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| **Jeffers, (John) Robinson (1887-1962)** |
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| Renowned as the ‘poet of Carmel-Sur’ (Brophy), Robinson Jeffers held a place of prominence in American literature from the mid-1920s through the 1930s. He lived in seclusion with his family at Tor House, which he built from sea-worn granite on a promontory in Carmel, California. There he developed his signature style of graphically tragic narrative poems and verse dramas, typically set in the surrounding landscape and accompanied by meditative lyric poems exploring related themes. Jeffers eschewed high modernism’s post-symbolist aesthetics for what he saw as its withdrawal from reality, crafting instead a free verse style that employed long, rhythmically stressed lines and a solemn tone. His prosody and themes are coloured by his non-anthropocentric philosophy, which he named inhumanism. The critical acclaim turned to disfavour during the Depression era and the Second World War; his popularity fluctuated, and finally dwindled. Critical interest in Jeffers’ works was renewed in the 1970s and 1980s, and readership has since increased, particularly due to the timeliness of his acute environmental aesthetics. |
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| Further reading:  Brophy, Robert. “Robinson Jeffers: Poet of Carmel-Sur.” Brophy 1-18.  Brophy, Robert, ed. *Robinson Jeffers: Dimensions of a Poet*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1995. A collection of essays that explore the poet’s worldview, poetics, and reception. Includes a review of Jeffers scholarship and a chronological, annotated bibliography of Jeffers’s volumes.  Karman, James, ed. *Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers*. Boston: Hall, 1990. Includes representative reviews of each of Jeffers’s poetry collections and a selection of thirteen previously published critical essays.  Thesing, William B., ed. *Robinson Jeffers and a Galaxy of Writers: Essays in Honor of William H. Nolte*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. Essays in this collection advance the critical positioning Jeffers among his poetic forebears and modern and contemporary literary figures.  Zaller, Robert, ed. *Centennial Essays for Robinson Jeffers.* Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991. A commemoration of Jeffers’s centennial year, with nine commissioned essays by leading Jeffers scholars and a selection of salient previously published essays, including forewords by Everson and a chapter by Czesław Miłosz.  **Biographical:**    Adamic, Louis. *Robinson Jeffers: A Portrait*. Seattle: University of Washington Chapbooks, 1929. Rpt. Covelo, CA: Yolla Bolly Press, 1983. An early biography by Slovenian American author and political activist. Reprint features a foreword by Garth Jeffers.  Bennett, Melba Berry. *The Stone Mason of Tor House: The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers*. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1966. Authored by family friend who became Jeffers’s secretary after Una’s death and founding editor of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*. Provides intriguing details, though criticized for some inaccuracy.  Carpenter, Frederic I. *Robinson Jeffers*. New York: Twayne, 1962. Twayne’s United States Author Series. Chronological survey of Jeffers’s life and career, including critical analysis of his long and short form poetry and philosophy. Includes selected bibliography, now dated.  Greenan, Edith. *Of Una Jeffers: A Memoir*. 1939. Rpt. ed. James Karman. Ashland, OR: Story Line Press, 1998. Personal account by Una’s close friend, her first husband Edward Kuster’s second wife and sometime Carmel neighbour. Includes photos and introduction by the editor, Jeffers’s scholar Karman.  Karman, James.“The Life and Work of Robinson Jeffers.” Introduction. *The Collected Letters of Robinson Jeffers with Selected Letters of Una Jeffers Volume One, 1890-1930*. Karman 1-134. (see list of works, Prose) A biographical and bibliographical overview that contextualizes the poet and his work in terms of literary and socio-political history.  *---. Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1987. The Literary West Series. Rpt. Revised Ed. Ashland, OR: Story Line Press, 1994. The essential biographical study of Jeffers, including bibliographical information (now incomplete).  Luhan, Mabel Dodge. *Una and Robin*. Berkeley: University of California: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1976. An intimate portrayal written from the perspective of the art patron’s friendship with Una in the 1930s.  Powell, Lawrence Clark. *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and His Work*. Los Angeles: Primavera Press, 1934. Foreword by Jeffers. Rpt. Pasadena: San Pasqual Press, 1940; New York: Haskell House, 1970. The first critical, if somewhat laudatory, introduction to the poet and his influences by celebrated University of California librarian-scholar. Includes bibliographical information, now dated.  Sterling, George. *Robinson Jeffers: The Man and the Artist*. New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926. Earliest biography, a personal tribute by Californian poet and friend of Jeffers. |