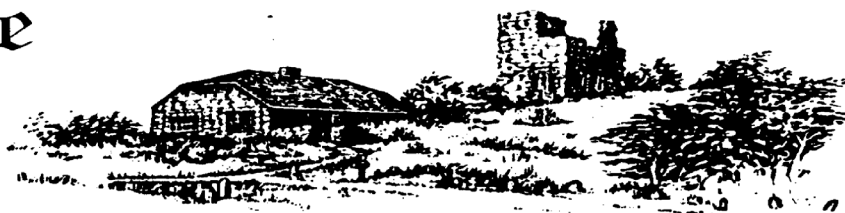


Tor House Newsletter



Winter 2018

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation,

100! In 2019 Tor House celebrates its century anniversary. Constructed in 1919, hard by the Pacific Ocean, without benefit of detailed plans and no permits, our little cottage continues to survive, welcoming Jeffers friends and fans, as well as students of historic architecture. Now surrounded by less classic, more modern abodes, Tor House Foundation has the continuing privilege of preservation. Our mission statement: To Preserve Tor House, Hawk Tower and its Collections. As Stewart Brand observed in his *How Buildings Learn*, “Tor House is a poem-like masterpiece. It may express more direct intelligence per square inch than any other house in America.” With your continued assistance and stewardship, Tor House Foundation will meet the challenges of maintaining our 100-year-old historic home.

The house is in good condition. I think we are on the third roof; exterior wood was recently repainted; west facing widows have UV protection and termites are quiet at this hour. The marine environment continues to bedevil hardware and hinges, so an oil can is useful.

“Celebrating the Century” will be the theme of the Spring Garden Party and, perhaps, of the 2019 Fall Festival. Fall Festival 2018 was a masterpiece. All credit to Alan Stacy and Erin Carey who dealt with the speakers’ schedules and the complex administrative requirements associated with the NEH grant. Well Done!

We do have an urgent need for additional tour docents. Please join their ranks and mention this satisfying and responsible service opportunity to friends and neighbors. Ask the office or find out about training and duties by consulting our current docents. If you’ve visited Tor House, you know what a superb job these volunteers are doing, many taking double shifts so that visitors will not be disappointed. Almost all tour booking is done on-line with our ticket contractor Fare Harbor. See the website to reserve your next trip. Credit card sales, too, are becoming popular in the bookstore.

A huge “shout out” to Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts who continues to manage the popular poetry competition. Next year’s Poetry Prize details are on page 6 of this Newsletter.

We continue our quest to have Tor House/Hawk Tower named a National Historic Landmark (NHL). National Parks approved our initial inquiry and conducted a site visit. Next is our formal application. Trustee Gere diZerega MD is leading this glacially slow project.

As is our custom at this time of year, we ask for your continued financial support. Tour admissions and book sales do not meet the budget. We NEED your Foundation membership and a little extra gift is appreciated beyond measure. You might consider sharing your admiration for Jeffers by gifting THF memberships to family and friends. We have maintenance tasks outside the budget that include: interior finish work, replacement of the water heater, upgrading the administrative office, rugs in the library and miscellaneous finishing work in the East Wing. As you are able, give us a hand!

Holiday Greetings from myself and Erin. Your questions, comments and visits are always welcome.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Vince Huth, President

Yes, I would like to support the work of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation. Please find enclosed my tax-deductible contribution of _____.

My gift is in honor of [optional] _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

October Visitors to Tor House

Although Robin and Una Jeffers are no longer there to greet them, writers and artists are still attracted to Tor House. This October, Tor House was graced with visits from authors Erik Reece and Tobias Wolff and from cinematographer David Schendel and his actress/teacher wife Florentina Mocanu-Schendel.

October 3

Author **Erik Reece** is writer-in-residence at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, where he teaches environmental journalism, writing, and literature.

Reece's 2006 book *Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness; Radical Strip Mining and the Devastation of Appalachia*, with a foreword by Wendell Berry, chronicles the devastating effects of mountaintop removal mining in his native state of Kentucky. The essay from which the book grew, published in *Harper's Magazine* (April 2005), won the John B. Oakes Award for Distinguished Environmental Journalism from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. In 2006 Reece received the Sierra Club's David R. Brower Award for Environmental Journalism.

Among Reece's other books are *Utopia Drive* (2016), *The Embattled Wilderness* (with James J. Krupa) (2013), and *An American Gospel* (2009). He has published numerous essays and magazine articles, including work in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation* and *Orion*.

Reece spent a week visiting the Central Coast for an article on Robinson Jeffers for *Pacific Standard* magazine. He wrote: "The working thesis of my piece, as it stands now, is that in these troubled times, we need to listen to Jeffers' vision and poetry more than ever. My own writing is very much grounded in place...and I'm fascinated by the way Jeffers grounded his work in Tor House and the Carmel area...."

October 5

Short story writer, memoirist and novelist **Tobias Wolff** is Ward W. and Priscilla B. Woods Professor, Emeritus, at Stanford University.

Wolff was in the area to give talks in Carmel and Salinas as part of the National Steinbeck Center's Big Read: Tobias Wolff's *This Boy's Life*.

Wolff is the author of the memoirs *This Boy's Life* and *In Pharaoh's Army*, the novels *The Barracks Thief* and *Old School*, and the short story collections *In the Garden of the North American Martyrs*, *Back in the World*, and *The Night in Question*. His most recent collection of short stories, *Our Story Begins*, won The Story Prize for 2008. He has also been the recipient of the PEN/Malamud Award and the Rea Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the PEN/Faulkner Award. His work appears regularly in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and other magazines and literary journals.

In 2015 Wolff received a National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama

October 27. Cinematographer **David Schendel** and his actress/ teacher wife **Florentina Mocanu-Schendel**.

Based in San Francisco, **David Schendel** has seven film credits, including *Yank Tanks*, a documentary about classic American cars in Cuba. The film has won numerous awards and has been screened on PBS and the Sundance Channel. His most recent documentary, *The Comedy Club* (2016), won the Jury Award for the Best Documentary at the Cinema at the Edge in Los Angeles.

Schendel is currently putting the finishing touches to his documentary *Enduring Democracy: The Monterey Petition* (scheduled release, January 2019). Filmed, in part, at Tor House, *Enduring Democracy* tells the story of a group of local women activists who led a door-to-door petition drive to welcome back Japanese Americans who had been held in concentration camps during the Second World War. The petition, published as a newspaper ad in the *Monterey Herald* in 1945 with the heading, "A Democratic Way of Life for All," was the only such public response in the country to the post-war hate campaign waged against Japanese-Americans.

Signers include Robinson and Una Jeffers, as well as Julia Hill Whittlesey and Eben Whittlesey, the grandmother and father of Foundation Board member Deborah Sharp.

Currently, Schendel is working with screenwriter Ty Richardson on "The Ballad of Reine Gore," a film adaptation of Jeffers's "The Love and the Hate," updated to the Viet Nam War.

Also a pianist and composer, Schendel played one of his original compositions, "Over and All Over," on the 1904 Grand O Steinway in the parlor of Tor House during his visit. He describes the piano as "amazing."

Born and raised in Romania, **Florentina Mocanu-Schendel** studied at the People's School of Art in Bucharest and University of Theater Arts in Targu Mures, graduating with a Diploma in Acting and an MFA for theatre and film. She performed for the National Theatre, the Comedy Theatre of Bucharest, and Romania Film. She won several awards for her work. In the U.S., she has worked in theatre and film while completing her MA in Drama from San Francisco State University and a PhD in Drama/Theatre and Performance Studies from Stanford University. Currently, she teaches Classical Dramatic Literature at the University of San Francisco, while freelancing as an actor, writer, director, choreographer, curator, scholar, and producer. She is co-founder of the theatre company Collected Works. She plays local activist Nancy Costello in *Enduring Democracy*.

~Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts

Visitors at Tor House



Florentina-Mocanu-Schendel, David Schendel, Deborah Sharp and Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts.



Erik Reese

The 24th Robinson Jeffers Association Conference will be held during the weekend of February 15-17, 2019 at the Carmel Woman's Club in Carmel, California. The topic will be "Jeffers' Inevitable Place." For further information, please consult the RJA website at www.robinsonjeffersassociation.org.

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS (September 2018 - November 2018)

LIFETIME (\$1000)

Joanne Medero

PATRON MEMBERS (\$250 for Individual or Couple)

Gere DiZerga

T. Ladson & Kristin Webb

SPONSOR MEMBERS (\$100 for Individual or Couple)

John & June Armstrong

Valeria W. Lyles

Inge Kessler

Roland & Martha Mace

MEMBERS

Stephen Bailey

Eric & Alison Jager

Lisa Meckel

C. Boyer

James H. Johnson

Esther Medina

Ollie Collins

Kevin & Judith Jones

John Poet/Anna Ramirez

Alan & Sherry Cosseboom

Francis & Mary Anne Lloyd

Sara Rubin

Mike Dillon

Audrey Lynch

Patricia A. Sanders

Karen Dunn-Haley

James & Christine Maguire

Alec Sutherland

Cathleen Gable

Phyllis Mazzocchi

Peggy Van Patten

Don & Esther Goodhue

Susan McElheran

Gloria Walters

Belinda Holliday

Deanna McKinstry-Edwards

Lynn Yaghoubian

* * * * *

CONTRIBUTIONS (September 2018 – November 2018)

Contribution - \$1000

Robert Kafka, for Musical Instruments

Contribution – \$500

Deborah Sharp, for Musical Instruments

Allen K Mears, for Poetry Prize

Contributions - \$100 to \$499

Robert Kafka

Deborah Sharp

Contributions – under \$100

Esther Medina

Peggy Van Patten

Lynn Yaghoubian

[Please note, listings reflect only new and renewed memberships and contributions since the Fall Issue of the Newsletter. The Spring Issue lists memberships and contributions for December, January, February, and March. There are no listings in the Summer Issue because of space constraints (Poetry Prize winners are published in the Summer Issue). The Fall Issue contains memberships and contributions from April through August of any given year, and the Winter Issue lists September through November memberships and contributions.]

* * * * *

Two Poems by Laura Christopher Newmark

The Luminous Sea

In late autumn twilight
the distant sea glows –
as if lit from below –
with a luminous silvery light.

December 2017

Silver Sea

Though gray fog drifts among the pines,
blanketing the hillside trees,
the changeable fog bank along the coast
reveals a splendor of silver sea.

December 2017

What Three Things”: Muriel Rukeyser’s *The Book of the Dead*

Originally published in her 1938 collection of documentary poems of witness, U.S. 1, Muriel Rukeyser’s poem cycle “*The Book of the Dead*” recounts the story of what many consider one of the worst industrial catastrophes in U.S. history, the Hawk’s Nest tunnel disaster in West Virginia. “*The Book of the Dead*” consists of twenty poems which include fragments of congressional and courtroom testimony, recollections of Rukeyser’s trip with photographer Nancy Naumberg to West Virginia in 1936, spells from The Egyptian Book of the Dead, and lyric verse. This year, West Virginia University Press republished the poem with an introduction by Catherine Venable Moore, a writer from Fayette County, WV; a list, most certainly only a fraction of the actual total, the Rinehart & Dennis Company kept of those who died, their age, race and place of burial; and two of Naumberg’s photographs.

Rukeyser met Robinson and Una Jeffers in 1944 when she spent the summer at the Carmel cottage of Ella Winter. In 1941 Jeffers served on a panel of three judges who selected Rukeyser for Poetry magazine’s first Harriet Monroe Poetry Award. Several months before Una’s death on Sept. 1, 1950, Una responded to a letter she had received from Rukeyser. “How sweet of you to think of me & sympathize!” Una wrote. Neither Robin nor Una knew that Rukeyser’s son, Bill, born on September 25, 1947 was their grandson. Except for persons close to her, Rukeyser never revealed that Donnan Jeffers was Bill’s father, although she did write, poignantly, in her poem “*The Gates*”: “...I cannot name the names,/my child’s own father, the flashing, the horseman,/the son of the poet....”

“What two things,” poet Muriel Rukeyser (1913-1980) asks in the last part of *The Book of the Dead*, “shall never be seen?” The answer: “They: what we did.”

“They”: the “official” estimate of 764 persons—probably closer to 2,000, mostly migratory black men from the South—who died of silicosis after working on the Hawk’s Nest Tunnel in 1930-1931 in Gauley Bridge, West Virginia.

“what we did”: “we”—the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation, its workers and subsidiaries; members of the medical profession and Congress; attorneys; townspeople, the undertaker, the sheriff, shop-owners—who, knowing the dangers of breathing in silica, had the men digging the silica dry without masks; who denied that silicosis was an issue—“only a few cases here”; who paid the laborers 25¢ per hour and the undertaker \$55 per body to bury them in a corn field when they died, unclaimed by family; who took no action to legislate safe working conditions—“Bill blocked; investigation blocked.”

Rukeyser also asks: “What three things can never be done?”

Her answer: “Forget. Keep silent. Stand alone.”

A major role of the poet is to remember, speak out, and recognize that we are all one community. To serve as witness. If the poet is fortunate, others listen.

Catherine Venable Moore, a native West Virginian, listened: “*These are roads to take*, Rukeyser wrote. I believed her. I took the roads.”

Moore, who lives five miles from Hawk’s Nest Tunnel, writes in her introduction to *The Book of the Dead* about “Appalachian fatalism,” “the spellbinding allure to disaster,” and about the disaster itself, “an extreme in a class of extremes—the disaster where truly *nothing* seemed to survive, even in memory....” Following a map that Rukeyser had made of her journey in 1936, Moore becomes “a tourist in my own home.” She revisits the sites of Rukeyser’s poem, speaks with the descendants of those who died of silicosis, reads the

historical records, including the 118 page redacted FBI file on Rukeyser and the company’s official account of the tragedy, and concludes, “This [latter] document has expanded, but into a longer list of undervalued, erased lives, as the rivers in West Virginia run their banks, as #WeAreOrlando and #BlackLivesMatter shout over and over to #SayTheirNames.” Yes, she concludes, “The same white supremacy that allowed, condoned, and covered up the mass killings at Hawk’s Nest still asserts its dominance.”

How relevant and timely, during the opioid crises we now face, this reprinting of Rukeyser’s searing indictment of capitalist greed, government inaction, and racism:

“They”: the 116 people who die each day from overdoses on opioids; some 42,000 in 2016 alone, 40% from prescription opioids;

“what we did”: the drug companies that knowingly marketed addictive opiates; the doctors who prescribed these opiates knowing the danger; the insurance companies that paid for the opiates but not other drugs; the pharmacists who dispensed the drugs; the legal system that criminalizes drug addiction; the federal government that remains largely unresponsive.

While the current opioid crisis occurs mainly among the white population, those affected have become part of that “longer list of undervalued, erased lives.”

In “Cassandra,” Robinson Jeffers writes, “Truly men hate the truth.../religion-/Venders and political men/Pour from the barrel, news lies on the old....” Will we take that “crust of truth” offered us by Rukeyser and Moore? Will we take the road where we never forget, never keep silent, never stand alone?

The reprinting of *The Book of the Dead* with Catherine Venable Moore’s introduction speaks to the powerful way poetry can serve as witness. It is a call to all of us.

Elliot Ruchowitz Roberts

***The Robinson Jeffers Tor House
2019 Prize for Poetry***

***The annual Tor House Prize for Poetry is a living memorial
to American poet Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)***

**\$1,000 for an original, unpublished poem not to exceed three pages in length.
\$200 for Honorable Mention.**

Final Judge: Brenda Hillman

Open to well-crafted poetry in all styles, ranging from experimental work to traditional forms, including short narrative poems. Each poem should be typed on 8 1/2" by 11" paper, and no longer than three pages. On a cover sheet only, include: name, mailing address, telephone number and email; titles of poems; bio optional. Multiple and simultaneous submissions welcome. There is a reading fee of \$10 for the first three poems; \$15 for up to six poems; and \$2.50 for each additional poem. Checks and money orders should be made out to Tor House Foundation.

Postmark deadline for submissions: March 15, 2019

The Prize winner will be announced by May 15. Include an SASE for announcement of the Prize winner.
Poems will not be returned.

For more information, visit our web site or contact us by email.

**Mail poems, check or money order, and SASE to:
Poetry Prize Coordinator, Tor House Foundation
Box 223240, Carmel, CA 93922**

**The Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation
P.O. Box 2713, Carmel, California 93921
Telephone: (831) 624-1813
www.torhouse.org Email: thf@torhouse.org**

The Atom To Be Split

Tor House Press is proud to announce the forthcoming publication of *The Atom To Be Split: New and Selected Essays on Robinson Jeffers*, by Robert Zaller. This volume collects essays from three decades on Jeffers' life and art, including new and previously unpublished work. It extends our vision of Jeffers both as one of the most significant poets of the twentieth century and as a prophetic figure who speaks urgently to the challenges of the twenty-first.

Robert, a founding member and past president of the Robinson Jeffers Association, received its Lawrence Clark Powell Award in 2018 for distinguished lifetime achievement. He is the author of two major studies of Jeffers, *The Cliffs of Solitude*, the inaugural volume of Cambridge University Press' Studies in Modern American Literature, and *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime*, published by Stanford. In addition, he edited *Centennial Essays for Robinson Jeffers*, and, for Tor House Press, *The Tribute of His Peers: Elegies for Robinson Jeffers*.

Robert's essays on Jeffers have appeared in major journals and university press publications both here and abroad. For *The Atom To Be Split*, he has revised and updated all previously published work. The essays that appear here for the first time suggest new directions for understanding Jeffers as a voice whose importance only grows with our times.

News and Notes

Are you looking for ways to play an active role in the Tor House Foundation experience?

I. Become a member and know that your contribution helps to preserve this wonderful property and continue its mission. Membership benefits include knowledge that you are part of the team, as well as free tours, a 10% discount on books and merchandise for sale through the Tor House Foundation, and, if you can provide a valid e-mail address, advanced notice of functions.

II. Become a Docent. The Foundation depends on volunteers to carry out its activities. **Tour docents** are the folks you meet when you visit Tor House. Though not necessarily Jeffers scholars, they are well-versed in Jeffers writing and in the history of the property. We provide the training. You are asked to provide the time. Tour docenting means you are the face of Tor House, a unique individual willing to enjoy the fun and assume the responsibility of representing the Foundation to the community and to visitors from all over the world. Though the Foundation has greatest need for Tour Docents, should you prefer a less public role, or should you not have sufficient time or energy to conduct tours each month, there are openings for other talents. We need folks interested in archival work, computers and web maintenance, gardening, flower arranging, selling, advertising, or simply lending a helping hand at special events. Suggest a role you might want to play: we're listening. Joining up is free. Discounts to Jeffers activities are often offered.

III. Contribute to your Newsletter. Your editor is always looking for Jeffers/Central Coast related poetry, photos, criticism, commentary and reminiscences. You, too, can be in print.

Which leads to the final point. As you might have noticed the Newsletter is now primarily published electronically. It appears on our website about a week before hard-copies are mailed out. A web link announces publication to members when a new issue is posted. Should you not have a current e-mail account, or if you choose to receive the Newsletter in hardcopy, through the mails, please let us know when you renew your membership and we will make sure a copy is delivered to your door. As always, we appreciate your keeping us up-to-date with all your contact information.

* * * * *

THE LAST WORD FROM JEFFERS

NOVEMBER SURF

Some lucky day each November great waves awake and are drawn
Like smoking mountains bright from the west
And come and cover the cliff with white violent cleanness: then suddenly
The old granite forgets half a year's filth:
The orange-peel, egg-shells, papers, pieces of clothing, the clots
Of dung in corners of the rock, and used
Sheaths that make light love safe in the evenings: all the droppings of the summer
Idlers washed off in a winter ecstasy:
I think this cumbered continent envies its cliff then....But all seasons
The earth, in her childlike prophetic sleep,
Keeps dreaming of the bath of a storm that prepares up the long coast
Of the future to scour more than her sea-lines:
The cities gone down, the people fewer and the hawks more numerous,
The rivers mouth to source pure; when the two-footed
Mammal, being someways one of the nobler animals, regains
The dignity of room, the value of rareness.

From *Thurso's Landing* (1931) [Hunt II, 159]

The editorial staff welcomes a discussion of this poem or any of the other material in this Newsletter. Please address comments to Newsletter Editor, Tor House Foundation, PO Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921 or fdv528@comcast.net. Space permitting, letters to the editor will be published in the next issue. All letters will be posted on our web site: www.torhouse.org.



**Robinson Jeffers
Tor House Foundation**
P.O. Box 2713 • CARMEL, CA 93921

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Office Open Mon.-Thurs. 9-1*

Winter 2018

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please check one:

- Full-time student/TH Docent \$15.00
- Senior 25.00
- Individual 40.00
- Couple 50.00
- Sponsor 100.00
- Patron 250.00
- Lifetime 1000.00

My payment for \$ _____ is enclosed.

Name: _____

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Please make check payable to:
TOR HOUSE FOUNDATION
Mail to: PO Box 2713, Carmel, CA 93921
Consult Website for on-line payment

Your contribution assists in the preservation of the unique home of the poet, Robinson Jeffers, and in community outreach programs.

Membership benefits include:

- ◆ Free tours of Tor House
- ◆ 10% discount on merchandise
- ◆ Advance invitations to coming events
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter

**ROBINSON JEFFERS
TOR HOUSE FOUNDATION**

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