waters decayed, the trickling springs that all the misty-hooded summer had fed
Pendulous green under the granite ocean-cliffs dried and turned foul, the rock-flowers faded,
And Tamar felt in her blood the filth and fever of the season. Walking beside the house-wall
Under her window, she resented sickeningly the wounds in the cypress bark, where Andrews climbed to his tryst, disgust at herself choked her, and as a fire by water Under the fog-bank of the night lines all the sea and sky with fire, so her self-hatred Reflecting itself abroad burned back against her, all the world growing hateful, both her lovers Hateful, but the intolerably masculine sun hatefullest of all. The heat of the season Multiplied centipedes, the black worms that breed under loose rock, they call them thousand-leggers, They invaded the house, their phalloid bodies cracking underfoot with a bad odor, and dropped Ceiling to pillow at night, a vile plague though not poisonous. Also the sweet and female sea Was weak with calm, one heard too clearly a mounting cormorant's wing-claps half a mile off shore; The hard and dry and masculine tyrannized for a season.

Robinson Jeffers' land of Carmel becomes real through his imagery. One feels as if he had actually sat on the cliff; had heard the rock in its fall, the wing of the hawk in rapid flight; had seen the green scales of the ocean, the cypress-furred hills, and the back of the big granite rock base. This poetry is nature poetry, the images revealing both sides of nature, the pain and the beauty—the fierce pain of claws tearing their prey, the wild beauty of the flight of a bird.

And so it is in Carmel on the storm-beautiful Pacific Coast that Robinson Jeffers chose to spend his life. Of

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4 Roan Stallion, pp. 125-126.
boulders from the shore line he built his house and famous
studio, Tor House and Hawk Tower. He has planted a forest,
some two thousand trees, which he cares for. Here he has
found a simple, happy life with his wife and twin sons, Donnan
and Garth. Often he takes long walks along the rocky shore,
swims with his sons, and in the evening reads to his small
family group. Louis Adamic says that Jeffers is "quite
ridiculously content with his personal environment"; and he
quotes Jeffers, "I should be glad to live like this for
several centuries; but good and evil are very cunningly
balanced in the most favored lives, and I should not con-
sider myself ill-used if I was to die tomorrow, though it
would be very annoying." 5

Robinson Jeffers is a well-educated man. For the pur-
pose of this thesis a few biographical facts relating to
his scholarship and his fields of training are pertinent
as they provide sources for his imagery. His father,
William Hamilton Jeffers, LL.D., was a scholar of Latin,
Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic; he married Annie Robinson Tuttle.
They had two sons, John Robinson Jeffers, the poet, and
Hamilton Jeffers, who is now an astronomer at Lick
Observatory. Robinson Jeffers was born in Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania, January 10, 1887, at which time his father
held the chair of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis

in the Western Theological Seminary (Presbyterian). Dr. Jeffers, a very distinguished theologian, tutored his sons and gave them a thorough knowledge of the Bible and the classics. At the age of five Robinson Jeffers was reading Greek. He went abroad with his father at the ages of five and six and twelve to fifteen, attending school at Vevey, Lausanne, Geneva, Zurich, and Leipzig. During the summers he and his father went on walking tours through the Swiss Alps. After he returned to the United States he entered the University of Western Pennsylvania. When the family moved to Pasadena, California, he entered Occidental College and graduated at the age of eighteen with a Bachelor's Degree. During a postgraduate course in English and languages at the University of Southern California, he met his future wife, Una Call Kuster. In 1907 he enrolled at the University of Zurich, but because he was dissatisfied with its curriculum, he returned to America and entered the medical school at the University of Southern California. It was not his intention to become a practicing physician; he desired general information. During the two years of medical school he was the honor student. Dr. Stookey, professor of bacteriology, said he stood first in all his classes. Then he enrolled in the Department of Forestry at the University of Washington for one year. Here he also had classes in law and zoology.
At the age of twenty-five he came into a legacy from a great uncle, which enabled him to marry Una Call Kuster in 1913 and to devote his life to the thing which had always been of utmost importance to him—writing poetry. In 1914 he and his wife moved to Carmel, and there he built his monuments—his houses, his poems.
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Totals: 189 Fire, 167 Stone, 164 Ocean, 26 Ice, 64 Heavenly Bodies, 156 Others
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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CHAPTER II

IMAGES OF ANIMALS

Of the images classified, 524 are images of animals, which is 21.3 percent of the total nature images and 16.2 percent of the total images of the poems. A further classification into the number of horse, dog, and wolf images does not seem important; but it does seem important that an analysis be made of the significance or function of the majority of the animal images. Therefore, the main functions of the animal images will be discussed. The study is not meant to be a classification of the images by function; the functions usually overlap and complement each other, and it is often difficult, if possible, to limit an image to one function. Each image presents a new problem. But the study is meant to give one an idea of the general trend of Jeffers' use of the animal image. Often one image object, as in this group the stallion, becomes a symbol and is dealt with separately. The bird image is not included with the animal image because its functions are sufficiently different from those of the animal image and important enough to warrant separate consideration. It is discussed in Chapter III.

The functions of the animal images fall into five main categories. The first group of images functions to
prove that man is of but trivial importance in the universe. The second group is used to show that man's desires and passions are ignoble and that desire also resides in inanimate nature. The third group is used to prove that nature is essentially painful. This group includes a discussion of the sword and net images because of their relationship to pain. The fourth group, the stallion image, functions as a symbol of the god-power in the universe. The fifth group of images functions sensuously, there being a predominance of visual images.

The animals used in the images are the ones which are found in the coastal region and of which Jeffers would have knowledge. Some of the domestic animals are the horse, dog, cattle, sheep; some of the wild animals are the coyote, snake, salmon, sea lion, mountain lion.

The animal image is used to point out that man is still in the stage of animal consciousness. His origin is the same as that of any other animal, the marine origin of life. The comparison of man to animals helps place man in his rightful status in the universe—the animal status or worse. The images tend to make one aware that man is not the measure of all things. Man is an animal, not its superior. Jeffers
makes this point clear:

... for what are we,
The beast that walks upright, with speaking lips
And little hair, to think we should always be fed,
Sheltered, intact, and self-controlled? We sooner
more liable
Than the other animals.

Such images as the one quoted are termites in the spindly
wooden legs on which man smugly carries his self importance.
His feeling of self importance is carried over to God when
man gives God an ape-body like his own.

... you ape-descended
Unable to see God but clothed in the contemptible
body of an ape.

Man feels important enough to make God sleep in man's
Procrustean bed. Jeffers ridicules the idea that God has
an animal body, but emphatically makes the point that man
does.

The dog image functions to degrade man, to make man
relatively insignificant in the universe. The image is a
concrete way of evaluating man. The image of the dog to
degrade man is an old one, a common one, and Jeffers uses
it with its many connotations to good effect. The days of
living are referred to as "dog-days." The evil time is.

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1 "Apology for Bad Dreams," The Selected Poetry of
Robinson Jeffers, p. 175.

2 The Women at Point Sur, p. 166.

3 "Ossian's Grave," Give Your Heart to the Hawks,
p. 122.
the "mad-dog time," \(^4\) and the stormy weather is referred to as "dog's weather." \(^5\) Often men are called dogs or act as a dog would act. Attila says of men before battle:
"...men ha' snapped at each other/ Like famished hounds." \(^6\)

Life is compared to a chained dog.

By day and night dream about happy death,
Poor dog give your heart room, drag at the chain,
Breathe deep at dawn, wish it were the last breath. \(^7\)

Man is only a poor dog, something to be pitied, and life is cruel. Children are called "mongrels between the present and the past." \(^8\) In "Such Counsels You Gave to Me" Jeffers uses the image of a dog nailed to wings to represent the mother's ambitions embedded in or forced onto the son. \(^9\) The results are disastrous. Jeffers speaks of Hitler as being heard clearly through the "dog wrath," \(^10\) of the "wild dogs in Europe," \(^11\) and of Europe as "that

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4 "I Shall Laugh Purely," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 97.
5 Solstice, p. 103.
6 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 66.
7 "Give Your Wish Light," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 97.
8 "The Dead Men's Child," Cawdor, p. 129.
9 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 18.
10 "The Day Is a Poem," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 126.
11 "I Shall Laugh Purely," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 98.
beautiful den of wolves."¹²

Other animal images functioning in the same manner are images of the hog, cow, bull, worm, wolf, beast, rat, lion, mice, ape, and rattlesnake. The worm image presents man as contemptible: "...the bitter crawling meanness of human lives."¹³ Madrone after killing her children compares herself to a beast. "I did what a senseless/Caged beast killing her cubs. Oh. Oh. Oh. I beast/I did it."¹⁴ When Helen ran off with the road-worker, Rick Armstrong, Reave said to her, "You've played the beast."¹⁵ Many such images as "the vermin infamies of men"¹⁶ make it clear that these animal images are significant chiefly to place man in his minor role in the universal drama. There are approximately 236 such images.

It seems almost paradoxical that while some animal images are used to make man as insignificant as the animal by comparison with it, other animal images are used to show that the animal is superior to man. Howard, the young man returning home to seek financial aid that he may continue his medical training, expresses the superiority

¹² "The Bowl of Blood," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 92.
¹³ Solstice, p. 94.
¹⁴ Ibid., p. 128.
¹⁵ Thurso's Landing, p. 47.
of the rat to man.

I'm willing to be a friendless rat all my life
And sleep in a cellar beside a urinal, but teach those
people
The rat's their better. 17

In "Great Men" Jeffers tells one it is better to be mute as
a fish than to be great. 18 The quiet, detached life is best.
And in "The House Dog's Grave" the dog with his passionate,
undivided fidelities is better off and happier than man with
his over-active and many-sided mind. 19

Another group of animal images, particularly those of
sheep and cattle, degrade man by taking away his individuality,
and freedom of thought and by showing him being drawn into
the thickening center of over-civilization. In "Intellectuals"
man is compared to sheep, who follow blindly. The intellect-
uals, when they become tired, cover their eyes and flock into
the fold. 20 In another poem the question is asked, "but
whose cattle are the herds of the people that one should
love them?" 21 When the small group stand at the graveside
of Fera's father, they are "like bewildered cattle nosing

17 Such Counsels You Gave to Me. p. 31.
18 Be Angry at the Sun, p. 127.
19 Ibid., pp. 109-110.
20 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 113.
21 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 155.
one fallen."^22 They are "slavish in the mass." For this reason Madrone killed her children—to save them from the degradation of city life to which their father meant to expose them. Jeffers distrusts the mob—the over-organized city. The "herd" for him is too blind, too mechanical, and men like sheep will follow one another over the precipice.

Humanity is the result of this over-organization. It is what man should shake off and discard like an old skin. Humanity represents all the traditions and customs of civilization. The Christian ideals are referred to as decaying lambskins. They degrade man. "And the odor: what is the odor? Decaying lambskins: the Christian/Ideals that for protection and warmth our naked ancestors... but naturally, after nineteen centuries."^23 Jeffers is saying by ellipsis it is ironical that after all this time—nineteen centuries—men still hold the decaying lambskins about them, that they still hold onto outworn Christian ideals. Barclay expresses a similar idea.

I told you,
God, turning like a quick seal under the water,
Swims the other current: or like a snake has rubbed off
Old customs, the courts and churches sell and dry skin
Sloughed from the fire of his coils: there is nothing wicked,
No sin, no wrong, no possible fountain of shame:
And earth shines with aliveness: how could you be troubled?

^22 Cawdor, p. 67.

^23 "Decaying Lambskins," The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, p. 610.

^24 The Women at Point Sur, p. 53.
Mr. Gates clarifies the meaning of the word humanity.

Though undefined by Jeffers the term "humanity," by inference from his use of it in his major poems, means probably the creeds, dogmas, conventions, expedient ethics, the mores and folkways developed by man en masse. Such are bad, thinks Jeffers, for these things, if countenanced by the individual lead to degradation and decay—something he believes has happened since man became aware of his humanity. More specifically in a metaphysical sense, as Jeffers no doubt uses the term, the word "humanity" relates to man's consciousness of himself as human in kind only and as cut off from the objective and external world. This attitude of man looking at himself as human to the exclusion of the objective external universe is the thing that individuals must break away from by their own "strength and substance."

Again humanity is referred to as a skin that is shed.

"He [Barclay] sat in the darkness exalted, ... feeling his humanity slipped off/ Lie on the rock like a skin, like a cast shirt." Such an image substantiates Mr. Gates's definition.

Thus almost one half of the animal images function in the poems to prove man's triviality in the universe, perhaps his purposelessness. They expose man as insignificant, as being more like an ape than a God. Jeffers' conception of man's status in the universe and of the Christian God is clearly brought out by the following passage.

He [God] is like a man that has an orchard, all the boughs from the river to the hill bending with abundance,

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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.

The insignificant worm which causes the apple to spoil is
man: the beautiful orchard is the universe. The apple
image may suggest fruitfulness as it does in the Adam and
Eve story, the apple infected by man representing man's
lust. Many images are lenses through which Jeffers tries
to get man focussed. To Jeffers the mountains are like
great cats watching man's comic and mouse-hole tragedies.

II

Another function of the animal image is to show that
the passions-love, hate, and envy-in man are ignoble.
There are 38 such images. It is important to note again
the great overlapping of image functions.

The hound image provides a concrete physical manifesta-
tion of anger. "Lord in the night, in the storm Lord,
fear takes hold, hot anger bites like a hound/ Men's hearts." Love and hate are referred to as beasts, implying that they
are undesirable, in such passages as: "I thought love/ Was

27 Ibid., p. 117.
28 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 66.
kindness, it's a blind burning beast,"\(^{30}\) and "Loves's a wild colt and snaps his teeth on the bit,"\(^{31}\) and the vivid snake image:

So that my [Gudrun's] heart is in heavy trouble between love and hatred,
Two snakes in one coil. Which can neither endure nor destroy each other, but each is swollen to bursting with venom
From the other's jaws, it spurts on my heart. \(^{32}\)

In relation to man, reasonable detachment is better than love or hate.

The wolf image represents deep, bitter emotions. "But now those blue eyes of yours/ Have wolves in 'em."\(^{33}\) "Wolf-eagerness" is called a treasure in warriors.\(^{34}\) Cawdor in his feeling toward Fera regarding marriage says, "But now I'm troubled with two wolves tearing each other."\(^{35}\)

Desire is often represented as a beast in the body of some person. The image is used with reference to Hood, Fera lying about his passion. "A beast lived in his blood."\(^{36}\)

\(^{30}\) Thurso's Landing, p. 94.
\(^{32}\) "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 20.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 3.
\(^{35}\) Cawdor, p. 14.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., p. 93.
And with reference to Mark, a beast represents his desire for Helen, his brother's wife. "There's a bright wanting beast in me." Tamar says, "But I have a wildbeast of a secret hidden/ Under the uncovered breast will eat us all up/ Before Lee goes." The beast represents something monstrous, fierce, and cruel.

Life is called "the inquisitive animal's/ Amusements." It also implies that man is lowered to the animal status. The word amusements makes light of man's passions. Animal inquisitiveness suggests morbidness. It is satirical of man's love.

Many images are especially successful in giving the physical manifestation of the abstract feeling, thus making it more vivid and real: "... and your own thoughts like harriers/ Tear the live mind." A number of the characters in Jeffers' poems--Tamar, Orestes, Fera, and the inhumanist in The Double Axe--succeed in rising above some of the emotions peculiar to man.

Some animal images are used to express desire or perhaps tension in inanimate nature. Dorothy Atwell in speaking of the ocean refers to it as being burdened with desire.

37 Thurso's Landing, p. 94.
38 "Tamar," Roan Stallion, p. 144.
40 "To a Young Artist," Cawdor, p. 148.
"Mother dear, what does it want?  
What is it crying for?  It seems  
To reach for something in its dreams,  
And like a dog it seems to pant."

The same idea is expressed in "Old rocks want monstrous  
roots to serpent among them," and again in the passage:

Goddess [desire] of the world,  
Young serpent in the veins of the rock,  
In the mountain of the jewels a young serpent,  
in the veins of a man a sweet viper all  
emerald.

By expressing the desire or tension in inanimate nature,  
Jeffers is saying that there is no complete annihilation—
o no absolute nothingness after man's death. This is in  
keeping with the accepted scientific law of change and the  
law of the indestructibility of matter. The peace in in-  
animate nature is strained; there are teeth in the rock.

   The strained peace  
Of the rock has no repose, it is wild and shuddering,  
it travels  
In the teeth of locked strains unimaginable paths;  
It is full of desire; but the brittle iniquities of  
pleasure  
And pain are not there.

In death man loses his identity and his individual

41 "Dorothy Atwell," Californians, p. 103.  
43 "The Songs of the Dead Men to the Three Dancers,"  
Roan Stallion, p. 221.  
44 Cawdor, p. 82.
consciousness; but the "serpent in the rock," the atomic movement and forces acting in or upon substance remain.

In his latest book, The Double Axe, Jeffers defines the nature of substance.

The cells of my old camel of a body,
Because they feel each other and are fitted together--
through nerves and blood feel each other--all the little animals
Are the one man: there is not an atom in all the universes
But feels every other atom; gravitation, electromagnetism, light, heat, and the other
Flamings, the nerves in the night's black flesh,
flow them together; the stars, the winds and the people: one energy,
One existence, one music, one organism, one life, one God: star-fire and rock-strength, the sea's cold flow
And man's dark soul.

Thus Jeffers expresses his belief in the unity of substance rather than in the duality of substance: mind and matter. This substance is not static; therefore there is no annihilation, even if it were desirable. "... but blessed is the night that has no glowworm." The glowworm represents the inherent desire or tension or change in substance. However, death, the loss of consciousness, is still desirable.

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45 The Double Axe, p. 53.
46 "In the Hill at New Grange," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 133.
Oh, tell Randal
That cornered between the stove and the wall can
still
Creep through the mouse-hole.

Thus many images function to define desire in man and also
in inanimate nature.

III

To Jeffers the life of man is mostly painful. The
many animal, sword, and net images, some 183 (animal 44,
sword 112, net 27) describing pain or fear, indicate
Jeffers' preoccupation with pain. The sword and net images
are included in this section because of their relationship
to pain, which will be pointed out later.

Louis Adamic quotes Jeffers' wife.

Una Jeffers tells me that he never picks a flower
wantonly, or prunes a tree or roots up a weed if
he can avoid it. She believes that life is more
honored by him than he realizes. In his everyday
life he is perhaps the gentlest person living.

Her statement substantiates the fact that Jeffers is very
sensitive to pain. Jeffers is a tragic poet because he
chooses to picture life in its moments of pain and fear.

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48 Louis Adamic, "Random Portraits and Snapshots,"
My America, p. 469.
Old man Ferguson describes his pain to his wife.

Listen, Sally.
Gi' me another shot o' medicine.
There's red-hot rats in my belly crawling and biting. 49

Reave Thurso refers to pain as "rat-gnawings." 50 Mary
Abbey describes her tragedy:

I thought
About a coyote that was caught near our house
In two steel traps at once, so that it couldn't
Stand nor lie down. . . . I am so caught. 51

That pain is constantly encountered throughout life is well
expressed in the following metaphor. ". . . Or Pain--/
Life's shepherd-dog--that nips us home again." 52

Pain involving emotion is worse than physical pain.
Fayne speaks of Lance's sense of guilt, from which he is
unable to free himself, as being easier to cast off than
pain. "It would be harder, if you've a snake in your heart;/
To keep it shut there." 53 But it is not easier to bear; it
is his cancerous sense of guilt which finally causes him to
jump from the high cliff to his death. Often worms and

50 Thurso's Landing, p. 81.
51 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 60.
53 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 32.
snakes, crawling or writhing, express pain or fear, as in the passage, "horror/ Writhe in your mind like worms." Jeffers uses the image of a snake coiling in one's brain to describe anxiety or fear. Barclay speaks of his freedom from fear. "I have long ago forgotten sacking my fears/ Like blind puppies, a stone for an anchor at the black bottom." The predominance of pain over joy in life is expressed by Gudrun, "but the nature of things is a wolf and your throat in his." Unescapable death is always chasing one, nipping one:

The frost, the old frost,
Like a cat with a broken-winged bird it will play with you,
It will nip and let go; you will say it is gone,
but the next Season it increases.

Even the end of life is painful. "It is likely enough that lions and scorpions/ Guard the end: life never was bonded to be endurable nor the act of dying unpainful."  

54 The Women at Point Sur, p. 80.
55 Ibid., p. 77.
56 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 53.
57 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 56.
Pain is also described by the parts of animals, such as teeth. The parts are usually capable of inflicting pain themselves. By emphasizing the physical, by making the pain sharp and tangible, the image makes pain become real to the reader. "O'Neil grinned and flashed/ A fist like a snake's head into Ferguson's belly." Teeth suggest pain in their hardness and sharpness and ability to pierce. "She'd felt, and she quite remembered the pinch of the world's dog-teeth." The teeth image is a common one. Randal in speaking of war tells April, "Who's lived years/ Between the teeth, takes his joy where he finds it." Horns provide another concrete way of describing pain. "Truth is the way, take the truth/ Against your breast and endure its horns." With equal vividness Jeffers says that a gasping hysteria is "like claws in his throat." Pain is made real by its concreteness. The picture of the ugly, starving pelican, which cannot fly because its feathers are tarred with oil from a ship, presents a picture of life with its burdens and hardships.

59 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 34.
60 "Resurrection," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 153.
61 The Women at Point Sur, p. 127.
62 Dear Judas, p. 44.
63 The Women at Point Sur, p. 145.
64 "Steelhead, Wild Pig, The Fungus," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 84.
There are also many descriptions, exclusive of the similes and metaphors that portray the "stricken moments" of life, and one unconsciously makes images of them by applying them to the life of man or to the condition of life in general. One such description is of the steelhead, stranded in shallow water, whose eyes are plucked out by the gulls. 65

The sword image is included here because it is also used to express pain. It is related to the animal image in its likeness to the images of teeth, horns, and claws. Because all are capable of inflicting pain, their association with pain is already established. All are weapons of defense; they are hard, sharp, and pointed; they all possess the ability of piercing flesh and of drawing blood. Animals have their teeth, horns, and claws; man has his sword. All are used for the same purpose: to inflict pain. As images they are used interchangeably, evidencing their close relationship. They function similarly in the poetry. Sometimes sharp teeth are called knives and vice versa. Wild boars are said to have "long naked/ Knives in their jaws." 66 The eagle's feet are referred to as

65 Ibid., p. 76.
66 Ibid., p. 77.
"weaponed feet." With the sword image as well as the animal image Jeffers describes the nature of life as essentially painful. He says that the world is vexed and hot, and full of stabs unlooked for. Fera, speaking of her father, says, "He never could learn that we have to live like people in a web of knives, we mustn't reach out our hands/ Or we get them gashed." The sword is closely associated with pain, the nerves being called "thin swords" through the body. The nerves are again referred to as red hot wires. "Would you believe this fixed and passive flesh/ Has red hot wire in it?"

Helen's death cry rings with pain and finality by the use of the broken arrow image: "a sharp clear broken-off cry like a snapped arrow." Pain is felt by associating the arrow, as one does the sword, with hardness, sharpness, and its ability to pierce. Finality of death is felt by the quick snap of the arrow and the fact that the arrow

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67 Cawdor, p. 21.
68 "The Belled Doe," Californians, p. 137.
69 Cawdor, p. 61.
70 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 18.
71 Thurso's Landing, p. 98.
72 "At the Fall of an Age," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 190.
The knife image usually expresses hate or cruelty. The Leader of the Myrmidons says to Polyxo, who is planning Helen's murder, "You hide a knife in your mind." The knife image is a sinister one. Jeffers tells the people that they are now looking at each other's throats with their knives. Being concerned with petty jealousies and hatreds of men, the people forget the splendor of inhuman things. Eyes are often called knives, which suggest their sharpness, their piercing coldness, and which reflect an inner steel-hard hatred.

The brightness suggested by the sword makes one feel that there is a bright point of consciousness or a shining in pain. In "No Resurrection" when Jeffers speaks of earlier times, he says, "Life and the world were as bright as knives." This image makes one feel as if there were something good and noble as well as something primitive and savage in the world at that time. Perhaps there is some beauty or value in pain. Again he says, "Joy is a sword, like a sharp sword." There is something clean

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73 Ibid., p. 187.
75 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 136.
76 Dear Judas, p. 41.
about physical pain. Now, however, life is too involved; cities are too thick. Man is bogged down in the mud of his own customs and dogmas.

Of the law Madrone says, "How can I fight the law that you have/ Made for you, the blue knife between mother and children?"77 Of money Jeffers says, "Ruling men's money's a wedge in the world."78 Of applied science he says, "Every discovery is a broken shield, a new knife of consciousness/ Whetted for its own hurt."79 Jeffers' sensitiveness to pain, then, is not so much to clean, physical pain which man may have courage to endure, but to the unnecessary mountains of pain that man imposes on man. The irony is that the most intense pain, the bitterest tragedy in man's life is unnecessary as it is created by man himself. In some instances it is true that the teeth being an integral part of the animal represent physical pain and that the sword made by man, but not an integral part of him, represents pain involving the emotions or unnatural pain. Man should, therefore, try to transcend his emotions. Emotions in excess are painful and degrading.

77 Solstice, p. 108.
78 Cawdor, p. 13.
79 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 91.
The sword image is enlarged to include war. A battle is a "sword-mountain." Carling in speaking of waging aggressive war against the Huns and Romans says, "Ride southward. . . like a flying lance-head, and axe-head, / Carve our own valley through the Huns and Romans." Gudrun says that the Romans and West Goths have joined their armies "like axe and helve/ For one huge stroke." The poem "Contemplation of the Sword (April, 1938)" is itself symbolical of what the sword image stands for. Only part of the poem is quoted, but it seems to sum up the meaning of the sword image.

Reason will not decide at last; the sword will decide. The sword: an obsolete instrument of bronze or steel, formerly used to kill men, but here in the sense of a symbol. The sword: that is the storms and counter-storms of general destruction; killing of men; Destruction of all goods and materials; massacre, more or less intentional, of children and women; Destruction poured down from wings, the air made accomplice, the innocent air perverted into assassin and poisoner.

The sword: that is: treachery and cowardice, incredible baseness, incredible courage, loyalties, insanities. The sword: weeping and despair, mass-enslavement, mass-torture, frustration of all the hopes that starred man's forehead. Tyranny for freedom, horror for happiness, famine for bread, carrion for children. Reason will not decide at last, the sword will decide.

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80 Ibid., p. 16.
81 Ibid., p. 5.
82 Ibid., p. 15.
The sword: that is: loathsome
disfigurements, blindness, mutilation, locked
lips of boys
Too proud to scream.
Reason will not decide at last: the
sword will decide.

There are some sword images whose primary function is
sensuous. Most of them are concrete, visual comparisons.
The brazen yucca is referred to as "bayonet-stands;" and again yucca is referred to as "a grim nest/ Of spear-points." Sometimes wings are knife-like: "Long wings like scythes against the face of the wave." Lightning is seen as a crooked spear. "The broad storm-cloud/ Can kill far off with hazardous quick-flaming and crooked spears." One of the most vivid images is one of a sunset:

Of blood-color light, that stained the sea they came from, and treacherously From below stabbed the cloud, dyeing its unguarded belly with fiery blood.

Most of the sensuous sword images also suggest pain.

83 Be Angry at the Sun, pp. 119-121.
84 Solstice, pp. 97-98
85 "The Vardens," Californians, p. 22.
86 Cawdor, p. 25.
88 Solstice, pp. 115-116.
The same image object is used as the title of Jeffers' book, *The Double Axe*, published in 1948. The first part of the poem, "The Love and the Hate," is a subjective account of World War II, describing man's futile suffering. The second part of the poem, "The Inhumanist," is an objective account of the war, the war being a symbol of man's violence. It is the story of an old man, who is the caretaker at the Gore place. He carries a double-bit axe in his hand. As man is the only animal carrying an axe, the axe probably represents passions peculiar to man: love, hate, and envy. The old man tries to discard the peculiarly human passions by flinging his axe from the high cliff into the sea. The axe hacks and slaughters a sea monster but returns to the hand of the old man. He also tries to kill his other self and fails many times. Finally by comparative isolation from man he is able to kill his other self—meaning that he has, to some degree, discarded his human frailties of love, hate, and envy—and has become the inhumanist. By seeing man objectively in the universe, by detaching himself from men, he finds a relative peace. He knows, "I will be turned again to the outer magnificence, the all but inhuman God./ I will grind no more axes." 89

Here one sees the sword image used most vividly. It becomes

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89 *The Double Axe*, p. 83.
monstrous, the double axe representing man's love and hate and envy twisted into brutalities: the unbalanced excess of pain.

The net or trap image usually represents civilization in which man is caught and suffers pain, in much the same way that a fish is caught in a net or by a hook or that an animal is caught in a steel trap. Civilization as here used means much the same as humanity as defined earlier by Mr. Gates.

Lazarus says to Mary, "No, Mary, I am out of that net. I would to God that you were out of that net." Lazarus had experienced death; Mary had not. The net here probably means the consciousness of pain and pleasure. It also refers to the self-consciousness of man and the egocentric universe he has created. The net image emphasizes the suffering in man's life. "What a net of cruelty/Life gasps in." In "The Purse-Seine" a city is compared to fishes caught in a net. Old Margrave sees in a dream:

"I dreamed about fishing.
Sometime ago," he answered, "but we were the fish. I saw the people all running reaching for prizes That dangled on long lines from the sky. A lovely girl or a sack of money or a case of whiskey,

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90 Dear Judas, p. 43.
91 Ibid., p. 17.
92 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 99.
Or fake things like reputation, hackle-feathers and hook. A man would reach up and grab and the line jerked, then you knew by his face that the hook was in him, wherever he went. Often they're played for half a lifetime before they're landed: others, like... my son... pulled up short. Oh, Oh, 93 It's not a dream.

His son had been condemned to death.

The sense of helplessness and futility is strongly expressed. "We are caught in the net,/And the monsters of our sin are not our own monsters, but the cords drawing." 94 Jeffers seems to say that it is not individual immoralities that destroy man, it is rather the imposition on man of old customs and beliefs—the cumulative, organized arrogances of man that destroy him. The surest-caught fish, the one who has turned his love inward to man, is Christ. "The surest-caught fish twists in the net and babbles to the others,/The cords cutting his gills, I have come to save you." 95 It is tempting for man to become a savior.

A knot in the net also represents self-love or love turned inward—incest. Incest as a symbol will be discussed in Chapter V. "We also had wanted/Too near our

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93 "Margrave," Thurso's Landing, p. 144.
94 Dear Judas, p. 15.
95 Ibid., p. 14.
blood./ And to tangle the interbranching net of generations/
With a knot sideways." 96 The net of generations suggests
that man is linked too closely to the past--that he is wear-
ing old clothes.

The trap image is used with similar effect. In the
poem "The Trap" 97 Jeffers speaks of civilization as being
too highly mechanized, over-organized. The many luxuries
man makes for himself show that man is too self-regarding.
He forgets his place in the "great magnificence of things."
"Love is a trap that takes/ The trapper and his game in the
same teeth." 98 Love of man is degrading; it cheats man
out of the greater love of universal truth and beauty. The
trap image represents the helplessness and the confusion of
the over-civilized man. "Barclay looked right and left like
an animal/ Driven on a trap, the funnel of the high stockade
narrowing." 99 The net image places man in a closing net:
Man feels the cords tightening, or the hook tear his throat,
or the steel teeth of the trap. The trap is civilization.

In summary, pain is ever-present, but it can be endured.
There is a shining in physical pain as suffered by animals,
but not in pain arising from man's love and hate and envy. Man by imposing false values on man through custom and dogma has created a trap, civilization, in which man is caught.

IV

The stallion image in Jeffers' poetry becomes a symbol of the potentialities of surging power and god-like strength in the universe. It is a symbol of the non-human power which is Jeffers' God. It is fitting then that one finds the surging power of the ocean, the vastness of the night and sky, and the strength of the mountains associated with the stallion image. It is the vital force of the universe.

Change or time is often expressed by the stallion. Running waves are like an endless army of horses. Jeffers speaks of time as the "gallop of the world," and of the passing of night, "Oh, horses of night run slowly give me time to breathe." In such images the stallion represents the inherent force or change in substance and suggests the fleetingness of man's life. Again the stallion represents the tide.

Granite the blood-heat of her [earth's] youth
Held molten in the hot darkness against the heart
Hardened to temper under the feet

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100 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 13
101 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 67.
102 Loc. cit.
Of the ocean cavalry that are maned with snow
And march from the remotest west.

The tide suggests a cyclical or rhythmical change in the universe.

In "Mara" the stars are like herds of wild horses on a vast field. The stars suggest a vital force. The same image appears in "Give Your Heart to the Hawks":

...and the earth, the great meteor-ball of live stone, flying,
Through storms of sunlight as if forever, and the sun that rushes away we don't know where, and all
The fire-maned stars like stallions in the black pasture, each one with his stud of plunging
Planets for mares that he sprays with power; and universe after universe beyond them, all shining, all alive:
Do you think all that needs us?

The stallion image makes man insignificant by comparison, his values meaningless.

The mountains suggest strength and endurance.

Where the tall Rockies pasture with their heads down, white-spotted and streaked like piebald horses, sharp-withers
And thunder-scarred shoulders against the sky, standing with their heads down, the snow-manes blow in the wind;
But they will lift their heads and whinny when the riders come, they will stamp with their hooves and shake down the glaciers.

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103 "To the House," Roan Stallion, p. 246.
104 Be Angry at the Sun, p. 29.
105 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, pp. 73-74.
106 Solstice, pp. 131-132.
Even the "thunder-scarred shoulders" suggest power and strength by association with the gods of mythology who controlled thunder, such as Jupiter and Thor. Man's time is only a moment when the beautiful stallion-god stops to pasture. Through the stallion image Jeffers reiterates the theme that only the universal values are true values; man-made values count for little comparatively. He also uses the image to say again that pain or violence is in the nature of things. "Stark violence is still the sire of all the world's values." 107

The stallion symbol finds clear expression in the narrative poem "Roan Stallion." It is the story of California, a young woman, one-fourth part Indian, who falls in love with a magnificent stallion. Her affection is turned from a drunken husband, toward whom she feels indifferent, to the horse. California is awakened to a new spiritual exaltation—a love for the shining god-like power which is symbolized by the beautiful stallion. In a wild night-ride, she rides the roan stallion, "the savage and exultant strength of the world," to the hilltop. Here she kneels adoringly before him, the strength, the clean power, the god of the world. Mr. Gilbert says of California's feeling toward the horse: "The woman senses in the stallion a power long dead in herself and her

107 "Bloody Sire," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 151.
husband—the psychic communion of true lovers. The *anima mundi*, or vital force of her being, strives to reach love in outer nature." Later she runs from her brutish husband to the corral, where the stallion tramples the husband to death. Then California "moved by some obscure human fidelity" lifts the rifle and kills the stallion. She then turns on her small daughter "the mask of a woman/Who has killed God." The god-power has been killed by man for something more important to him: his sense of human fidelity, his love turned inward. "Roan Stallion" is therefore tragic, not because the drunken husband is killed, but because the stallion is killed.

In summary, the stallion image stands for freedom in action, strength, change, the vital god-power of the universe. It is an age-old symbol of super-strength.

V

The primary function of many animal images—approximately 161—is sensuous. That is, the image calls one's sense organs into play and creates for him a sensuous experience. Very few images, however, have a single function, and for this reason they are difficult to classify. They do not fit neatly into groups; each image is a study worthy in itself. The images cited are thought to be representative.

By far the greatest number of these images are visual ones. Jeffers seems much more aware of form and color than he does of odor, touch, taste, or sound. Of the 161 images approximately 135 are visual.

The function is not limited to a sensuous description or amplification: "...the ebb-tide ocean/ In the autumn heat stank like a beast."109 Here is a concrete description of an unpleasant odor. As the animal image is often used in comparison to man, a similar unpleasantness may be associated with man; and since the animal image is often used to make man offensive (and is therefore thought of as something very undesirable), the unpleasantness of the odor is intensified. As autumn heat often reflects a tension of the passions in man ("Tamar" was cited earlier as an example), it may also be suggested here. Therefore, the association to man is made by the animal comparison, the offensiveness, and the autumn heat. The primary function, however, is sensuous.

Some images regard the sense of touch. "Hood felt a hand/ Close on his shoulder like the jaws of a horse."110 The feeling of the grip is amplified by the use of something tangible and something which suggests pain, intensified by its association with the teeth and sword images. In another image relating to the sense of touch, Jeffers refers to

109 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 21.
110 Cawdor, p. 55.
revenge as a slippery fish.\textsuperscript{111} As often happens, Jeffers is describing something abstract in concrete terms, thus making it more real and vivid. The slippery fish suggests that revenge is elusive and empty, that one can never hold it in his hands and be through with it. Rather he is always grasping for it--never satisfied.

The images relating to taste are few. They usually picture man in his decline. Helen speaks to Hester of their lives. "Does it taste mouldy,/ The meat of this house?\textsuperscript{112} Gudrun's shadow evaluates her life. "Am I to go down the darkness eternally/ Chewing such a filthy cud of memories between my eye-lids?\textsuperscript{113}

Images of sound do not usually carry so many other-than-sensuous implications. Jeffers speaks of "the leopard-footed evening,"\textsuperscript{114} and of "the nameless little brook that runs/ With no more rustle than a gliding snake/ Among its cresses."\textsuperscript{115}

Some visual images seem to be solely sensuous in their function. For example, hair is often referred to as a mane or fleece. Even these images suggest man's kinship to animals. The flame of a lamp is described as a fish-tail\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{111} "At the Fall of an Age," \textit{Give Your Heart to the Hawks}, p. 198.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Thurso's Landing}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{113} "At the Birth of an Age," \textit{Solstice}, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Roan Stallion}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{115} "At Lindsay's Cabin," \textit{Californians}, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{116} "Mara," \textit{Be Angry at the Sun}, p. 56.
and fire as a red fox-tail.\textsuperscript{117} The ocean often resembles a fish with its white scales.\textsuperscript{118} The backs of mountains are often whale-backs or backs of grizzly bears; the jagged granite is like teeth or fangs. Perhaps such descriptions suggest the tension or change in inanimate nature. Mountain streams wind like snakes. The cormorants also are described by the snake image. "They writhed long negro snake-throats and shot/ Sharp heads at each other."\textsuperscript{119} The whip mark on Tamar's thigh, made by her brother, is a swelling red snake-trail.\textsuperscript{120} April's sudden mental activity is vividly described by the snake image.

... her mind had not moved  
From torpor before, flashed into bitter activity
Striking its length at random like a burnt snake.\textsuperscript{121}

Clouds are often described by animal images and show Jeffers' interest in form and color. "... and the brave clouds with flashing bellies/ Crossing the gorge like a fleet of salmon,"\textsuperscript{122} and "... the evening sea-cloud/ Hung heavy black, leoparded all over with sanguine firespots."\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{117} \textit{Thurso's Landing}, pp. 75-76.
\item \textsuperscript{118} \textit{Solstice}, p. 110.
\item \textsuperscript{119} \textit{Give Your Heart to the Hawks}, p. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{120} "Tamar," \textit{Roan Stallion}, p. 160.
\item \textsuperscript{121} \textit{The Women at Point Sur}, p. 81.
\item \textsuperscript{122} \textit{Thurso's Landing}, p. 68.
\item \textsuperscript{123} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 91.
\end{footnotes}
The colors most often used are red and black. "...the sea was the color and roughness of a shark's flank, wounded by the flooding creek, as if they had torn its side with the gaff when they hauled it in." 124 Jeffers makes the wind tangible and real by his description. "Dry weed-stalks and waste paper scurried from the south like rabbits across the dark foreland." 125

The eye is used in many comparisons. "At the stairhead she met Natalia and felt/ Her eyes like rods in the dark; then they were drawn/ Home like a snail's," 126 and "The broad ocean burned like a vast cat's eye/ Pupilled by the track of sun." 127 Just before April is seduced by her insane father during their night walk through the fields, her feeling is defined by her physical reaction as described by her eyes.

The treacherous blood
Now when all needed draining down from her brain
Dimmed the eyes, all the peripheral field of vision
Drawn with a veined gray veil, the colored veins in it
Writhing like serpents, but in the midst as through water
The bearded mask darkening against the dim cloud
Was clear enough.

124 *Solstice*, pp. 100-101.
125 "Mara," *Be Angry at the Sun*, p. 28.
126 *The Women at Point Sur*, p. 128.
127 *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 11.
The description also shows Jeffers' knowledge of physiology. He had studied medicine for two years. The foregoing images are sufficient to indicate Jeffers' use of the animal images which function sensuously in his poems.

In summary, the functions of the animal images are briefly stated: (1) The images function to show man as insignificant in the universe. (2) The images are used to show that man's emotions are ignoble and that there is desire even in inanimate objects. The inherent desire or tension or change in matter is used to support Jeffers' theory that there is no complete annihilation. (3) Animal, sword, and net images show that the universe is essentially painful, that there is something "shining" in physical pain, but not in pain involving man's ignoble emotions. The use of concrete images makes pain seem more tangible, therefore more real. (4) The stallion image symbolizes the super god-power in the universe and helps define Jeffers' God. (5) The images function sensuously to describe and amplify. Most of these images are visual, revealing Jeffers' interest in form and color.
CHAPTER III
IMAGES OF BIRDS

In most classifications, the bird images come as a subdivision under animals. But as Jeffers uses the bird images, they function differently from the animal images and therefore warrant separate classification and discussion. The insect images are classified with the bird rather than with the animal images simply because most of the insect images picture the insect in flight. Some of the insects used in the imagery are the moth, butterfly, bee, flea, fly, lice, and ant. The birds most often referred to are the hawk, eagle, and falcon; others are the swan, sparrow, dove, pelican, gull, heron, and meadow lark. All are birds inhabiting the coastal region.

There is a total of 309 bird images, which is 12.5 percent of the total nature images and 9.6 percent of the total images classified.

The functions of the bird images are divided into six groups. First the hawk image functions to show man the ideal god-like way of life through freedom and courage. The second group is related to the animal group in that it symbolizes pain, the tragic fate of human characters. Bird images, particularly those of the swan, in the third group
are used to express the wild beauty of the universe. The fourth group expresses man's imaginative powers, while the fifth, images of the eagle, symbolizes death and the flight of the soul. The last function is sensuousness.

I

Through the hawk image Jeffers reveals his impatience with the weak conventions of man, the solitary hawk representing freedom in thought and action from these weak conventions. The hawk is fierce and courageous and soars alone to vast heights. Never is it self-pitying; never does it humble its proud head. The hawk suggests strong individualism and independence, qualities desirable for man; therefore one should live the life of the hawk, though it is difficult. One should have "strength of the human soul to suffer or sin to its dream's uttermost/ And forget it all in an hour and fling at the stars like a young hawk loosed."¹ Sin is only a word. "But love or hatred/ Or good or evil are hardly/ A hair's weight here in the balance."² Man needs courage to think for himself, to assert himself.

Electra speaks to Orestes of their conviction to seek a daring revenge of their father's death. "You and I were

² "Resurrection," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 175.
two hawks quartering the field for living flesh Orestes/
Under the storm of the memory/ Of Agamemnon: we struck:
we tore the prey; that dog and that woman." 3 Orestes,
after killing his mother for her sins, breaks through love
of humanity to love of inhuman nature. He says, "I have
cut the meshes/ And fly like a freed falcon." 4 The bird
represents freedom; its flight suggests leaving behind
the conventions of man.

The vital power of the universe, Jeffers' indifferent
God, is an eagle—free from human emotions and pity. 5 In
"Hurt Hawks" the "intemperate and savage" hawk has much
in common with the wild God of the world. 6 "God was a
hawk in the glow of the morning, a bee in the rose that
has stars for her petals." 7 The hawk sometimes expresses
the consciousness or change in substance. In the poem
"Rock and Hawk" the hawk is an emblem of the bright power
and the fierce consciousness of the universe. 8 "Shiva"
also expresses this idea. The hawk represents conscious-
ness or change in matter, the power before which all

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3 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 76.
4 Ibid., p. 81.
8 Solstice, p. 133.
securities and temples will finally crumble:

This is the hawk that picks out the star's eyes.
This is the only hunter that will ever catch the wild swan;
The prey she will take last is the wild white swan of the beauty of things.
Then she will be alone, pure destruction, achieved and supreme,
Empty darkness under the death-tent wings.
She will build a nest of the swan's bones and hatch a new brood,
Hang new heavens with new birds, all be renewed.

In this poem the hawk represents the vital force of the universe.

People are often referred to as hawks when something in their nature is fierce, wild, hard, or aloof.

Reave's mother said, "We've not seen him," steadily watching her
Across the lamplight with eyes like an old hawk's,
Red-brown and indomitable, and tired. But if she was hawklike
As Helen fancied, it was not in the snatching look
But the alienation and tamelessness and sullied splendor
Of a crippled hawk in a cage. She was worn at fifty
To thin old age; the attritions of time and toil and arthritis
That wear old women to likeness had whetted this one
To difference, as if they had bitten on a bronze hawk
Under the eroded flesh.

Fera says that Hood is wilder than the eagle. Faith Heriot

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9 The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, p. 611.
10 Thurso's Landing, p. 23.
11 Cawdor, p. 109.
is like a falcon wild with famine.  The wildness, the freedom are preferable to self-pity.

Jeffers sees a lone heron fly over the beach after a noisy crowd of people have left. The heron is dearer to him than the people. He feels reconciled with the world, not with man's own nature.

The eagle or the hawk is admired because of its aloofness, its independence. It does not follow the flock blindly, but lives its felt nature. Payne pleads with Lance to be like the hawk. "You are not one of the sparrows, you are not a flock-bird; but alone in your nature, separate as a gray hawk." Jeffers speaks of "a horseman high alone as an eagle on the spur of the mountain." The mass of men, the flock of birds, the swarm of insects, all are weak and undesirable. In "The Broken Balance" Jeffers refers to ant-hills as customs. "Men molding themselves to the anthill have choked/ Their natures until the souls die in them." The insect is always noxious. Madrone feels that if she should send her children to live in a city they would be "decaying to an average, growing to be like/ All the other insects that fill

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12 The Women at Point Sur, p. 69.
13 "People and a Heron," Roan Stallion, p. 92.
14 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 52.
15 "The Coast-Road," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 86.
the cities and defile the country."17 Mark's insanity is referred to as a swarming mind.18 The swarm stands for confusion and loss of individuality as opposed to the hawk. Lice provide a fitting image of dependent man.

I shot an eagle once,
And looked at the gorgeous corpse, ruffled the plumes
And saw the lice under them; we the white lice
On this eagle world. I don't make a good louse,
I lack contentment.
One ought to be satisfied with the warm grease
Under the stormy feathers flying through thunder; 19
Shut eyes and suck.

The eagle represents the difficult life of freedom; the lice the unthinking mass. The image offers a challenge to man. Mr. Frajam Taylor summarizes Jeffers' use of the hawk image. "The hawk to Jeffers is the image of all that is proud, fierce, and unconquerable. It is a hard, strong, and lonely creature, ready to pounce with cruel predatory talons onto whatever it chooses to take for itself. It acknowledges no master: it bows to no law but that of its own being. Assertive, fearsome, aggressive—like the eagle of Nietzsche's Zarathustra—it is an ideal of god-like humanity."20

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17 Solstice, p. 112.
18 Thurso's Landing, p. 52.
19 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, pp. 15-16.
In "The Cruel Falcon" Jeffers says that the life of the cruel falcon is to be envied. Contemplation makes a good life if it is strict; action if it is sharp. Man's soul begins to die in pleasant peace and security. Freedom is wild and beautiful, but very difficult. To Miss Strauss the hawk's freedom is a symbol of the primary uncorrupted conscience of nature.

The most important single poem centered around the hawk image is "Give Your Heart to the Hawks." It is a story presenting the challenge of living the difficult and painful life of freedom symbolized by the hawk. At a night beach party, Lance in a rage of jealousy kills his brother Michael. His wife Fayne, eager to save Lance from the law, begs him not to admit his guilt. She tries to persuade him to be the judge of his own actions. "Oh, give your heart to the hawks for a snack o' meat/ But not to men." Fayne pleads with Lance, telling him it is necessary:

To be able to live, in spite of pain and that horror and the dear blood on your hands, and your father's God,
To be able to go on in pure silence
In your own power, not panting for people's judgment,
Nor the pitiful consolation of punishing yourself
Because an old man filled you with dreams of sin

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21 Solstice, p. 93.


23 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 29.
When you were little: you are not one of the sparrows, you are not a flock-bird: but alone in your nature, separate as a gray hawk.

Lance suffers from his oppressive sense of guilt. He hates himself. Life becomes valueless to him because he cannot discard the old values and standards. He cannot cast off some of his "humanity" and create new ideal values. In an effort to punish himself he jumps from a dizzy, lonely height to his death. The tragedy arises out of Lance's inability to live the free, courageous life of the hawk.

The story ends on a note of hope, however, when Payne, courageous as a young hawk, decides that though she could not keep Lance she will keep the child in her body--her child, who will change the world. Henry Seidel Canby says that Jeffers "has made a woman the symbol of the anti-defeatism of a race that, even if God is no friend of humanity, will accept the rigors of nature, seeing its grandeurs, and fight on toward a future." Payne leads the rigorous life of the hawk.

II

The second group of bird images symbolizes pain, the tragic fate of human characters. Pain is usually expressed

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24 Ibid., p. 52.
25 Henry Seidel Canby, "Give Your Heart to the Hawks," Saturday Review of Literature, X (October 7, 1933), 162.
by a bird that is wounded or caged or caught.

Natalia's pain is symbolized by a wounded bird. She struck her head on an iron stove in a struggle with Faith, who kept her from stabbing herself.

and Natalia
Rose from the bed like a snapped-wing hawk that flops up
On the sound wing against the children tormenting it
And strikes this way and that way quicker than sight
With beak and talons, so that it seems not to have struck
Yet the hands and the cheeks are bleeding: then the snapped wing
Betrays it and it falls but the children are scattered:
She falling back on the bed had not the hawk's
look nor silence.

Cruelty, slavery, degradation, pestilence, filth, and pitifulness of men make them like little hurt birds or animals. Fera speaks of the hardships of life as "hawk agonies." Later she refers to Michal's unkindness to her as aggravating her pain. "You were quite kind my days of sunshine,/ And now you pick the feathers from the sick bird." War as waged by Hitler is a wounded eagle. "Wounded: an eagle: we've clapped one wing over Denmark and one on

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27 "Contemplation of the Sword, "Be Angry at the Sun, p. 120.
28 Cawdor, p. 36.
29 Ibid., p. 99.
Norway, but the right's torn."\(^{30}\) In "At the Birth of an Age" the singers sing of God and of the essentially painful nature of the universe.

the peace of the eagle
Forever circling
Perfectly forever alone, no prey and no mate,
What peace but pain?
His eyes are put out, he has fountains of blood for eyes,
He endures the anguish
But if he had eyes there is nothing for him to see
But his own blood falling,
He is all that exists. . . . \(^{31}\)

The caged or caught bird represents the inevitability of pain and man's helplessness in coping with pain. "Faith felt like a hawk blinded at night/ Beating on glass."\(^{32}\) Lance finds life intolerable because of his oppressive sense of guilt. "I have beaten like a blind bird at every window of the world. No rational exit."\(^{33}\) The sorrow of Reave's mother is compared to a goshawk caught in a trap.

The old woman dragged her hands
Through the wet earth and stood up, lifting her yellow Asturine face: as when a goshawk is caught in a steel trap at a pole's end,
That was feathered with a bird for bait, and the farmer comes with death in his hands and takes down the pole, she turns

\(^{30}\) "The Bowl of Blood," *Be Angry at the Sun*, p. 83.
\(^{31}\) *Solstice*, p. 78.
\(^{32}\) *The Women at Point Sur*, p. 111.
\(^{33}\) *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 95.
In the steel teeth and outstares her captor with harder eyes.

The trap image, discussed in the preceding chapter, again expresses the inevitable pain, while the steel teeth of the trap suggest the intense reality of pain, both amplifying the effect of the image. Fera compares her agony, the need for a young man's love, to a bird. "But while I breathe I have to come back and beat against it, that stone [Hood's breast] for nothing, Wave after wave, a broken-winged bird/ Wave after wave beats to death on the cliff. Her blood in the foam." Helen feels that Rick is to Reave as a bird in a dog's mouth. In "At the Birth of an Age" the singers compare Christ's suffering to that of an eagle. "I see the pride of an eagle nailed up alive. . . . Enormous helpless shoulder-storms of an eagle nailed there: yet strive, wings, strive."

The crucified hawk or eagle symbolizes the needless crucifixions of human life. The caged eagle in "Cawdor" is used as such a symbol. Michal keeps the great bird with the trailing wing in a cage and feeds it live squirrels while

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34 Thurso's Landing, pp. 114-115.
35 Cawdor, p. 43.
36 Thurso's Landing, p. 39.
37 Solstice, p. 76.
beetles crawl by its weaponed feet. With all its pain and imprisonment, the eagle never loses its pride or courage. The hurt hawk is undefeated. Courage is part of its nature; self-pity is foreign to it. The hawk endures the pain of its broken wing, nor ever falls prey to cat or coyote.

He is strong and pain is worse to the strong, incapacity is worse.
The curs of the day come and torment him
At distance, no one but death the redeemer will humble that head,
The intrepid readiness, the terrible eyes.
The wild God of the world is sometimes merciful to those That ask mercy, not often to the arrogant.
You do not know him, you communal people, or you have forgotten him;
Intemperate and savage, the hawk remembers him;
Beautiful and wild, the hawks, and men that are dying,38 remember him.

The crucified hawk that Vidal and Julio Vasquez nailed by its broken wing to the barn wall and prodded with a wand symbolizes the needless suffering in the world.39

Humanity is caught in a trap of pain, and it is best for man to have strength and courage to endure pain as does the hawk.

III

The third function of the bird image is to express the inherent beauty of the universe, which is symbolized by the

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39 The Women at Point Sur, p. 11.
wild swan, an age-old symbol of beauty.

The Myrmidons call Helen of Troy a "wild swan, splendid-bodied."\(^{40}\) France riding beside the men fighting the ground-fire in the wild wind is exhilarated by the galloping horse, the fierce fire, and the wind; and she feels the immense, earnest, terrible beauty in them, her feeling being expressed by the bird image. "France rode beside them,/ Her heart flying like a bird, here was the beauty/ She'd not dreamed even."\(^{41}\)

The beauty of the bird is most often revealed in its flight. "...while the wings/ Weave like a web in the air/ Divinely superfluous beauty."\(^{42}\) In the poem "Flight of Swans" Jeffers speaks of the cyclical change of the universe, the cycle of seasons and the cycle of life and death. He refers to the beauty of the universe as a diamond without and to the beauty of life as the diamond within. Humanity with its angry choices and hopes and terrors is in vain. The universe is beautiful in its wholeness; it can be ugly in part, especially in man's cruelties. "The world is like a flight of swans."\(^{43}\) The

\(^{40}\) "At the Fall of an Age," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 196.

\(^{41}\) Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 45.

\(^{42}\) "Divinely Superfluous Beauty," Roan Stallion, p. 205.

\(^{43}\) Solstice, pp. 150-151.
flight of swans suggests the change and unhampered freedom and beauty of the universe.

The beauty of the universe finds its clearest expression in bird imagery in the sonnet "Love the Wild Swan," the wild swan representing the beauty of things that the artist can never capture.

"I hate my verses, every line, every word.
Oh pale and brittle pencils ever to try
One grass-blade's curve, or the throat of one bird
That clings to twig, ruffled against white sky.
Oh cracked and twilight mirrors ever to catch
One color, one glinting flash, of the splendor of things.
Unlucky hunter, Oh bullets of wax,
The lion beauty, the wild-swan wings, the storm of the wings."

--This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game.
Better bullets than yours would miss the white breast,
Better mirrors than yours would crack in the flame.
Does it matter whether you hate your . . . self? At least
Love your eyes that can see, your mind that can
Hear the music, the thunder of the wings. Love the
wild swan.

There is an earnestness, a wildness in beauty. The wild swan is the beauty of the universe in its entirety. "The greatest beauty is: Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man/ Apart from that."

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44 Solstice, p. 146.
IV

The fourth function of the bird images is to express imaginative, poetic, creative powers in man. The eagle and the hawk are often the sources and grandeur of inspiration.

Fera respected her father because "he had eagle imaginations."\(^{46}\) The wild grandeur of the eagle's flight is easily associated with the flight of the imagination. "His mind had wings and magnificence."\(^{47}\) Regarding a rock house, Jeffers calls the little clay kits of the sparrows, the imagination of the house.\(^{48}\)

The poet and his poetry have much in common with the falcon. The poet shall speak:

As a falcon on the slope
Of the coming storm afar
And wildly driven,
Cries aloud 'twixt earth and heaven
Ere he pass, and down the wind
Be mingled with the lightning bright and blind. \(^{49}\)

The poet speaks of his song as "my eagle of messengers,
my falcon of fair speech."\(^{50}\) It is the poet's affair

\(^{46}\) Cawdor, p. 32.
\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 62.
\(^{48}\) "Winged Rock," Thurso's Landing, p. 129.
\(^{49}\) "Ode on Human Destinies," Californians, pp. 202-203.
\(^{50}\) "Maldrove," Californians, p. 37.
"to awake dangerous images/ And call the hawks." Hawk-like imagery is desirable for poetry:

... for a poem
Needs multitude, multitudes of thoughts, all fierce,
all flesh-eaters, musically clamorous
Bright hawks that hover and dart headlong, and ungainly
Gray hungers fledged with desire of transgression, salt
slimed beaks, from the sharp
Rock shores of the world and the secret waters.

Poems are not static or temporal, and Jeffers regrets that they are pinned to the calendar by historians like butterflies to cardboard. They should be alive and free like the hawk.

However much the birds represent the imaginative power, the splendor of the poem can never reproduce the splendor of "the throat of one bird/ That clings to twig, ruffled against white sky."

V

Sometimes death is associated with birds. "He thought of death/ Comes down like a hawk—on the man," and "Ah, grasshoppers,/ Death's a fierce meadowlark." In

51 "Triad," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 114.
52 "Birds," Roan Stallion, p. 86.
53 "Note," (Introduction), Be Angry at the Sun.
54 "Love the Wild Swan," Solstice, p. 146.
55 The Women at Point Sur, p. 132.
56 "Wise Men in their Bad Hours," Roan Stallion, p. 251.
associating the bird with death, one thinks of the pain of death and also the desirable beauty of death, the freedom of death.

More frequently the release of the spirit or the return to inhuman nature is symbolized by the flight of the eagle. Young Carling speaks to his brother of his feeling for the beauty and freedom of the plain. "Oh Gunnar it seems to me that my spirit,/ After the close fields and forest at home, flies towering up to the sun like a noon-eagle/ Above this plain." 57 Here the eagle's flight represents a new freedom, and the flight of the spirit is closely related to the imaginative powers of man. The flight of the spirit, however, is usually associated with death. Cassandra speaks of death as a flight. "O vulture-/ Pinioned, my spirit one flight yet, last, longest, unguided,/ Try into the gulf." 58 Fera in speaking of her father's near death expresses the flaming away of the soul before its return to inhuman nature. Death is the soul's last flaming. "If I were able I would take him up, groaning to death, to the great Rock/ Over your cramp cellar of a canyon, to flame his bitter soul away like a shot eagle/ In the streaming sky." 59 The flight of the

57 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 4.
59 Cawdor, p. 36.
soul, then, in Jeffers' poetry does not imply personal immortality, but rather the last fierce burning of consciousness or of life.

The last fierce rush of the spirit is beautifully expressed in "Hurt Hawks." The wounded hawk is mercifully shot.

I gave him the lead gift in the twilight. What fell was relaxed, Owl-downy, soft feminine feathers; but what Soared: the fierce rush: the night-herons by the flooded river cried fear at its rising Before it was quite unsheathed from reality. 60

The soul flight of Michalis eagle carries one skyward until man is nothing but an atomic speck; one sees the mountains flatten, the earth shrink to insignificance. The flight is beyond time, so that one sees the great tidal changes of nature going on forever, growth and decay—changes both earthly and universal. In the eagle's death dream one sees the indifferent God of the universe and nature as essentially painful, though beautiful. The dream further reveals the final peace for man in non-human nature even though complete annihilation cannot be realized. It is the most philosophic passage in the group, only part of which is quoted. George shot the wounded eagle, freeing the "cage-hoarded desire."

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60 Cawdor, p. 154.
What leaped up to death,
The extension of one storm-dark wing filling its world,
Was more than the soft garment that fell.

This rose,
Possessing the air over its emptied prison,
The eager powers at its shoulders waving shadowless
Unwound the ever-widened spirals of flight
As a star light, it spins the night-stabbing threads
From its own strength and substance: so the aquiline
desire
Burned itself into meteor freedom and spired
Higher still.

There the eagle's phantom perceived
Its prison and its wound were not its peculiar
wretchedness,
All that lives was maimed and bleeding, caged or in
blindness,
Lopped at the ends with death and conception, and shrewd
Cautery of pain on the stumps to stifle the blood, but not
Refrains for all that; life was more than its functions
And accidents, more important than its pains and pleasures,
A torch to burn in with pride, a necessary
Ecstasy in the run of the cold substance,
And scape-goat of the greater world. (But as for me,
I have heard the summer dust crying to be born
As much as ever flesh cried to be quiet.)
Pouring itself on fulfilment the eagle's passion
Left life behind and flew at the sun, its father.
The great unreal talons took peace for prey
Exultantly, their death beyond death; stooped upward,
and struck.
Peace like 'a white fawn in a dell of fire.' 61

Thus in life's last flaming flight, one finds the affirmation
for the rigorous life of the eagle and for the peace
found in death.

61 Cawdor, pp. 114-117.
VI

The sixth group of bird images functions sensuously. Nearly one hundred of these are visual; approximately twenty-six refer to the sense of sound; very few to the senses of touch, taste, and smell.

The wings of a bird are frequently used to describe cloud formations or a sunrise. "...when the red hawk wings of the first dawn/Streamed up the sky over it [mountain]."62 The sunset is like wings, "The evening opens/ Enormous wings out of the west,"63 and also like feathers, "Red in the foam hang the westering/Feathers of day's end."64 These images indicate Jeffers' interest in color. And when Reave arrives at the desert shack to take Helen home with him, she feels that her misfortune is so bright that the desert sun is a crow's wing by comparison.65 Hills are parted like wings: "...high over the lifted hawk-wings of the divided hills."66

The motion of the wings provides for many sensuous images. One is of Clare Walker's coat. "...her grotesque

63 "Point Pinos and Point Lobos," Roan Stallion, p. 240.
64 "The Bowl of Blood," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 79.
65 Thurso's Landing, p. 37.
66 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 47.
cloak/ Blown up to her shoulders; flapping like wings/
About the half nakedness of the slender body. "Even
shed-doors are like wings.

When she opened the shed-doors
The fierce wind from the south took them like sparrow's
wings and broke them backward and tore the hinges,
One of the wings tore free and flew in the air, fell on
gray grass.

The overlapping of the functions of the image is obvious
here. Besides being a sensuous image, it strongly suggests
the inevitable pain, the tragic fate of man as a result of
forces beyond his control. The words took and broke them
backward resemble the sound of the tearing wing. The action
itself in its violence suggests a fierce wind or uncontrol-
vable force. Drunken Charlie sees the body of a drowned
girl in the ocean. "She wavered up through the green water/
Like a moth flying." The motion of wings is also compared
to an artery on the side of Vina's throat which flutters
like a bird as she holds out her arms to Hugh.

The ant provides an interesting image. "An instant
thought of Helen/Ran like a string of ants over his mind."

68 Solstice, p. 114.
69 "Drunken Charlie," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 145.
70 "Steelhead, Wild Pig, The Fungus," Such Counsels
You Gave to Me, p. 74.
71 Thurso's Landing, p. 37.
The thought is made concrete, persistent, annoying and active by the ant image.

The voice of the bird is sometimes compared to the song of creeks or rivers, "the bird-chatter of little rivers." But it is the cry of the bird compared to the cry of man which is used more often. Such is the cry of California's husband as the stallion tramples him to death. "...the man/ Lurched up to his knees, wailing a thin and bitter bird's cry." Such images of sound also suggest man's suffering. Helen's wild, hysterical laugh is like the cry of a bird. "Suddenly Helen/ Laughed like the bitter crying of a killdeer when someone walks near the nest." The sense of danger adds to the painfulness, the terror of the laugh. To Barclay pains scream like eaglets. "All the earth's agonies/ Scream in my ears like famished eaglets in the aerie/ Furious for the black flesh of annihilation." The intenseness of pain is made so real that it finds outward expression in a scream and is therefore a sensuous image. It is implied that the earth's agonies are many. Pain is ever-present.

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73 Roan Stallion, p. 27.
74 Thurso's Landing, p. 40.
75 The Women at Point Sur, p. 104.
The sensuous images are important chiefly for making abstract things concrete and consequently more vivid. The vividness is also achieved by describing the physical manifestation of a feeling. For this reason the description becomes more real than it otherwise would be, either more beautiful or more ugly. In addition to the sensuous function of these images, the very association with the bird itself carries in its many subtle hands the fruits of the other trees of function.

In conclusion, the images of birds function chiefly in six ways: (1) The images serve to show man the ideal life for him to live—the rigorous life of the hawk, in which he finds courage, independence, freedom, and victory over pity and other emotions. (2) They express pain, the needless crucifixions of human life. (3) That there is beauty in all the vast workings of nature is verified by the wild swan image. (4) Some bird images represent man's poetic and imaginative powers, again expressing the desirability of bird-like qualities. (5) The eagle and hawk images, especially of the bird in flight, describe death and the last flight of the spirit before it is burned out. (6) The last group of bird images functions sensuously, making the thing compared concrete and vivid. Most of these images are visual.
CHAPTER IV

IMAGES OF PLANTS

The images of plants comprise the smallest group of nature images. There are two and a half times as many animal images and about one and a half as many bird images as there are plant images, yet the plant images add greatly to the sensuous vividness of the poems and also to the philosophic thought. There are 196 plant images, which is 8.9 percent of the nature images and 6.1 percent of the total images classified.

The flora of the coastal region most often described is the trees: eucalyptus, alder, cypress, sycamore, oak, pine, madrone, fir, redwood, and willow; and the many wild flowers, some of which are the following: Indian paintbrush, verbena, wild-gourd, wild strawberry, wild buckwheat, wild lilac, maidenhair fern, sage, lupin, thistle, poppy, blackberry, saw-grass, bitter sorrel, colt's foot, and yellow violet. These trees and flowers are used both in the imagery and in descriptive passages, such as in the poem "The Maid's Thought."¹ The accurate detail of the flora of the Carmel region may have been in part a result of Jeffers' study of forestry at the University of Washington. Lester Rowntree,

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¹ Roan Stallion, p. 206.
a botanist, has written of the flora in Jeffers' poetry.

It is a relief to find someone with a grasp on the feel of the place, someone who can treat our forests and wild flowers with the dignity they should inspire, for they have suffered sorely at the hands of sentimentalists. . . . Much has been written of the trees and plant life of our district and many erroneous references made, but no one has tied them to the landscape and to the very core of the land in which they grow as has Jeffers.

The functions of the plant images fall into four main divisions. The first group functions to affirm life. Especially in its moments of fierce consciousness or awareness through passion or pain, it can shine magnificently. The second group stresses the brevity of life through the fact that both plants and men perish and die. The third group expresses the deep-rooted persistence of traditions and customs, self-imposed tyrannies in the life of man, making him a slave to the past. The fourth group functions sensuously.

I

The plant image defines the bright point of consciousness of life through passion and pain. Life is a process of flowering or ripening. Mary says of Jesus:

The shining that came forth from between my thighs... Is gone: past the flower and the fall I sit and sing a cracked song.

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2 Lawrence Clark Powell, Robinson Jeffers, citing Lester Rowntree in The Carmelite, pp. 88-89.

3 Dear Judas, p. 12.
The flowering usually represents awareness or activity. "She looked like an incredibly small flower-stock/ Suddenly flowering."\(^4\) Helen's decision to shoot Reave to free him from his pain is a flowering of her intention.\(^5\) Flowering then is the highest point of realization. Helen's running off with Rick Armstrong was a flowering or expression of her fear of Reave.\(^6\)

Man's life is compared to that of a ripening berry. Pain is represented by the plow and pruning-iron, both knife images.

Rain, hail and brutal sun, the plow in the roots, The pitiless pruning-iron in the branches, Strengthen the vines, they are all feeding friends Or powerless foes until the grapes purple. But when you have ripened your berries it is time to begin to perish.

Civilization is also ripening and, therefore, will soon be in its decline.\(^8\) The ripeness suggests a complete life, life lived to the fullest degree.

Life-sustaining blood is a noble flower. "For now men fall in battle and that noble flower flowing from their

\(^4\) *Thurso's Landing*, p. 78.
\(^8\) "The Bowl of Blood," *Be Angry at the Sun*, p. 87.
bodies/ Tells nothing except how beautiful they might have been. 9  Blood is a noble, rich, glowing color, too strong for the modern world to admire. 10 The association of the flower with red and blood adds to the brightness and intensity of the experience.

Usually the flower is a symbol of the intense moments of life and is, therefore, associated with passion. Cawdor cannot disregard his passion for Fera:

The image
Of the young haggard girl streaked with the dirt of the fire
And her skirt torn to bandage her father's face
Lived like a plant in his blood.

Passion is often a burning flower, most often a red one.

0 it is time for us now
Mouth kindling mouth to entangle our maiden bodies
To make that burning flower.

The rose of sunset is used as a symbol of passion.

The whole cloud began to glow with color like a huge rose, a forest of transparent pale crimson petals
Blowing all about them; slowly the glory
Flared up the slope and faded in the high air. 13

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9 "That Noble Flower," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 95.
10 Loc. cit.
11 Cawdor, p. 9.
13 Thurso's Landing, p. 23.
Helen speaks of Reave's life since he became paralyzed as a rind. "When the flower and fruit are gone, nothing but sour rind;/ Why suck the shell?" Life should be naturally and completely experienced.

Sometimes passion is represented by the apple. Electra in speaking to Orestes refers to incest as biting the apple. The grape image is used frequently in "Fauna," a love lyric. In the purple grape one finds suggestions of sweetness; of approachable softness and roundness; of desire, established in part by its deep, rich color. The crushing of the grape against one's palate symbolizes the fulfillment of desire.

Love is a grape.

"... but love grows here on the hill, wild, wild, God's grape to crush.
Sent by God, you said I was. A wild grape, a wild gift in the dark
Storm to hide us."

But pleasure is not so sharp nor intense as passion; it does not afford one the full realization of life. "Pleasure is merely contemptible, the dangled/ Carrot the ass follows to market or precipice."  

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14 Ibid., p. 27.
15 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 79.
16 Roan Stallion, pp. 207-220.
17 "The Coast-Range Christ," Roan Stallion, p. 188.
18 "Birth-Dues," Dear Judas, p. 121.
Battles are beautiful blossoms forever unfolding or untimely iron flowers. A battle is a flower because it is one of the times in a person's life when consciousness is drawn to a sharp focus. "We shall have to perceive that battle is a burning flower or like a huge music, and the dive-bomber's screaming orgasm/ As beautiful as other passions." When life is intense, even painful, when it is most fully realized, it is like a flower. It is most beautiful when one is most alive to it. The flower and fruit images affirm life.

Unless one has lived fully, it takes a while for the suppressed passion or desire to burn itself out after the person has died. Jeffers speaks of the brain-glow after death as being "like bits of rotting wood on the floor of the night forest/ Warm rains have soaked, you see them beside the path shine like vague eyes." He says further that after death "each bud that had been nipped and fallen grew out to a branch,/ Sparks of desire forty years quenched flamed up fulfilment." The relationship to the flight of the eagle or the soul's last flaming is obvious.

19 "At the Fall of an Age," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 195.
20 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 54.
21 "Battle May 28, 1940," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 131.
22 Cawdor, p. 50.
23 Loc. cit.
Desire should be allowed to flower; for life shines brightly in its intense moments. When life is lived to the brim, when life is a blossom or a fruit, it is best. Jeffers never denies life. Nevertheless, in his fundamental affirmation of life, he does not value consciousness as much as he does unconsciousness. Consciousness is sometimes a bitter weed, sometimes a contagion. It is associated with pain and is therefore less desirable, less admirable than unconsciousness. But life, a necessary part of nature, is affirmed.

II

The second function of the plant image is to stress the brevity of life by emphasizing the fact that both men and plants perish. Some images suggest in a general way the passing of time. Two thousand years are like grains of corn one holds in his hand. 24 It has been a "forest of years" since Christ lived. 25 Even the seemingly permanent things are slaves to time. "Short-lived as grass the stars quicken in the nebula and dry in their summer." 26 Most often it is the wilting flower and the shrivelling

24 Dear Judas, p. 32.
25 Ibid., p. 9.
fruit which forcefully make life seem ephemeral. People and flowers have short lives. The withering of the flower indicates death.

And here unknown
Hoped to live out their love and lives, and wither
As in green shade two deer-bells, which alone
The forest wildbirds visit.

Ruth Alison is compared to a flower, delicate and fragile. "Hers indeed/ Was a mild heart easily to be bruised,/ Not long enduring, soft and flowerlike sweet." Madrone speaks of her children as "murdered flowers." In "Dear Judas" man is referred to as a "poor withered rose." Underlying all these images is the sense of fatality.

People are also like fruit, especially the apple. Death is as common in battle as a fallen apple in an orchard. "They [men] fall and fall/ Like apples in a wind." In speaking of old age, Reave refers to his wife as a shrivelled apple.

...and Helen
Like a little shrivelled apple by the fire between

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28 "Ruth Alison," Californians, p. 91.
29 Solstice, p. 125.
30 Dear Judas, p. 29.
31 Thurso's Landing, p. 117.
Peace considers herself a little ripe apple that her husband leaves on the bough to rot. Fruit is often associated with old age and death. When Helen looks out of the window, she sees Mark's body hanging from a tree: "The ivory tree/Seemed to have borne in the rain enormous fruit." Fruit with its suggestions of ripening, shrivelling, and falling from the tree is an appropriate image of death. The fruit, however, should not leave the tree before it is ripe.

Jeffers is saying that he does not condone suicide. Strength and courage to endure are more desirable.

When Reave is wounded by the hissing, flying wire, which held the cable above the gorge, he is "like a red root cut by the plow and pitched/ Forth of the furrow." The life source is cut; withering and dryness follow. Sometimes

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32 Ibid., p. 58.
33 "The Coast-Range Christ," Roan Stallion, p. 175.
34 Thurso's Landing, p. 101.
35 "Suicide's Stone," Roan Stallion, p. 250.
36 Thurso's Landing, p. 104.
it is the axe in the tree that causes death.

But Lance began:
To shake, like a tall dead mast of redwood that men are felling;
It is half cut through, each dip of the axe the sonorous timber quivers from the root up to the cloud.

Both men and trees are vulnerable to axes.

At times a dead person is compared to a broken stick. Martial wished he had died in the fire: "To be a blackened log with the others/ Lying quiet." At times death is like the burning of straws.

...and from time to time
A war or a revolution rakes them up like dry straws in a stack and burns them.

Man is susceptible to death; that he will die is a thought, ever present, making the life span but a lightning flash in the long night. Man perishes as do flowers, fruits, and even trees. However, at times, Jeffers feels that there is something permanent in the yearly repetition of grass and in the oak, cypress, and redwood trees. In "The Summit Redwood" Jeffers speaks of the endurance and long-life

37 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 23.
38 Thurso's Landing, p. 104.
39 Cawdor, pp. 8-9.
40 Solstice, p. 112.
41 Cawdor, p. 139.
of the tree, and in "Granite and Cypress" of the long-lasting, almost permanent quality in both granite and cypresses. Cypresses have strength to endure the tempest—more strength than man. "But at present/ There is not one memorable person, there is not one mind to stand with the trees, one life with the mountains." The trees seem as old as the rock and as unchanging.

Old cypresses
The sailor wind works into deep-sea knots A thousand years.

Generally speaking, however, the plant images show that men like flowers and fruits' wither and die. Life is brief; it is but "the flicker of men and moths and the wolf on the hill."  

III

The third function of the plant image is to show that man's life is rooted in the past, that tradition is a self-imposed tyranny. Payne begs Lance not to think of hell and not to speak strangely. "That's for your father, who/ Walks

42 Roan Stallion, p. 89.
43 "Contrast," Cawdor, p. 143.
45 "Night," Roan Stallion, p. 84.
his road all staring between hedges/ Of Christs and Satan."[46] The father creates his own heaven and hell in life, his own fears by accepting for truth an old myth. Christ speaks of planting seeds which will influence future generations.

Even now on earth my love makes war upon death and misery, not like a sword, like a young seed, And not men's souls, but far down the terrible fertile future their children, changed and saved by my love, May build the beauty of an earthly heaven on all our dead anguishes, and living inherit it.

Men want to influence future generations. It is difficult not to want power, not to want to be a savior of men.

Men do not stumble on bones mostly but on seeds, And this young man [the dead men's child] was not of the sad race of Prometheus, to waste himself in favor of the future.

The bones represent that which is dead and gone; the seeds that which will twine itself vinelike around some new tree. The great influence of the Roman Empire is referred to as a stone rose seeding the earth.[49] The remains of an old dwelling are "like seeds ill planted."[50]

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[46] Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 66.
Tamar speaks of Helen, her father's sister, whose spirit visits her on the beach as a vicious berry grown up out of the graveyard for her poison. Thus Helen, though long dead, reaches fingers of influence from the grave to mold Tamar's life.

In "The Broken Balance" Jeffers speaks of the "hopeless prostration of the earth/ Under men's hands and their minds" and of civilization as "the spreading fungus, the slime-threads/ And spores." In society the law of precedence is followed to the detriment of the freedom of the individual. Orestes speaks of the stalk of his humanity as broken when he turns his love to inhuman nature free of old values. The stalk represents his tie or his relationship to values of the past.

To-night, lying on the hillside, sick with those visions, I remembered
The knife in the stalk of my humanity; I drew and it broke; I entered the life of the brown forest
And the great life of the ancient peaks, the patience of stone, I felt the changes in the veins
In the throat of the mountain.

Sometimes fagots express determinism. David says to Peace, "Now I see that God was at work and both of us

51 "Tamar," Roan Stallion, p. 133.
52 Dear Judas, p. 118.
fagots for that fire." In "The Three Avilas" the boy and girl are as surely doomed as "two twigs bound in one fagot to be hurled/ Into a fire's white heart and central force."55

Madrone's strength of will may remind one of the madrone tree. Mr. Gilbert in his book on Jeffers says, "Madrone's will could be called the will of nature revolting under the yoke of man's self-imposed tyranny."56 Much of this tyranny is the traditions which are growing like plants and are deeply rooted in the past. Civilization with its traditions is an old, rotten tree which must give way to change. "The storm that broke the old rotten tree/ Was justified by a sprouting acorn."57 New values are slow to replace old ones; the root is long lived. "The field must be broken before the spring sowing,/ The old wood must be broken before the young forest."58

The root image is used many times meaning merely the source or origin. The lie Mary told Jesus regarding his birth is the root from which both his power and his ruin

55 Californians, p. 50.
56 Rudolph Gilbert, Shine, Perishing Republic, p. 142.
57 "The Bowl of Blood," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 94.
58 Dear Judas, p. 25.
The greater influence of Mary's lie, the whole Christian faith, is also suggested by the root image.

Sometimes roots in their deep, dark world represent peace from passions. "Reach down the long morbid roots that forget the plow, / Discover the depths." 60

Seeds, stalks, and roots tie man to the past. He is not free to live his felt nature as does the hawk and to fly alone above the tree tops clear of entanglements with dead men.

IV

The fourth function of the plant image is sensuous. Nearly all of these images are visual. The eagle's wing is like a fern-leaf. 61 Hills are "round rocks mossed in their cracks with trees." 62

Some people are like plants. Reave Thurso is as strong and hard as an oak. "He was somewhat/ Short-coupled, but so broad in the chest and throat, and obviously all oak." 63 The reference is presumably to the scrub oak, a short, sturdy tree. Fawn and her child bathing in the sea

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61 *Cawdor*, p. 21
62 *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 73.
63 *Thurso's Landing* p. 11.
are as lovely as a bud and a flower. Hair is frequently referred to as a dark forest or as seaweed. "In the harmless water, the auburn hair trailed forward/ Darkened like weeds." A sallow face is like a sunless plant. As red usually represents something passionate and violent, so in a negative way "sunlessness" represents something lifeless and insipid. Eyes are made more intense and wild when associated with red.

At other times it is nature that is flowerlike. The beauty of red sunsets is not a quiet, but a wild beauty. "Sundown is like a sunless plant. As red usually represents something passionate and violent, so in a negative way "sunlessness" represents something lifeless and insipid. Eyes are made more intense and wild when associated with red.

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evening. 70 Dawn may also be like a fruit ripening. 71 Cloud formations are always interesting. "The old man looked up at the cloud-flecks/ Like algae breeding on clear deep well-water around the moon." 72 

Compared to the visual images, the images of touch, smell, taste, and sound are negligible. They are used to a lesser degree in plant imagery than in animal and bird imagery, and less in bird than in animal imagery. Mr. Powell believes that Jeffers' genius is primarily visual, 73 and a study of the imagery supports his belief. Jeffers has the power of animating that which he sees and of using the exact image, be it beautiful or ugly.

V

In summary, the plant images function chiefly in four ways: (1) The images define the intensity of consciousness through passion and pain. They represent the full blossoming and natural ripening of life, which is desirable. (2) By comparing the life of man to plant life, Jeffers stresses the fact that life is transitory. It is only a relatively short time until man, like the flower, withers and dies.

70 "Tamar," Roan Stallion, p. 110.
71 "The Stone Axe," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 110.
72 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 69.
73 Lawrence Clark Powell, Robinson Jeffers, p. 141.
(3) The plant images by being tied to the earth show how man is tied to influences of the past. Man's individuality is suppressed by tradition. (4) The images describe sensuously the earth in all its aspects. The visual comparisons of form and color are primary.

It should be noted that in the imagery studied in Chapters II, III, and IV the most important function of the images has been significance; that is, most of these images have been used to define or amplify Jeffers' position on some philosophical or social question.
CHAPTER V

IMAGERY OF MAN

Though the images of man are many and important, most of these function sensuously and, consequently, do not warrant lengthy discussions. The importance of the sensuous function, however, should not be minimized. It is largely responsible for the vividness, reality, and intense beauty of Jeffers' poems. In the animal, bird, and plant imagery there are proportionately fewer images whose function is sensuousness than in the man imagery.

Images of man include all comparisons of persons and of the physical parts of man. There are 661 such images, which is 20.5 percent of the total images and 26.9 percent of the nature images.

The problem underlying most of Jeffers' poetry is the problem of people living together and adjusting to environment. It is important to note, therefore, that the individuals of his poems are symbols of the human race in all its phases (they are not included in the scope of this thesis, but are important symbolically); the environment is all non-human substance and space. However, the imagery itself helps to define the physical universe, man's relation to it, and the problem of man's adjustment to his environment.
There are four chief functions of the images of man. First the images support Jeffers' scientific view of the universe—that is, that man is a product, not a measure of the universe, and that the ultimate fate of man is extinction, possibly within the cycle of evolution. Second the images show that egocentric man has created for himself an unnatural environment and for this reason civilization is decadent. The third function is an extension of the second, the purpose of which is to prove that humanity is psychologically living in incest and that Christ is an example of the introvert whose love is turned inward upon humanity. The last group, in which many images are used to animate nature, functions sensuously. Also included in this group are sensuous images taken from the sciences—physiology, psychology, and chemistry—with which Jeffers had become familiar through his studies of the sciences and in the school of medicine.

I

Nature is the great mother image, out of whose womb came man, man being a child or product of nature. The universe, sufficient in itself, existed before man was born and will continue to exist after he is gone. Nature gave birth to man; he is only an abortion from nature's
womb, one of the many.

I Night the Mother
Watching the right abortions pour from my womb,
Gods, men, and the stars and Caesar,
Receive them with kindness when they stream home.1

Nature is the mother who gives birth to man and to whom
man returns in death.

In the beginning before light began
We lay or fluttered blind in burdened wombs,
And like that first so is the last of man,
When under death for husband the amorous tombs
Are covered and conceive; nine months go by
No midwife called, nine years no baby's cry.2

Our race will perish: "Other births/ Even now are quick-
ening in the timeless womb."3 Men are the earth's children,
but only "Temporary fosterlings."4 All will be re-absorbed
or re-formed by nature. "There's nothing under the sun
but crumbles at last."5 Life is, however, evolutionary
and cyclical. There was a time "when we [man] crawled out
of the womb and lay in the sun's eye on the tideline."6

1  Dear Judas, p. 16.
4 "Maldrove," Californians, p. 32.
5 Cawdor, p. 59.
Life is "repeating itself always like the leaves of a tree, or the lips of an idiot." And the universal change may also be cyclical as suggested by the tides:

The tides of the brute womb, the excess
And weight of life spilled out like water, the last migration
Gathering against this holier valley-mouth
That knows its fate beforehand, the flow of the womb, banked back
By the older flood of the ocean to swallow it.

All that exists is subject to change; man to extinction. As the ocean tosses substance into form, so will it in time swallow all.

Man, as a temporary product of nature, becomes insignificant. His triviality is well expressed by the animal image. The above references to life as an abortion and as being spilled out like water again suggest man's relative unimportance. The universe does not exist for the convenience of man. While he is a part of nature, nature was not ordered to fit his needs; it did not come tailor-made. Life is referred to as celled slime, and man as an "atomic center of power clouded in its own smoke." Life

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7 "Tamar," Roan Stallion, p. 93.
8 "Haunted Country," Roan Stallion, p. 93.
10 Cawdor, p. 115.
is also a torch-bearer's race:

...it is run in a dusk; when the emptied racer drops unseen at the end of his course. A fresh hand snatches the hilt of the light, the torch flies onward. Though the man die. Not a runner knows where the light was lighted, not a runner knows where it carries fire to. Hand kisses hand in the dark, the torch passes, the man Falls, and the torch passes.

The creation of man was apparently purposeless. The value of life, which Jeffers never denies, is in the running of the race.

...we are willing to love the four-score years Heartily; but as a sailor loves the sea, when the helm is for harbor.

Fera compares the uselessness of the doctor's trip to her father's life of failure.

"Like this old man," she said, "and the other Millions that are born and die; come all the sloppy way for nothing and turn about and go back. They have the drive."

When man is referred to as a racer or a poor dancer, the ephemerality of life is stressed. Even tears suggest the

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12 "Night," Roan Stallion, p. 85.
13 Cawdor, p. 52.
14 "To a Young Artist," Cawdor, p. 149.
brevity of life and become more or less inconsequential in time. "The water I draw at the spring has been shed for tears/ Ten thousand times." The tears also suggest the ever-present pain, the indestructibility of matter, and the cyclical forces of nature. Man must "eat change and endure." 

Jeffers says that in death the fragments of consciousness, beginning to lapse out of the frailties of life, enter another condition. Death, the entering of another condition, is as natural and simple as the shedding of a dry cell of skin, and as inconsequential.

She [an old woman] is thrown up to the surface of things, a cell of dry skin.
Soon to be shed from the earth’s old eyebrows,
I see that once in her spring she lived in the
streaming arteries,
The stir of the world, the music of the mountain.

In "Nova" Jeffers says that we cannot be sure of life for one moment. The flaming of any sun may increase suddenly ten-thousandfold or more, as did the Nova, and burn out itself and its planets in a short period of time. The

15 "Ossian’s Grave," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 122.
17 Cawdor, p. 82.
18 "Fawn’s Foster-Mother," Cawdor, p. 130.
19 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, pp. 111-112.
fate of the human race, at least as far as individual identity is concerned, is extinction. "Remember that the life of mankind is like the life of a man, a flutter from darkness to darkness."20

Thus in Jeffers' scientific view of the universe, man is a temporary phenomenon. After showing man as insignificant as a dry cell of skin, Jeffers turns to the immediate problem of man's adaptation, discussed in Part II.

II

The second group of images defines man's problem of adaptation which arises from the unnatural environment he has created for himself. He has made a set of values, good and evil, by which he tries to live. But as these values are not natural to man, he finds his natural self rebelling against them; thus the dilemma. Life is a "ravel of nerves that made me a measurer/ Of certain fictions/ Called good and evil."21 Payne wrestles with her conscience. She sees the ethical code as outworn. "I am holding the made world by the throat/ Until I can make it change, and open the knot that past time tied."22 Thus man, by imposing upon himself an unnatural environment through custom and

21 "Inscription for a Gravestone," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 145.
22 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 61.
false values creates his own suffering. When his felt nature conflicts with the imposed rules of conduct, his awareness of the violation of the code burdens him with a sense of wrong. Life becomes cruel because of man's pride, jealousy, compassion, love, and hate. Death is described as a man undressing himself of laughable prides and infirmities. Cawdor's one jealous act, killing his son, grew to be his cancer. His conscience became his disease. He speaks of the two women he has known since the death of his wife as his vomits. As they are not readily accepted by society, Cawdor feels scorn for them. Faces are often like scars as pain or sorrow is visibly registered there. People have a bruised look about them. When Natalia learns her husband is returning from the war, she feels accusing fingers of conscience pointing at her. Faith, her lover, reproaches her. "But now," she answered, "you've had a letter from Randal/ And see eyes in the door."
Natalia's sense of guilt and frustration drives her to murder her child. She justifies the murder by reasoning:

She had a wound, do you see, in the eye of the body, When they grow up it turns a running ulcer And all that have it are unhappy.

Bruce is jealous of his brother and his wife. Because he is suspicious of their love, he feels like a dirty spy. "Coming home, he fought/ His violent need of sneaking to the lighted window/ And peek like a dirty spy."

Bruce asks Fawn for forgiveness because he suspected her of unfaithfulness, and then says to himself, "What do you want forgiveness for? . . . You fool,/ Let that corpse float." Their immoral love torments him, and finally in a desperate effort to escape his suffering, he takes his own life. A sense of wrong sticks in one's throat.

Man feels a need to suffer or be punished for his so-called sins. Thus Cawdor cuts out his eyes with a piece of flint and says, "These punishments are a pitiful self-indulgence./ I'd not the strength to do nothing."

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30 The Women at Point Sur, p. 163.
31 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 9.
32 Ibid., p. 50.
33 Thurso's Landing, p. 51.
34 Cawdor, p. 125.
Lance tears his hands on barbed wire and for a moment finds relief from his oppressive conscience. In "A Redeemer" an old man explains why he always carries wounds in the palms of his hands. "I am here on the mountain making Antitoxin for all the happy towns and farms." The life of freedom, of casting off established values, is a difficult one. It is much easier to place hope in a religion, the state, or even progress. "It is lonely to be adult, you need a father."

All of the prides, fear, pity, jealousy, cruelty, love, and hate spring from man's self-made cultural pattern. The culture has become a machine. "Every inhabited country Is clotted with human anguish."

Humanity itself is an infection.

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

Taking a city.

Human works and fineries are a quaint disease. Again

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35 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 87.
36 Cawdor, p. 133.
37 "Thebaid," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 105.
40 "Westward Beach," Californians, p. 147.
humanity is referred to as a festering wound.

But cut humanity
Out of my being, that is the wound that festers in me,
Not captivity, not my enemies: you will heal the earth
also;
Death, in your time.41

Civilization is called a transient sickness42 and also
the enemy of man.43 Here one sees a relationship to the
root and seed images which make man a slave to the past.

Walter Van Tilburg Clark in his study of Jeffers'
poetry summarizes the problem of man's adaptation.

But having developed as its [humanity's] outstanding peculiarity a self-conscious mind which is
clever enough to instigate material and ideational
growth combatting elementary evolution, and being
unable, of course, to break away from evolution (the
force which has developed that mind), it has succeeded
only in involving itself on a scale hitherto unknown,
in moral codes without sufficient natural reference,
in unnatural environment, and in self-concern as de-
structive socially as an equal introversion is personal-
ly. By dint of this involvement, operating the more
dangerously because of emotional natures which have
not been levelled by the intellect (truly Wordsworth's
"prying intellect"), but have, by that intellect, been
refused their natural outlets, and so made more than
ever uncontrollable; by dint of this involvement
humanity is hastening its period of decay, bringing on
its end much more rapidly than are the more natural
species.44

41 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 57.
42 "New Mexican Mountains," Thurso's Landing, p. 133.
44 Walter Van Tilburg Clark, "A Study in Robinson
Jeffers," (unpublished Master's thesis, University of
Vermont, Burlington, 1934), p. 28.
Man cannot exist when he must think in contradiction to his natural inclinations. The most destructive force is man's self-concern, which is discussed more fully in the following section with incest.

III

Because it is felt to be of sufficient importance, incest as a symbol is discussed separately. Jeffers believes that the human race is psychologically living in incest, that is, that all man's concerns are turned inward upon himself and that he is too deeply involved in satisfying his own wants. He presents these acts of incest as symbolic evidences of the decadence of man. Mr. Busch in his essay "Duel on a Headland" calls one's attention to the genetic fact that in incest procreation is itself a form of destruction ending in sterility. For this reason incest is a fitting symbol of man's destruction because of his complete concentration upon self. Man is digging a pit for himself.

Self-regardful humanity cutting itself away from the earth and the creatures, gathered home on itself, Digging a pit behind it and a gulf before it, Cancerous a growth that makes itself alien: how long would you be spared before the knife rings you and the spreading Ulcer scooped out, but this sound flesh solders you home to the beasts?

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46 The Women at Point Sur, p. 58.
Having broken out of humanity, Orestes tells Electra his dream of the introversion of the human race:

I saw a vision of us move in the dark:
all that we did or dreamed of
Regarded each other, the man pursued the woman, the woman clung to the man, warriors and kings
Strained at each other in the darkness, all loved or fought inward, each one of the lost people
Sought the eyes of another that another should praise him; sought never his own but another's; the net of desire
Had every nerve drawn to the center, so that they writhed like a full draught of fishes, all matted
In the one mesh; when they look backward they see only a man standing at the beginning,
Or forward, a man at the end; or if upward, men in the shining bitter sky striding and feasting,
Whom you call Gods...
It is all turned inward, all your desires incestuous,
the woman the serpent, the man the rose-red cavern,
Both human, worship forever...

As fish are caught in a net, so man is caught by his introversion, the net image (Chapter II) again suggesting man's inevitable suffering. Man's universe has become anthropocentric.

You have walked in a dream, consumed with your fathers and your mothers, you have loved
Inside the four walls of humanity, passions turned inward, incestuous desires and a fighting against ghosts.

The introversion of the human race is a self-woven web in

which it is caught. The web image is related to the net and trap images discussed earlier.

What, not to be tangled any more in the blinding Rays of reflected desire, the man with the woman, the woman with the child, the daughter with the father, but freed Of the web self-woven, the burning and the blistering strands running inward?

Absorbed by his own interests, man has created unsurmountable difficulties.

Man, introverted man, having crossed In passage and but a little with the nature of things this latter century Has begot giants; but being taken up Like a maniac with self-love and inward conflicts cannot manage his hybrids.

The only thing left for man to do is to break out of humanity, to turn his love outward to the non-human universe. "Humanity is the mold to break away from, the crust to break through, the coal to break into fire, the atom to be split." This is clearly expressed in "The Tower beyond Tragedy." After Orestes has killed his mother to revenge his father's murder, he is able to cast off humanity, to turn his love outward; no longer is he tortured by the emotions peculiar to mankind. He spurns the

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49 Ibid., p. 104.
51 Roan Stallion, p. 20.
incestuous love of Electra and finds the tower beyond tragedy above the pain of human emotions.

Racial introversion is destructive. Man must become reconciled to his relatively unimportant status and recognize the beauty of the vast universe about him. One must climb the great ladder out of the pit of himself and man.52

You children must widen your minds' eye to take mountains
Instead of faces, and millions
Instead of persons; not to hate life; and massed power
After the lone hawk's dead.

Christ is used as a symbol of self-love. His love was turned inward upon humanity; in this sense he was an introvert.

And the young Jew writhing on the domed hill in the earthquake, against the eclipse
Frightfully uplifted for having turned inward to love the people.

Christ's love was a "sacred hunger" for power over mankind. His extreme introversion was responsible for his destruction, for through crucifixion he obtained the power he sought. In "At the Birth of an Age" Carling dies like the young Jew

52 "Sign-Post," Solstice, p. 147.
because he too loved his enemy. Humanity was Christ's enemy because of his incestuous love of it. The poem is a story of the beginning of the Christian era and of Christ's passion for power. Christ feels that he has given the gift of love to man and that he will live on in men's hearts.

My truth is born. It has nothing to do with the dead; I loved the living and taught them to love each other.
Even now on earth my love makes war upon death and misery, not like a sword, like a young seed, And not men's souls, but far down the terrible fertile future their children, changed and saved by love,
May build the beauty of an earthly heaven on all our dead anguishes, and living inherit it.

The influence of Christ is described and amplified by the use of the seed image. His possessive love makes Jesus "more tyrannous, more terrible, more true, than Caesar or any subduer of the earth."57

"Dear Judas" tells of Jesus's passionate love of man which made him desirous of possessing men by living in their hearts. Jesus knew that "one must writhe on the high cross to catch at people's memories."58 He

55 Solstice, p. 83.
56 Ibid., p. 74.
57 Dear Judas, p. 33.
58 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 159.
reasoned:

For mild submission might appease them and lose me the cross: without that
The fierce future world would never kneel down to slake its lusts at my fountain. Only a crucified God can fill the wolf bowels of Rome; only a torture high up in the air, and crossed beams, hang sovereign
When the blond savages exalt their kings.59

The blood sacrifice is not necessary, although man has not outgrown it. Man does not have to crucify God to be atoned with him. Blood and the blood sacrifice are needed to satisfy dependent man. Many descriptions in the poems remind one of Christ's crucifixion and the needless crucifixions of life. Howard dreams of nailing a dog to wings in the laboratory,60 later the wild pig hung in a tree to be skinned reminds him of a crucified phallus.61

Christ's influence, made possible by the betrayal of Judas, has captained twenty centuries,62 and "like strong poison in a sickly world/ Works yet medicinal/ And deadly."63 Now the gospel is spooned down one's throat when he is young.64

59 Dear Judas, p. 37.
60 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 18.
61 Ibid., p. 22.
62 Dear Judas, p. 35.
63 "The Year of Mourning," Californians, p. 182.
64 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 49.
And nobody sees good or evil but out of a brain a
hundred centuries quieted, some desert
Prophet's, a man humped like a camel, gone mad
between the mud-walled village and the mountain sepulchres.

Religions are thus derived from a "private impurity";
Christianity from a woman's lie and a man's lust for
power and passionate love turned inward upon mankind.
Gods themselves are a product of man's mind. "Our baser
part of consciousness flows over, and mocks us from without. Thence Gods were made."

Jeffers does, however, believe in an impersonal, non-
human God—a God who is "the whole splendor of things." "Every eye that has a man's nerves behind it has known
him." God is indifferent to man.

The God of the stars has taken his hand out of the
laws and has dropped them empty
As you draw your hand out of a glove.

The beauty of God is in his organic wholeness; therefore
"this people as much as the sea-granite is part of the God

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65 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 158.
67 "Contemplation of the Sword (April, 1938),"
Be Angry at the Sun, p. 120.
68 "Hellenistics," Such Counsels You Gave to Me,
p. 121.
69 The Women at Point Sur, p. 36.
from whom I desire not to be fugitive." 70 No man-savior is needed.

They [men] are not to be pitied but very fortunate; they need no savior, salvation comes and takes them by force.

It gathers them into great kingdoms of dust and stone, the blown storms, the stream's-end ocean. 71

It is for man then to love "the coast opposite humanity," the beauty of the universe in its wholeness. Love focussed on one of its parts may become as ugly as a "severed hand." 72

IV

The fourth group of images functions sensuously. The large number of images belonging to this group testify to the fact that the man images are used chiefly to give the poetry a sense of reality and to make it more vivid. Of the 661 man images, 508 function sensuously. The percentage of sensuous images found in this group is much greater than it is in any other group discussed heretofore.

The sensuous images are divided into three groups. First are those that are used to animate nature, for

70 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 157.
71 Ibid., p. 160.
example: "Like mourning women veiled to the feet/ Tall slender rainstorms walk slowly against the gray cloud."\(^{73}\) There are 204 such images. The second group of sensuous images, some 72 of them, are drawn from the sciences, especially medical science, and are felt to warrant special mention. An illustration may help define the grouping:

"Howard felt a sudden increase of force and life in his mind, like a transfusion/ Of strong red blood."\(^{74}\) The last group includes all other sensuous images, of which there are approximately 232. Carson in his desire for Hildis is

Like a prisoner scraping the end of a broken bolt
Against a stone, for weeks, without any hope at all,
but willing to grind it to a sharp point
To pick the cement from the bearings of the barred window.

The images which animate nature often compare nature to a person. Pines are wardens;\(^{76}\) rocks are sentries. "Over against the beach of pines/ Four island-rocks stand sentry."\(^{77}\)

\(^{73}\) "Distant Rainfall," *Solstice*, p. 143.
\(^{74}\) *Such Counsels You Gave to Me*, p. 30.
\(^{75}\) "Resurrection," *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 168.
\(^{76}\) "A Westward Beach," *Californians*, p. 146.
Cormorants are like people.

They stand assembled on this rock
In ordered groups austerely.
No wing is moved, no neck is bent;
They seem a quiet folk intent
For some miraculous event.

The hawk attacking a heron is a pirate attacking a fisherman. And the cypresses are horsemen.

For up and down the coast they are tall and terrible horsemen on patrol, alternate giants
Guarding the granite and sand frontiers of the last ocean.

Other images animate nature by comparing some aspect of nature to a part of man's body. Oak trees have knotted knees, and thrust elbows at the wind. Rocks or mountains are referred to as having a nose, face, fingers, lips, shoulders, ankles, teeth, and eyebrows. The valley or canyon is the throat of a mountain. Raindrops are blind, quick fingers; the tide has a "liquid yet unequal hand."

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78 Ibid., p. 148.
79 "The Loving Shepherdess," Dear Judas, p. 68.
83 "Tor House," Cawdor, p. 150.
The eye is frequently used as an image. The ocean is a huge eye-ball.\textsuperscript{86} Dawn has red eyes which stab up through the nest-side.\textsuperscript{87} And sunset is the opening and closing of an eye.

The sea-west heaven
Opened an eye, whence the last of the sun
Flamed like a fire fallen into a well
Flashing before it is drowned, that makes the black disk of water
As bright as blood; and the wild angry light streams from the bottom up the stained wall
And washes with color every cold stone: so from the floor of the world a fountain and flood of roses Flew up to the height, those two riders might have seen Their own blue shadows on the red cloud above them;\textsuperscript{88} Then the eye of the west closed.

Blood is also used frequently as an image usually with reference to color. In the preceding quotation the ocean at sunset is as bright as blood. But Clare Walker "heard the ocean like the blood in her ears."\textsuperscript{89} Wounds are included as images of man because they seem to be a physical, tangible part of man. The road is a raw sore cut in the mountain's feet.\textsuperscript{90} The strips of sunset seen

\textsuperscript{86} "Subjected Earth," \textit{Give Your Heart to the Hawks}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{87} "The Torch-Bearer's Race," \textit{Roan Stallion}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Give Your Heart to the Hawks}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{89} "The Loving Shepherdess," \textit{Dear Judas}, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{90} "Mara," \textit{Be Angry at the Sun}, p. 41.
through cypress trunks "seem dull red wounds on foreheads of drowned men."\(^{91}\)

Nature is also animated by doing the things that men do. Thunder walks down a narrow canyon.\(^{92}\) One can see "the March rain walk on the mountain, sombre and lovely on the green mountain."\(^{93}\) "She found Lance at the fence-corner/ Where the north pasture comes down to drink."\(^{94}\) The redwoods draw themselves a little backward as from a fugitive.\(^{95}\) The sound of a fire is a snoring.\(^{96}\) Fayne believes that she and Lance can leave memory behind by travelling to a new country. "...and any ghost or memory that wants to follow us will be sore in the feet/ Before the day's end."\(^{97}\)

Most of the scientific images refer to some bodily function, and they surely reflect Jeffers' interest in the study of medicine. It is well to remember that all the scientific images do not belong to this group. In an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, referred to

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92 *Roan Stallion*, p. 12.
94 *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 63.
95 "Ruth Alison," *Californians*, p. 65.
96 "Come, Little Birds," *Be Angry at the Sun*, p. 112.
97 *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 105.
earlier, Niven Busch, Jr., says of Jeffers: "Biology, astronomy, medicine, forestry were his favorite subjects. At the time he set himself to master his chosen trade, he probably brought to it a better grasp of the scientific knowledge of our time than any other contemporary writer of verse."98

Birth is a commonly used image. The birth of a storm is compared to the birth of a child.

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. 99

Ireland is "a uterine country, soft/ And wet and worn out, like an old womb/ That I have returned to, being dead."100

The activity of the mind is compared to that of a womb. Faith feels the grandfather's shuffling motion as he drags himself slowly, painfully out of bed.

In Faith's mind
The womb's throes in waves
Of animal contraction
Thrust their object: she felt in her mind

100  "Ossian's Grave," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 122.
Not the knives and grinding
Of the pain she'd never experienced, but sick
thrust. . . .thrust... .
Complicating with stifling
Drunken abysses of remembered ether;
She felt the rings of flesh
Drawing and sucking
In waves on the bearded load, he had made his mother. 101

The sperm is a half-cell and its bride is the egg.

He imagined the terrible
Life-race of the myriad half-cells of one
Ejaculation, racing up the wet uterine
Darkness to find one bride.

It is "Like competition in the world outside: for one that
wins, / Thousands of others wither in the wet darkness." 103

Another function of the body that is frequently de-
scribed is the activity of the nerves and brain cells. The
mind, a group of nerve cells, is no more than its physical
parts and their interactions. The cells of the mind are
described during sleep and dreams.

Sleep deepened over him
Like heavy ocean, more like coma than sleep; his mind
made no appreciable dreams,
But crawling blindly about his body like a numbed spider
on its web of nerves, here it shook a filament
There a dark ganglion faintly glowed for a moment and
returned to darkness, a pin-point nexus of brain-cells
Grew phosphorescent and faded and faintly glowed again;
little superfluities of meaningless chemistry;

102 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, pp. 12-13.
103 Ibid., p. 13.
Besides the tidal glowing and paling, and the traffic-light rhythms
Of nerves that govern breathing and heart-beat, arteries
and viscera.

About that time a small constellation
Of nerve-cells began to glow in the sleeper's brain,
and his mind dreamed.

For a further dream the nerve-cells recharge their exhausted
batteries, and then "strands and galaxies of nerve-cells
flickered in the brain;/ And thin swords through the cord
and body, and the boy dreamed,"\(^{105}\) The head is a bone vessel
where all the nerves meet for counsel.\(^{106}\) When Hood fell
over the precipice and crushed his head on the rocks, the
bone vessel was burst, and each cell met its particular
death.

The vivid consciousness
That waking or dreaming, its twenty years, infallibly
Felt itself unitary, was now divided:
Like the dispersion of a broken hive: the brain-cells
And rent fragments of cells finding
After their communal festival of life particular deaths.
In their deaths they dreamed a moment, the unspent
chemistry
Of life resolving its powers; some in the cold star-
gleam
Some in the cooling darkness in the crushed skull.
But shine and shade were indifferent to them, their
dreams

\(^{104}\) Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 17.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., p. 18.
\(^{106}\) Cawdor, p. 81.
Determined by temperatures, access of air, wetness or drying, as the work of the autolytic enzymes of the last hunger hasted or failed.

Again death is described imaginatively as a physical phenomenon, revealing Jeffers' interest in body chemistry and in the scientific aspect of death.

After a time of darkness
The dreams that follow upon death came and subsided, like fibrillar twitchings
Of the nerves unorganizing themselves.

After the death of an individual the process of decomposition is begun.

Gently with delicate mindless fingers
Decomposition began to pick and caress the unstable chemistry
Of the cells of the brain.

Eyes are sometimes used as an image meaning consciousness or understanding. Sanity is the focusing of the eyes. Of men who will believe in him, Jesus says:

... and men will put out the eyes of their minds, lest faith
Become impossible being looked at, and their souls perish.

107 Cawdor, pp. 81-82.
108 "Margrave," Thurso's Landing, p. 147.
109 Cawdor, p. 49.
110 The Women at Point Sur, p. 25.
111 Dear Judas, p. 38.
Eyes dilate and contract like little hearts. Even sleep is described as a physical process: "Some gland poured opium into the blood." Gudrun sees another variety of dreamers "pass like pulses from a cut artery." The sickness in a body is compared to a rebellion in a nation.

Like a compact and powerfully organized state in the agony
Of insurrection, when strikes have blocked life-essential services, thirst, hunger and darkness are in the houses;
Leaders lose contact with their people, in the night of the streets under dead street-lamps undirected rioters,
Convulsed muscles of the great body of the state fight their own friends and build
Barricades against their own faction; red tongues of random fire stream up the sky,
The armored cars fall into traps and spit random death:

An interest in psychology is shown by several images. It is sometimes difficult to cast out of one's thoughts what he wills.

After we fail our minds go working under the ground, digging, digging. . . .we talk to someone,
The mind's not there but digging around its failure.
Lance says to Fayne, whom he thinks of constantly in association with his brother, whom he murdered in a jealous rage,

If you'd take your red hair and spindly face
Out of my lamplight I'd be alone: it's like a burst blood-vessel
In the eye of thought.

When Hood leaves home for the last time, he climbs unthinkingly to the same high rock.

His usurped mind
Unheeding itself ran in its track of habit,
So that he went from the oaks as before, upward The gravelly slope of spoiled granite to the Rock.

There are a great many images involving terms and processes from all the sciences. Not all of them fall into this group; but they do, as a whole, supply accurate details in the images, giving them a sense of reality; they emphasize the physical aspect of the thing described, making it more concrete and vivid. Jeffers' knowledge of the sciences has thus greatly enriched his poetry.

The remaining sensuous images are predominantly visual ones, as all sensuous images studied so far have been. At times the senses are used interchangeably.

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117 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 53.
118 Cawdor, p. 72.
"He reached and touched her face with his fingers,
Tasting it like a blind man." Helen looks longingly
at her husband, hoping to hear him say she is free.

But Helen hearing
The "dearest," and the changed voice, wishfully
Lifted her head, and the great violet eyes
Sucked at Reave's face.

The comparison is often to a physical part of man.
Hood's fire on the top of the cliff is a "bright high
blood-drop under the lump-shaped moon." The action
of hands expresses the physical manifestation of a feeling.
"Alfred/ Witlessly walks with his hands lamenting." Faith gathers "her native courage like a hand plucking/
A dropped coin from a swirl of deep water."

In many images the comparison is to a person. When
Cawdor finds Fera in Hood's bedroom telling him of her
father's death, "Hood looked like a boy caught in a crime
but herself like innocence." Insanity is compared to
a screaming child.

119 Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 63.
120 Thurso's Landing, p. 49.
121 Cawdor, p. 18.
122 "Ghosts in England," Give Your Heart to the
Hawks, p. 142.
123 The Women at Point Sur, p. 162.
124 Cawdor, p. 46.
The ungeared
Mind ran wild in the sad bed by her mother
Through phantasmal pollutions and lightning beauty
Like a child screaming in a labyrinth.

The poet is a hunter futilely trying to capture the beauty
or truth of the universe.

"Unlucky hunter, Oh bullets of wax,
The lion beauty, the wild-swan wings, the storm
of the wings."
--This wild swan of a world is no hunter's game.
Better bullets than yours would miss the white breast.

The sensuous image is used to amplify the meaning and to
make the picture more vivid.

The four functions of the images of man are summarized
as follows: (1) The images support a scientific view of the
universe. Man is nothing more than a temporary phenomenon
in a vast, changing universe, and his ultimate fate is
extinction, possibly within the cycle of evolution.
(2) Civilization is in its decline, having become too in-
volved with traditions and man's emotions. (3) Part of
the decline is due to the fact that man is self-regarding
to the exclusion of all else. He is psychologically living
in incest; the inturning of man's mind is disastrous.

125 The Women at Point Sur, p. 97.
126 "Love the Wild Swan," Solstice, p. 146.
Christ is a man whose love was turned inward upon mankind; his was a desperate desire to possess men by living in their hearts. (4) The sensuous images, the largest group under images of man, are used mainly for vividness, again indicating Jeffers' interest in form and color. Two special groupings deserve mention: A large portion of the sensuous images are used to animate or personify nature; the second group includes many scientific terms and processes, particularly those relating to medical science.

For the first time in this study, the sensuous images play the leading role, far outnumbering the significant ones.
CHAPTER VI

IMAGES OF INANIMATE NATURE

It is in the images of inanimate nature that one finds relief from the violent passions and pains of life. Before man stand always the final disinterestedness, the deep peace. It is the knowledge of this peace-death that makes life endurable, even desirable and beautiful. The return to inanimate nature through death is man's savior.

There are 766 images of inanimate nature, which is 31.2 percent of the nature images and 23.8 percent of the total. These images have been subdivided into images of fire, ocean, stone, ice, heavenly bodies, and others. (See chart on page sixteen.) The functions of these images, however, are derived from the group as a whole, not from the subdivisions as such. It is true that most of the fire images, for example, fall into the same group because they function in the same way--not because they have an image object in common. The functions of the images of inanimate nature are five. First they are used as symbols of man's final treasure--unconsciousness--and the ultimate peace man finds in death. The second group, especially the fire images, contrasts somewhat with the first, being used as symbols of passion, of life, of change resident in nature.
Fire has a beauty of its own. The third group suggests that the nature of change is cyclical, evidenced mainly by images of the tide and fire. The triviality and the undesirability of life are reaffirmed by the fourth group of images. The last function is sensuousness.

Jeffers prefers the peace of unconsciousness to consciousness, perhaps because consciousness is always associated with pain and suffering. In inanimate nature one finds strength, endurance, and disinterestedness. In the night, the ocean, and the stone, one finds the desired tranquillity and long security. With night is associated rest—the time for laying aside one's toils and cares. Night may well be enlarged to symbolize the permanent sleep, the dark, warm pillow on which man's head finally comes to rest. And the ocean with its unseen depths and eternal bigness and everlastingness is a natural refuge from burning consciousness. But the stone affords the most natural symbol of the unconscious. To represent something permanent, Jeffers utilizes the immobility, rigidity, strength, quietness, and insensibility of stone. The enduring granite—the beautiful, solid peace—has freedom; it is free from all the aches in human hearts. Blessed is the stone in its tranquillity, blessed in its deep indifference.
Even in life man needs indifference in order to cope with pain. It is necessary for him "to be faithful in storm, patient of fools, tolerant of memories and the mutterings of prophets."\(^1\) It is needful to have night in one's body.\(^1\) Night is a symbol of the peace found in death, a "dark glory."\(^2\) "I have passed/ From beauty to the other beauty, peace, the night splendor."\(^3\) Unlike Christian immortality, death is valued because man carries no passions to the grave: "...blessed is the night that has no glowworm."\(^4\) It is night, the peace-bringer, with all its lovely quietness that is immortal, not man.\(^5\) "...you Night will resume/ The stars in your time."\(^6\) Night includes all unconscious nature.

O shining of night, O eloquence of silence, the mother of the stars, the beauty beyond beauty

The sea that the stars and the sea and the mountain bones of the earth and men's souls are the foam on, the opening of the womb of that ocean.

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1 "Ocean," Cawdor, p. 146.
2 "Hooded Night," Dear Judas, p. 129.
3 "Gale in April," Roan Stallion, p. 170.
4 "In the Hill at New Grange," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 133.
5 "Night," Roan Stallion, p. 83.
6 Ibid., p. 84.
7 "Point Pinos and Point Lobos," Roan Stallion, p. 236.
Here night is identified with the sea, which also represents the non-human universe.

"Peace is an ocean/ To conquer and traverse, and at last drown in." The ocean is the "black crystal, the untroubled fountain, the roots of endurance." Sometimes not-being is symbolized by a lake. "He desires nothing but unconsciousness;/ To slip in the black bottomless lake and be still." Fera compares life and death to water.

I've tasted life
And tasted death; the one's warm water, yellow with mud and wrigglers, sucked from a puddle in the road,
Or hot water that scalds you to screaming;
The other is bright and cool and quiet, drawn from the deep.

Unconsciousness is so desirable, so beautiful that it is bright and shining. It is paradoxical that shining is used to emphasize the beauty of darkness. The universe is always beautiful. Death is a treasure more precious than gold. "Dead king, you keep a better treasure than bracelets,/ The peace of the dead is dearer than gold, no one can rob you." The beauty and value of gold are

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8 "Birthday," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 106.
9 "Ocean," Cawdor, p. 146.
10 "In the Hill at New Grange," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 132.
11 Cawdor, p. 94.
12 "In the Hill at New Grange," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 129.
weighed against the treasure of death, which outshines and outvalues the gold. The use of the word gold is effective as it puts forth for the comparison the best life has to offer, the richness and beauty of life, even life itself. Still it is outweighed by death.

The rock also represents freedom from feeling and desire. Thus Tamar, after living the life of freedom as symbolized by the hawk, prefers death, in which she finds the stone's tranquillity and strength and peace. "One always went envying/ The quietness of stones." In the "Rock and Hawk" the rock stands for the dark peace, the final disinterestedness, the calm death. The beauty and value of the rock is in its insensibility.

...massive
Mysticism of stone,
Which failure cannot cast down
Nor success make proud.

The non-human state is desirable. "A stone is a better pillow than many visions." As people may have "night" in their bodies, so may they become stonelike: "...you like a stone, hard and joyless, dark inside." In life

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14 Solstice, p. 133.
15 Loc. cit.
17 Thurso's Landing, p. 28.
it is better for people to value the vast non-human universe than themselves.

I wish you could find the secure value,
The all-heal I found when a former time hurt me to
the heart,
The splendor of inhuman things. 18

In death people are gathered into the "great kingdoms of
dust and stone." 19 Orestes learned to value the stone.
"O stones of the house; I entreat hardness: I did not
live with you; Long enough in my youth." 20 In becoming
more like the stone, he triumphs over emotions. "I am
stone enough not to be changed by words, nor by the sweet
and burning flame of you;/ Beautiful Electra." 21 He finds
an object fairer than humanity. "I entered the life of
the brown forest/ And the great life of the ancient peaks,
The patience of stone." 22

The night, the ocean, the stone--the immense kingdoms
of quietness--are man's salvation to which he returns in
death.

18 "Air-Raid Rehearsals," Such Counsels You Gave to
Me, p. 101.
19 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 160.
21 Ibid., p. 79.
22 Ibid., p. 81.
II

There are two kinds of beauty: one is in tension or change as symbolized by fire; the other, a greater one, is in immobility and quietness as symbolized by the night, ocean, and stone.

Fire or a star may represent passion in man in much the same way as does the blossoming of a flower, discussed in Chapter IV. In both instances the color red amplifies the effect of the image and relates one to the other. The love of Carson and Hildis is like a star.

They were rather like one star than two people, for that night at least.
So love had joined them to burn a moment for each other, no other star was needed in all the black world.

A whole year's desire may burn like a star or sometimes like a meteor.

...so the aquiline desire
Burned itself into meteor freedom and spired
Higher still.

The desire for power is a consuming flame. "Without great following, no greatness; it is ever the greedy Flame on a

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23 "Resurrection," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 175.
24 "Emilia," Californians, p. 15.
25 Cawdor, p. 115.
wick dipped in the fat of millions." The fire image is used frequently in "Tamar," indicating the fullness and intensity of Tamar's life. Her father calls her a burning fire.

The story ends in a great fire as the Cauldwell house burns to the ground. Tamar's passion is finally burned out, and she triumphs in the end as she with her three lovers is burned to death. The flame is quieted, and peace spreads over the ruins. Fera, having aroused Hood's passion, says, "I have lighted the fire, let me warm my hands at it/ Before we are burned." The comparison of anger to a grass-fire suggests the heat, the uncontrollable force, the rapidity with which it spreads, and the consuming power of anger. "She marvelled secretly/ At the reasonless anger that ran through her dry nerves like a summer grass-fire." The furnace may represent love, or yearning, or accusing eyes. Helen says to Polyxen: "...let me go in! From public shame, and this furnace of eyes."

26 "Great Men," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 127.
28 Cawdor, p. 65.
29 Thurso's Landing, p. 56.
32 "At the Fall of an Age," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 186.
Desire may also be a breaking wave or lightning.

Oh cage-hoarded desire,
Like the blade of a breaking wave reaped by the wind,
or flame rising from fire, or cloud-coiled lightning
Suddenly unfurled in the cave of heaven.33

The blade suggests the sharpness or pain of desire; all three images a restlessness and tense motion. Heaven suggests the beauty of desire. Such violent aspects of nature as earthquake, torrent, cataract, storm, and hurricane also symbolize the passions and turmoils of man's mind. Tamar's is "a cataract life/ Dashing itself to pieces in an instant."34 To Cassandra the life of humanity is similar.

I am sick after steadfastness
Watching the world cataractlike
Pour screaming onto steep ruins.35

Fire also represents pain. Andy Ferguson's pain is an "isle of dull fire/ In the dry flesh."36 When Fera tells Cawdor of Hood's innocence, his suffering is great. "Now the air's fire/ To drink and the days and nights the

33 Cawdor, p. 114.
36 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 17.
teeth and throat of a dog." The suffering is emphasized by the fire image as well as the teeth image, which was discussed in Chapter II. The images make pain seem almost tangible. "The sun of pain at her heart had rays like skewers of anguish/ Along the left arm and up by the jugular arteries." As the lamp images function similarly—to express pain or consciousness—they are included in this group with the fire images. "The hopeless cage of pain is a lamp/ Shining rays that go right through the flesh and etch the secrets of bone." Pain is always described physically; the rays or flames are hot, dry, piercing, penetrating. After Cawdor cuts out his eyes, as a self-punishment, his head is full of sharp lightnings. The nerves are threaded lightning. Fire is sometimes a destructive force and is related to the sword image. "...but fire and the axe are devils." It is also descriptive of war as is the sword image: the plains during the Trojan War flowed fire. In references to World War II,

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37 Cawdor, p. 108.  
38 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, pp. 30-31.  
39 Cawdor, p. 102.  
40 Ibid., p. 126.  
41 The Women at Point Sur, p. 118.  
42 "Tor House," Cawdor, p. 150.  
43 "At the Fall of an Age," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 193.
destruction is "fire-hail on Mannheim."  

Consciousness as well as passion and pain is firelike. The lamp of thought is a common image: "... his father's lamp of thought was hidden awhile in words." When man was formed the brain-vault was sphered to a bubble of fire. The skull is a shell full of lightning. The tides also represent consciousness.

I felt the tides draw inward again, The waters of conscious power turning in the ebb, lapping around your image.

The fire of passionate thoughts may wield seed-like influence after the fire itself is burned out.

The fire threw up figures And symbols meanwhile, racial myths formed and dissolved in it, the phantom rulers of humanity That without being are yet more real than what they are born of, and without shape, shape that which makes them; The nerves and the flesh go by shadowlike, the limbs and the lives shadowlike, these shadows remain, these shadows To whom temples, to whom churches, to whom labors and wars, visions and dreams are dedicate:

44 "The Bowl of Blood," *Be Angry at the Sun*, p. 89.
48 "Resurrection," *Give Your Heart to the Hawks*, p. 169.
Out of the fire in the small round stone that black moss covered, a crucified man writhed up in anguish.

Life is often referred to as a torch for one to burn in with pride. The burning of the torch is as beautiful as the blossoming of a flower; and, in much the same way, it too affirms life. In its fullness and its intense moments, life shines and has its own great beauty. Fire represents universal change as well as consciousness, relating one to the other and making the torch of consciousness part of the universal fire. But for a short time, while man lives, fire is held in the bone vault; all man's agonies and his thoughts are particles of fire, their beauty enormous. The torch of freedom "is not safe but hungry, and often requires blood for its fuel."

In "The Torch-Bearer's Race" the picture of life is very much like that of the swallow's flight through a lighted room—a flutter from darkness to darkness. Man is a runner, carrying the flaming torch, consciousness. He knows not where he carries it or why. As the race ends the torch is passed to another runner.

Opposed to the clearness and brightness of fire is the fog image. Fog, mist, or cloud often represent ignorance.

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49 Roan Stallion, p. 24.
50 Dear Judas, p. 39.
51 "Shine, Republic," Solstice, p. 139.
52 Roan Stallion, pp. 102-104.
or deception. Gudrun sees the Gods as a cloudy growth of deception. 53 Half-believers are fog-people. 54 To Clytemnestra "the world's fogged with the breath of liars." 55 However, fire itself is always shining, always beautiful. Gods have made the necessary embrace of breeding as beautiful as fire. 56 Even cruelty shines.

I need not think of the Russian labor-camps, the German Prison-camps, nor any of those other centers That make the earth shine like a star with cruelty for light.

Change is not confined to man, but exists in inanimate nature (this idea is also discussed in Chapter II in connection with the animal images), and hence there is no complete annihilation. "Old rocks want monstrous roots to serpent among them;" 58 there is an "explosive corruption vaulted with marble." 59 The ocean also symbolizes change or tension resident in substance.

53 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 50.
54 The Women at Point Sur, p. 21.
55 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 64.
56 "The Excesses of God," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 104.
57 "Memoir," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 96.
59 The Women at Point Sur, p. 84.
It is not possible
A man's spirit possess more than his members; but the
ocean soul of the world
Has whirlpools in its currents, knots in the tissue,
ganglia that take
Personality, make temporal souls for themselves: may parallel a man's before they are melted.

Two inseparable things are resident in nature: matter and form. Matter, symbolized by the stone, the ocean, the night--the permanent and unconscious--is always being re-formed, the change being symbolized by fire. Both are beautiful.

III

Change may be cyclical. There will be endless renewals of stars, of planets, of people far into the future. None will escape the flame. "New stars fling out new planets, strange growths appear on them, new formed little lamps of flickering/ Flesh for the same flame."61 In the renewals of nature one may find wisdom.

...the men wisdom made Gods had nothing
So wise to tell me nor so sweet as the alternation of white sunlight and brown night,
The beautiful succession of the breeding springs,
the enormous rhythm of the star's deaths 62
And fierce renewals.

60 The Women at Point Sur, pp. 133-134.
61 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 90.
In the universe time has lost its significance. Mountains are "a moment's earth-waves rising and hollowing." Change is an endless process, which does not admit a single static form or non-existence. Vasquez visions such a universe:

It was dreadful to see
No space between them [star's rays], no cave of peace
nor no night of quietness, no blind spot nor no
deaf heart, but the tides
Of power and substance flood every cranny; no 64
annihilation, no escape but change.

Especially does the image of the tide represent the recurring round of events. Civilizations continually rise and fall as do waves, so that on the same level of each wave one may expect the same sort of life. Thus one is able to make predictions. At the present time, civilization is decadent; it is on the down-rip of the wave. 65 This conception of time leads Jeffers to a philosophy of determinism. "The mountain ahead of the world is not forming but fixed." 66 The cycle may be limited to the earth or it may be limitless. There are "endless cross-waves of time." 67 Cawdor's eagle in its death flight beyond time sees the change resident in matter. "It neither

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65 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 52.
66 "Meditation on Saviors," Cawdor, p. 158.
wondered nor cared, and it saw/ Growth and decay alternate forever, and the tides returning." 68

On the basis of these images it seems that Louis Adamic is unjust in his criticism of Jeffers when he says that Jeffers sees things as a series of goings-on, which Jeffers calls "decadence," and does not see them as a whole, as a process, as life which is death which is life, and so on. 69 Jeffers' expressions of cyclical change seem very strong and clear:

And all these tidal gatherings, growth and decay,
Shining and darkening, are forever.
Renewed.

IV

The fourth group of images of inanimate nature reiterates the insignificance and undesirability of life, as previously expressed by the animal images. These images, however, make life insignificant by stressing the ephemeral existence of everything, including planets and stars. Astronomy has made the earth but a pin point in a vast universe, and a temporary pin point at that.

The first group includes such images as foam, bubble, dust, pebble, ashes, spark—all small and seemingly

68 Cawdor, p. 116.


70 "Practical People," Roan Stallion, p. 98.
unimportant. The earth is a grain of dust; the sun a spark. "But Vasquez laughed aloud, for the earth was a grain of dust circling the fire,/ And the fire itself but a spark, among innumerable sparks."71 The stars are like dust fleeing apart.72 The slaying of a king is only a meeting of two bubbles on the lip of a cataract.73

Christianity is but a froth. "...we have come to the end of that dream, when we touched it the iris-tinted/Bubble was a froth-work of blood and of fire."74 The two thousand years of instruction now sag underfoot like a rotted floor.75

The purposelessness of life is compared to a falling stone. The world is like a stone that, for no reason, falls from a far-off cliff in the night, making a lonely noise and a spark. No one sees it or hears it, and no one cares. There is no design in its falling. The only good thing in man's life is his courage to endure.76

Such images as mud, dirt, dust, bubble, pit, mold, and crust express the undesirability of humanity. Life is a

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72 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 75.
73 "The Tower beyond Tragedy," Roan Stallion, p. 53.
75 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 64.
76 Thurso's Landing, pp. 104-105.
slime-brook. Madrone sees humanity as the dirt of the world. "Because I am human, that's the dirt of the world." Tamar remains unaffected by further incestuous involvements. "I have swum too deep into the mud/ For this to sicken me." The earth is dust on God's hands.

Lord if thou art minded to burn the whole earth
And spat off the dust from thy hands, it is well done,
The glory and the vengeance.

Fera endures Cawdor as this earth endures man. Perhaps man can cast off part of his humanness. "Can man wash off humanity/ And wed the unmarriageable sea?" Humanity is the dirt, the mud, the slime; it is ignoble and undesirable.

Thus such images of inanimate nature as spark, foam, bubble, dust, dirt, pebble, and mud imply that life lacks some of the importance with which man has seen fit to adorn it. Life is important, however, but only in its relationship to the whole.

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77 Solstice, p. 109.
78 Ibid., p. 99.
80 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 67.
82 "A Westward Beach," Californians, p. 149.
The last group, whose function is sensuousness, includes about one-third of the images of inanimate nature. As the sensuous images fall naturally into the same subdivisions as were made in the classification, they are discussed in that order.

The fire images are visual ones, describing the shape, movement, or color of flame. Rocks may be shaped like flame or have tongues of flame. It seems to Mary when she hears falsely that Jesus is safe that the mountains leap like flames for joy. A river in its movement is also compared to fire.

The river down the long darkness
Shining writhes like a fire,
The stars return.

The fire-like river represents life; the darkness unconsciousness. Shining suggests beauty, and the return of the stars the cycle of change. It is, however, the color or shining of the flame that is most often compared. Fayne's mop of red hair is like a glowing coal.

84 "The Bowl of Blood," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 79.
85 Dear Judas, p. 41.
86 "At the Birth of an Age," Solstice, p. 92.
87 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 9.
crocuses are of vari-colored flame, and the yucca-ed hillsides high in the sun flare like torches.

Generally the ocean images are visual, but some of them refer to the sound of the wave. Mara speaks in "a soft slurred voice/ No more syllabic than the ocean's." Chopped waves are guitar-music. Creeks in the spring time roar like the ocean. The following image suggests the sound of the tides as well as the ebbing. "The sea-tides of my sobbing heart withdraw." The color of the ocean is described by the image, usually the white of the foam or the blue, gray, or darkness of the water. The movement of the ocean is often described, as in the sunset. "...atmospheres of flame-shot/ Color played like a mountain surf, over the abrupt coast, up the austere hills." In form a mountain range is like ocean waves.

If the children
Could see from where they lie hidden they'd see

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89 "All the Little Hoof-Prints," Such Counsels You Gave to Me, p. 115.
90 "Mara," Be Angry at the Sun, p. 41.
91 Ibid., p. 27.
92 "The Mill Creek Farm," Californians, p. 129.
94 Cawdor, p. 68.
What a great surf of mountains beats from the distant ocean up to their dwelling-place, wave over wave, waves of live stone.

The vastness of the ocean is suggested in many images, as when the sky is an "ocean of stars." Lee dreams of a battle that looked like waves. He is an aviator whose plane is hit by a German and plunges into the sea. In this image the waves suggest the action of a great battle—a seemingly endless struggle; the water in which one is to be drowned suggests coldness and heaviness, the weight of battle. The sea represents death.

The images of rocks or mountains are essentially visual. Usually reference is made to the various shapes of the rocks and the great size of the mountains. The knuckles of one's hand are like peaks.

The memory of all his bad-tempered times, his heavy earnestness and lack of laughter, pierced like a mountain-peak the cloud of her mind.

Note the use of the cloud image, discussed earlier in the chapter, in relation to the fog and mist images suggesting

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95 Solstice, p. 130.
97 "Tamar," Roan Stallion, p. 110.
98 Thurso's Landing, p. 97.
99 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 19.
confusion. Madrone says to her husband:

Do you know what mountains
In me hate you? There are no mountains on the earth like them,
Neither Everest nor the white mountains I saw When I was born. 100

Images of granite, flint, marble, and crystal (often regarding its clearness) are common. These images refer to the sense of touch, especially in the hardness, firmness, and smoothness of the stone. A face, focussed on resistance, is like a flint chip. Pain has hardened Cawdor, made him unapproachable; his face is like a rock to break on. A few of the stone images may be classified as sound images.

He heard in the evening
The new farmhand talking with Concha Rosas,
His Alp-Italian accent against her Spanish-Indian like pebbles into thick water.

The images of heavenly bodies are visual, most of them describing the shining of the stars. "The darkness under the trees in spring is starry with flowers." 104

100 Solstice, p. 108.
101 Thurso's Landing, p. 80.
102 Cawdor, p. 71.
103 Ibid., p. 36.
And the "Bright fish-scales glued/ With blood and slime to the boat-thwarts glitter like a night of stars." 105
Sometimes the shape of the light is dominant. Comets of light come from the car's eyes. 106 And Christ rose "like a comet streaming blood and bitterness for splendor." 107
Street lights may wane as does a moon. 108

The use of such words as galaxy, constellation, meteor, comet, and planet suggests Jeffers' interest in astronomy. Some images make use of scientific data.

To annihilation and blank vacancy
Given up, the spirit was lost; its voice was left:
(For naked in the final agony
Man's soul is sometimes of its batlike voice
Most piercing and far-heard)--the voice drove on,--
As when a star is blackened, yet its light
Rains on the earth for centuries to come
From the incalculable gulf and vast of heaven-- 109

Snow and ice images refer mostly to whiteness, clearness, and coldness; night images to darkness.

The remaining miscellaneous group includes such images as thunder, island, dawn, cloud, canyon, wilderness, wind, cave, torrent, valley, and whirlpool. Again they are mostly visual images, indicating first an interest in form and then

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105 Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 21.
106 Solstice, p. 125.
109 loc. cit.
in the colors red and black. In a dust storm one sees "the plow and his footprints smoking." The scales of salmon are full of sunset. The thunder images, however, usually refer to sound. The hooves of the roan stallion make soft thunder, and the sound of water is a gentle thunder.

An interesting image is the island, suggesting isolation. The mind has various islanded points. Cawdor, intent on his own suffering, is thoughtless of Fera. "He spoke with no intention of cruelty, his mind in the pain of its own bonds, islanded alone, incapable of feeling another's." The actuality of abstract qualities is manifested by the sensuous image; the vividness of concrete objects is amplified.

In summary, the five functions of the images of inanimate nature are briefly stated. (1) For man the end of life is a welcome release from the knives of consciousness to the night-splendor and the stone-slumber. The images verify Jeffers' admiration of unconscious nature.

110 "Resurrection," Give Your Heart to the Hawks, p. 160.
111 "Salmon-Fishing," Roan Stallion, p. 245.
112 Roan Stallion, p. 21.
114 The Women at Point Sur, pp. 55-56.
115 Cawdor, p. 107.
and the shining beauty of peace. (2) The fire image represents intense awareness. It usually symbolizes life in its intense moments of pain or passion, but also symbolizes the change that resides in matter or unconscious nature. (3) This change may be cyclical, as evidenced by the images of the tide and fire. (4) Since all that exists is subject to change, all is insignificant in time; since the earth occupies so little space, it is insignificant in the newly discovered vastness of the universe. Hence life has become inconsequential and purposeless. Human life so enraptured of itself is undesirable. (5) The images of vivid sensuousness are primarily visual, their beauty being in their exactness and truthfulness of description.

While examination of the imagery is not a complete study of the poetry, it is a concrete approach to critical study. It provides one with evidence upon which he may build his case, and it certainly reveals a great deal of the beauty and philosophic thought of the poems, thereby increasing one's appreciation of them. In the concluding chapter an attempt to correlate and to summarize the findings of this study will be made.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Once more it is deemed necessary to say that all classifications of imagery are elastic; the consistency of any classification rests in the fact that similar problems are treated similarly by one person. No attempt to classify further by function has been made, but only an attempt to point out what seemed to be definite trends of image usage, based partly upon suggestions from Rosemond Tuve's *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*. The method provides a most intimate study of Jeffers' poetry.

A deep earnestness and forcefulness pervade all this poetry. The poems are vigorous, animated, and highly original. The stuff of which they are made is as solid and enduring as the boulders of Tor House. The images are the mental boulders rolled up from the coast by Jeffers' mind to go into the building of his books. For the most part the images are age-old ones, carrying with them many long-established associations. The accumulated, integrated experience gives force to the image. Yet one is startled by its spontaneity. It seems as though it were heard for the first time because the comparison is
so precisely and accurately drawn.

Perhaps Jeffers' keen powers of observation and scientific training are responsible for the scientific exactness of the imagery. Jeffers is well schooled in the sciences and draws upon his scientific knowledge for all the various groups of images. Scientific words are a part of his poetic vocabulary—such words as molecule, ganglion, genes, thyroid, enzymes, bacteria, fossils, telescope, meteor, and nebula. These words never seem pedantic in the poetry. Often phenomenon is described scientifically and imaginatively as is the chemistry of the brain cells at death and the action of the womb at birth (discussed in Chapter V). The vocabulary is cosmic in scope, including words ranging from the remotest galaxy to the electron.

The classification by the image object reveals a predominance of nature images—the permanent material of poets. Of some 3,221 images, 2,456 are images of nature. (See Chart page fourteen.) Therefore it is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of nature in the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. Walter Van Tilburg Clark, the novelist, writes of Jeffers' poems that "their real flesh is the imagery of nature."\(^1\) The Carmel coast lives in all his

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poetry. In various places and seasons, the coast sets the stage and establishes the mood for the great dramas. One is always aware of the reality of the cliff, the hawk, the cypress, and the Pacific Ocean. And the "unbridled and unbelievable" beauty of each is there.

This study has further revealed that the images are not used as mere decorations in the poems, but rather have two important functions—sensuousness and significance. Thus some images animate nature or recall for the reader a delightfully exact sensuous experience, making the poetry more alive, more forceful, more real. Experiences are transferred with visual sharpness into language, indicating an interest in form and color. Among the images functioning sensuously, the largest group is found under images of man. Perhaps this is true because of the additional sensuous images in this group which are used to animate or personify nature and because of the additional scientific images also in this group which make the descriptions more vivid and real.

The significant function, however, is foremost in the majority of the images. Hence most of the images are meaningful, defining Jeffers' thought accurately and richly and revealing his attitude toward life and the universe. The images carry the thought; they never just decorate or prettify, but are indeed an integral part of Jeffers'
poetry. The single image object functions so often in the same way that it becomes symbolical. Now as "Hurt Hawks" is read once more, all the numerous descriptions of the hawk, all its symbolic significance come winging into the words. The poem has grown in beauty and in depth, revealing the interaction of images upon each other throughout the entire poetic work. Even the characters of the narratives are symbols of the human race. The richness of symbols in the poetry makes a study of the imagery particularly worthwhile.

The images, other than the sensuous ones, define Jeffers' view of the universe and his philosophy of life, which will be summarized briefly. Through science has come the realization of the vastness of the universe. No longer is the earth thought of as the hub of the universe; the sun is but one of the small innumerable stars. It is significant that poetically the earth is a grain of dust, the sun a spark. Jeffers sees no reason for believing that thought exists outside the bone vault of man's mind. "No thought apparent but burns darkly/ Smothered with its own smoke in the human brain-vault: no thought outside: a certain measure in phenomena."2 There is no thought as a ruling principle in the universe. For this reason Jeffers prefers

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2 "Apology for Bad Dreams," The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers, p. 177.
to believe that things external to the mind of man are more permanent, more real than man's consciousness. He places his faith in the external universe.

I humbler have found in my blood
Bred west of Caucasus a harder mysticism.
Multitude stands in my mind but I think that the ocean in the bone vault is only
The bone vault's ocean: out there is the ocean's:
The water is the water, the cliff is the rock, come
shocks and flashes of reality. The mind
Passes, the eye closes, the spirit is a passage;
The beauty of things was born before eyes and sufficient to itself; the heart-breaking beauty
Will remain when there is no heart to break for it.3

The universe is non-human and unitary, composed of one substance—"one people, the stars and the people, one structure."4 The nature of the external universe or substance is change. This change resident in substance is expressed by the animal, hawk, and fire images while the images of the tide and fire suggest that change is cyclical, that life may be renewed. In some way it is felt that the universe renews its energy and hence has no end.

Stars are condensed from cloud and flame as it were immortally, and faint and have ceased, and their slag finds
After enormous ages the mother cloud; self-regenerating universes all but eternally

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4 The Women at Point Sur, p. 72.
Shine, tire, and die; new stars fling out new planets, strange growths appear on them, new-formed little lamps of flickering Flesh for the same fire."

Because of this endless state of flux, there is no escape for man to nirvana--no black hole of annihilation. That biologically life is not forever dead is to Jeffers a challenging problem. However much annihilation may be desired and withheld, death still remains a haven from the pain of consciousness.

The wild beauty of things has never escaped Jeffers. In all the changing, timeless universe, in the rhythm of things, he sees beauty--the wild swan. And God has lost his ape-body and animal consciousness, which man saw fit to impose upon him. Instead God has become all universal power and beauty, a great non-human God, omnisecular, symbolized most clearly by the stallion.

Man's place in space and time and his peculiar acquisition of consciousness are explained by the animal imagery. As are all the animals, man is but atomic substance--one form of the universal stuff. He is insignificant in space, only a temporary phenomenon in time. The brevity of man's life is expressed by the images of animal, plant, man, and inanimate nature. His creation was

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5 Solstice, p. 90.
fortuitous. He differs from other animals by possessing consciousness, but that is hardly an advantage as consciousness is one with pain. Out of Jeffers' sensitivity to pain have come all of his tragic stories. His preoccupation with suffering shows him to be one of the most sympathetic of people. The pain ever present in man's life and emphasized above all else is adequately described by the animal, bird, sword, net, trap, and fire images. "Pain is the solidest thing in the world." Coping with pain is one of man's major problems of adaptation and leads Jeffers to value strength and endurance in man. He realizes man's plight; his acute sensitivity makes him suffer man's pain and value the wild beauty and peace of non-human nature. Knowing man is part of the universe, he tries to reconcile pain and peace, to both of which his being is so alert. Therefore strength and endurance and a knowledge of the reality and immeasurable beauty of things somewhat counteract pain and make life good; especially is this so since life, while it may be renewed, always like a farmer, weary of the plow, lies down at night to a sound sleep. Since life is always part of the wild universal beauty, there is a shining in pain, especially in physical pain. Pain made in man's mind is incongruous. In spite of his

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6 Thurso's Landing, p. 103.
aborrence of pain, Jeffers never denies the value of life—"a necessary ecstasy in the run of cold substance."\(^7\) Nor does the knowledge that life is transitory and purposeless lead Jeffers to decry life; it has value in itself. The plant and fire images affirm life—life that at times blossoms beautifully or burns with delight. The eagle usually represents the imaginative and creative powers of man. To live one's felt nature, to live life to the fullest is best and brings the most complete peace. Passion not exhausted in life may "echo in the wood for certain years or millenniums."\(^8\)

This study of imagery does not reveal a negative philosophy; rather it raps hard on the head of present values which Jeffers considers detrimental to man. Feeling that man's emotions are ignoble, that the values of good and evil are meaninglessly imposed upon man, that humanity is decadent, Jeffers stresses what are to him "real" values which can make man's life more endurable. Some of man's humanness must be thrown away—his infirmities of fear, compassion, jealousy, cruelty, love, and hate. The animal and sword images testify to man's ignoble emotions. The man images show that man creates much of his own suffering and confusion by imposing on himself an unnatural environment.

\(^7\) Cawdor, p. 117.

\(^8\) Dear Judas, p. 42.
It is desirable that man have some "night" in his body, that he trade some fever for tranquillity.

Next man must see tradition for what it is worth, reject what he will. Man should not be chained to the galley ship of the past, nor should a bird be caged. The seed and root images express the stifling influence of past culture. Humanity itself has become corrupt as it forces upon man creeds and customs that man has outgrown. It has also become too enamored of itself, losing sight of the non-human universe. Racial introversion is expressed by the man image. Psychologically humanity is living in incest, concerned only with self, seeing everywhere only man's reflection. Group life is too mechanical and tends to kill independent thought. Thus the swarm of insects, the flock of birds, the herd of cattle, the massed centers of people are undesirable. One should avoid urban life, should be able to fly as the proud, fierce hawk above the contagion of civilization. The solitary hawk with its cold courage and independence is the ideal of the rigorous, god-like way of life. Civilization is decadent, described by the images of man as an infection on the earth. Because it is a trap in which man is caught, it is expedient that he break away from humanity. In order that one may see the universe truly, he must break the human mold and the egocentricism of man. It takes courage and strength.
For the individual there is no personal immortality. "Consciousness wanders home from cell to molecule." The flight of a bird describes the last flaming or burning out of consciousness. Like the flower and the nova, man's inevitable fate is extinction. He is a product of the earth's womb and will return to the earth in death. Death is the present savior.

Oh beautiful capricious little savior,
Death, the gay child with the gipsy eyes, to avoid you for a time I think is virtuous, to fear you is insane.

Whatever man's life, in some fifty years or so he faces salvation in the great stone realms of quietness, insensibility, and peacefulness. Unconsciousness towers above consciousness as one sees in the night, the ocean, the rock, freedom from the whips of the senses and happy indifference.

In conclusion, the classification by the image object has revealed a predominance of nature images while the study of image usage has revealed two important functions of the images--sensuousness and significance. The sensuous images help to make the poetry alive; the significant images help to make it intense and profound. The great nature images, weighty with thought, ugly and beautiful, are an essential part of the poetry of Robinson Jeffers.

9 "Margrave," Thurso's Landing, p. 147.
10 Loc. cit.
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