

Yale University Library
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Guide to the Robinson Jeffers Collection

YCAL MSS 284



by Christopher Geissler, Tom Hyry, and Beinecke Staff

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
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New Haven, CT 06520-8330
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CALL NUMBER: YCAL MSS 284

CREATOR: Jeffers, Robinson, 1887-1962

TITLE: Robinson Jeffers collection

DATES: 1920-1951

BULK DATES: 1920-1933

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 1.67 linear feet (5 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection consists of manuscripts of Robinson Jeffers's poetry and a small amount of correspondence and other papers related to Jeffers.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.jeffers>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.jeffers>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Acquired by gift and purchase, 1949-2004.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The Robinson Jeffers Collection is the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

Robinson Jeffers Collection. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Processing Information

Former call numbers: Za Jeffers and Uncat MSS 689.

Most of the descriptive information used in the inventory of this finding aid was derived from folder notes and catalog cards created by previous staff members of the Beinecke Library.

Existence and Location of Copies

Microfilm available for portions of the John Hay Whitney Gift including Autograph manuscript of "Cawdor" (Film #2777) and Manuscripts of "Roan stallion," "The tower beyond tragedy," and an unpublished poem (Film #903)

Associated Materials

Photographs of Robinson Jeffers (Za J355 +G1), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Pamphlets by and about Robinson Jeffers, including newspaper clippings and other ephemera (Za J355 +1), Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Robinson Jeffers

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) was born John Robinson Jeffers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of the Reverend Dr. William Hamilton Jeffers and Annie Robinson Tuttle. He was educated by his father and at European boarding schools. In 1902, Jeffers entered the University of Western Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh), but was graduated from Occidental College, California, three years later. He pursued graduate studies in literature and philosophy at the Universities of Southern California and Zurich, before enrolling in the Medical School at the University of Southern California in September 1907. In 1910 he left medical school to study forestry for one year at the University of Washington.

While studying at the University of Southern California, Jeffers met Una Call Kuster, the wife of a prominent Los Angeles attorney. Their involvement and Kuster's ensuing divorce was a public scandal that was widely reported. Jeffers and Kuster were married in 1913 and one year later settled in Carmel, California where Jeffers eventually built the stone cottage and tower he called "Tor House." A daughter was born in 1914 but died in infancy; twin sons were born in 1916. In 1912 Jeffers privately published his first volume of poetry, *Flagons and Apples*. In 1916 his second volume, *Californians*, was commercially published. *Tamar and Other Poems* (1924), his third volume, proved both a formal and critical breakthrough and was reissued in an expanded edition the following year under the title *Roan Stallion, Tamar and other Poems*. Over a period encompassing five decades, Jeffers published nearly two-dozen volumes of poetry. In 1954 he published his last volume, *Hungerfield and Other Poems*, an expanded edition of his *Hungerfield* (1952)

which included a eulogy for Una Jeffers who died in 1950. A volume of Jeffers' uncollected poems, *The Beginning and the End and Other Poems*, was published posthumously in 1963.

Scope and Contents

The Robinson Jeffers Collection encompasses accessions of single manuscripts, small groups of manuscripts, and other papers pertaining to Robinson Jeffers, acquired by the library from a variety of sources. Materials incorporated into this collection have been organized into three series documenting the gifts of John Hay Whitney, Robert M. Leylan, and materials from other sources. The collection spans the years 1922-1951, with the bulk of material dating from 1922-1933.

The bulk of the collection consists of manuscript drafts of Jeffers' early narrative and lyrical poems. The John Hay Whitney Gift materials contain significant annotation and are inscribed with descriptive and analytical commentary. Additionally, a single folded sheet labeled "Genesis of Tamar," includes plans for the stairway of the tower at Tor House. The Robert M. Leylan Gift includes full drafts of shorter poems and passages from longer and unidentified poems. The third series, Materials from Other Sources, incorporates a typescript copy of a study of the poetry of Robinson Jeffers by Howard Trivers and annotated by Robert M. Leylan.

The limited correspondence in each series includes letters from Robinson and Una Jeffers, the book dealer Barnet B. Ruder, and the Jeffers bibliographer S. S. Alberts, concerning the various manuscript materials.

Arrangement

Organized into four series: I. John Hay Whitney Gift, II. Robert M. Leylan Gift, III. Materials from Other Sources. IV. 2004 Addition.

Collection Contents

Series I: John Hay Whitney Gift, 1922-1951, undated

(4 boxes)

Gift of John Hay Whitney, 1951.

Organized into two subseries: Writings and Correspondence.

	Writings	1922-1933
	The writings consist of bound volumes of manuscripts of Jeffers' poems. The file titles were transcribed directly from the spines of the volumes. One volume, "Manuscript Poems" consists of multiple shorter works by Jeffers.	
	Arranged alphabetically by title of the poem.	
b. 1, f. 1	"Cawdor" Film #2777	1927-1929
	Original manuscript written in pencil on 137 numbered leaves, 28 cm.; inscribed on the first and last leaves by the author; with a long autograph inscription concerning the poem, signed and dated January 1929, on a separate leaf, and with an autograph letter signed from Una (Mrs. Robinson) Jeffers to Barnet B. Ruder concerning the manuscript, January 15, 1929, laid in.	
b. 1, f. 2	"Dear Judas"; "The Loving Shepherdess"	1928-1930
	"Dear Judas"	1928-1930
	Original manuscript, written in pencil on 40 numbered leaves, plus 2 pages numbered 41 and 42, 28 cm.; with an autograph inscription concerning the poem, signed and dated September 8, 1930, on a separate leaf.	
	"The Loving Shepherdess"	1929-1930
	Original manuscript, written in pencil on 64 numbered leaves, 28 cm.; with an autograph inscription concerning the poem, signed and dated September 8, 1930, on a separate leaf.	
b. 1, f. 3	"Descent to the Dead"	1928-1932
	Original manuscript, written in pencil on 25 numbered leaves (some leaves written on both sides and on verso of letters) plus 1 leaf of index, 28 cm.; with an autograph inscription concerning the poems, signed and dated April 27, 1932, on a separate leaf.	
b. 2, f. 4	<i>Give Your Heart to the Hawks and Other Poems</i>	1929-1933
	Original manuscript, written chiefly in pencil on 254 leaves (some written on both sides), 28 cm.; with an autograph inscription concerning the manuscript and dated December 1933.	
b. 3, f. 5	Manuscript poems	circa 1927, undated

Writings > Manuscript poems (continued)

"Ascent to the Sierras" and "The Summit Redwood"	undated
Original manuscript, written in pencil on 2 leaves, 28 cm; inscribed, "Original manuscript of 'Ascent to the Sierras.' Robinson Jeffers," with verso inscription, "Original manuscript of 'The Summit Redwood.' Robinson Jeffers."	
"Ascent to the Sierras"	undated
Original typescript, with manuscript corrections, on 2 leaves, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft. Robinson Jeffers."	
"The Bird with the Dark Plumes"	undated
Original manuscript, written in pencil on 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Original manuscript of 'The Bird with the Dark Plumes.' Robinson Jeffers."	
"Bixby's Landing"	undated
Original manuscript, written in pencil on 2 leaves, 17x22 cm.; inscribed "Original manuscript of 'Bixby's Landing.' . . . Robinson Jeffers."	
"Contrast"	undated
Original typescript with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft, Robinson Jeffers."	
"Fawn's Foster Mother"	undated
Original typescript, with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft. Robinson Jeffers." Cancelled title: "The woman who nursed a fawn."	
"Meditation on Saviors"	undated
Original manuscript, written in pencil on 7 leaves, 28 cm. (leaf 6, 18x25 cm.); inscribed "Original manuscript of 'Meditation on saviors.' Robinson Jeffers." Versos of leaves 1, 4, 5, and 6 have manuscript notes and drafts.	
"Meditation on Saviors"	undated
Original typescript, on 7 leaves, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft of 'Medtation on Saviors.' Robinson Jeffers." Cancelled titles: "Commentary on the women at Point Sur," "The peace or the people," and "Meditation on Redeemers."	
"Ocean"	undated
Original typescript with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft. Robinson Jeffers."	
"A Redeemer"	circa 1927
Original manuscript, written in pencil, on 5 leaves, 16-28 cm.; inscribed "'A Redeemer. . . . Robinson Jeffers."	
"A Redeemer"	undated
Original typescript, with minor manuscript corrections in pencil, 4 leaves, 28 cm.	

Writings > Manuscript poems (continued)

	"Soliloquy" Original typescript, with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Revised second draught of 'Soliloquy.' Robinson Jeffers."	undated
	"The Summit Redwood" Original typescript, with corrections in pencil, 2 leaves, 28 cm.; inscribed "(Second draft.) Robinson Jeffers."	undated
	"To a Young Artist" Original manuscript on 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Original manuscript of 'To a Young Artist.' Robinson Jeffers." Written on verso, beginning of an autograph letter addressed "Dear Ben," Carmel, California, July 1, 1927.	circa 1927
	"Tor House" Original typescript, with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; inscribed "Second draft. Robinson Jeffers."	undated
b. 3, f. 6	"Roan Stallion," "The Tower Beyond Tragedy," & an unpublished poem Film 903 "Roan Stallion" Original manuscript, [19] pages, 27.5x33 cm.; pages [5]-[19] are written on versos of leaves numbered 54, 84-85, 90-93, 99-101, 118-119, and 120-122 of typewritten manuscript of a long narrative poem on Christ by Jeffers. Inscribed: "First draught of 'Roan Stallion' May-June 1925. R. J."	1924-1925 1925
	"The Tower Beyond Tragedy" Original manuscript, [55] pages, 15.5x33; written in part on versos of discarded business letters, leaves numbered 87-89, 113-194, and 216-227 of typewritten manuscript of a long narrative poem on Christ by Jeffers, and on other leaves of discarded typescript. Inscribed: "First draught of 'The Tower Beyond Tragedy,' 1924-1925. R. J."	1924-1925
b. 3, f. 7	<i>Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems</i> Galley proofs, with manuscript corrections, 73 leaves; page proofs, with manuscript corrections, 81 leaves; pages (13-127) clipped from a copy of <i>Tamar and other poems</i> ([1924]), from which galleys 29-73 were set.	[1925?]
b. 3, f. 8	Genesis of "Tamar" "Tamar" Original manuscript, written in pencil, 1 leaf, 36x63 (folded); contains the first germ of the Tamar story, with notes for its expansion; original manuscript of first and final draft of the poem 'Continent's end' from the Tamar volume; original manuscripts of fragments of two other short poems, never finished; and plans for the stairway of the granite tower which Jeffers built beside his house. Written on verso of Los Angeles Trust & Savings Bank statement dated January 17, 1922 to February 17, 1922.	[after 1922 Feb 22]-1925 [after 1922 Feb 22]

Writings > Genesis of "Tamar" (continued)

	Correspondence	1925 Nov 25
	Robinson Jeffers, typed letter signed to Donald Friede, 1 leaf (28 cm.), inscribed Carmel, California	
b. 3, f. 9	"Tamar" (negative copy)	after 1922 Feb 22
b. 4, f. 10	<i>Thurso's Landing and Other Poems</i> Original manuscript, 195 numbered leaves, plus 1 leaf of index, 28 cm.; with an autograph inscription concerning the manuscript, signed and dated April 27, 1932.	before 1932
	<i>The Women at Point Sur</i>	
b. 4, f. 11	Original manuscript 131 numbered leaves, 28 cm.; inscribed by the author to Donald Friede, with a note concerning the manuscript.	1927
b. 4, f. 12	Galley proofs and page proofs Galley proofs, 45 leaves, and page proofs, 55 leaves, with manuscript corrections.	1927
b. 4, f. 13	Correspondence Robinson Jeffers, autograph letter signed to John Hay Whitney, 1 leaf (28 cm.), inscribed Tor House, Carmel, California	1951 May 24

Series II: Robert M. Leylan Gift, 1929-1932

7 Folders

Gift of Robert M. Leylan, 1950 and, 1966.

Organized into two subseries: Writings and Correspondence.

	Writings Includes autograph and typescript copies of manuscripts of Jeffers' poetry. Arranged alphabetically by title.	1929-1932, undated
b. 4, f. 14	"Birds" Autograph manuscript: [2] pages, 14.5 cm. With positive photostat.	undated
b. 4, f. 15	"The Broken Balance" Original manuscript, 1 leaf, 28 cm.; from Section IV of the poem. Published in <i>Dear Judas and Other Poems</i> (1929). With positive photostat. Received laid in to limited edition of S. S. Alberts, <i>A Bibliography of the Works of Robinson Jeffers</i> (1933).	before 1929
b. 4, f. 16	"Day After To-morrow" Original typescript, with manuscript corrections in pencil, 1 leaf, 28 cm. With positive photostat.	undated
b. 4, f. 17	"Hands" Autograph manuscript, 1 leaf, 27 cm. Original title: "The Cave of Hands." With positive photostat.	undated
b. 4, f. 18	"Hooded Night" Autograph manuscript, [1] page, 28 cm. On verso, original manuscript verses discarded from his "Cawdor." With positive photostat.	undated
b. 4, f. 19	[Poems] Original manuscripts (positive photostats), 10 leaves, 28 cm.; includes poems entitled "The enemy," "Post mortem," "Credo," "Day after to-morrow," passages from "Cawdor," and other unidentified poems. (Originals written on both sides of 5 leaves.)	undated
b. 4, f. 20	Correspondence 3 letters addressed to Robert M. Levy concerning manuscripts of Robinson Jeffers. S. S. Alberts, typed letter signed, 1 leaf (27 cm.), with original envelope; dated 1932 Dec 28. Una Jeffers, autograph letter signed, 1 leaf (29.5 cm.), with original envelope; dated 1929 Feb 17. Barnet Ruder, typed letter signed, 2 leaves (22.5 cm), with original envelope, dated 1929 Feb 25.	1929-1932

Series III: Materials from Other Sources, 1929-1930*2 Folders*

Acquired by gift or purchase from various sources, as indicated on individual folders.

b. 4, f. 21	Correspondence 2 letters addressed to Dudley Nichols. Robinson Jeffers, autograph letter signed, 2 pages (28 cm.), 1929 Apr 17. Enclosure: Una Jeffers, autograph letter signed, 1 page (30 cm.), 1929 Apr 17. With original envelope. Gift of Dudley Nichols, 1949	1929 Apr 17
b. 4, f. 22	Writings by other authors: Trivers, Howard, "Robinson Jeffers: A Study" Typescript (carbon): 26, [4] leaves, 28 cm. Signed by the author on leaf 26. With manuscript comments by Robert M. Leylan.	1929-1930

Series IV: 2004 Addition, 1920-1928*0.21 linear feet (1 box)*

b. 5, f. 23	"Ante Mortem," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated
b. 5, f. 24	"Apology for Bad Dreams," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	1925, undated
b. 5, f. 25	"Birth Dues," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated
b. 5, f. 26	"Dead Man's Child," drafts, autograph manuscript and typescript, corrected	1928, undated
b. 5, f. 27	"The Machine," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated
b. 5, f. 28	"Natural Music," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated
b. 5, f. 29	"On Building With Stone," draft, typescript, corrected	[1928?]
b. 5, f. 30	"To the Children," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated
b. 5, f. 31	"To the House," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	1920, undated
b. 5, f. 32	"To the Rock That Will Be the Corner-stone of the House," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	1923, undated
b. 5, f. 33	"The Trumpet," draft, autograph manuscript, corrected	undated

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

American literature -- 20th Century
Poets, American

Occupations

Authors -- United States -- 20th Century
Poets -- United States -- 20th Century

Names

Jeffers, Robinson, 1887-1962