



Lines of Force

BY THOMAS CENTOLELLA

The pleasure of walking a long time on the mountain
without seeing a human being, much less speaking to one.

And the pleasure of speaking when one is suddenly there.
The upgrade from wary to tolerant to convivial,
so unlike two brisk bodies on a busy street
for whom a sudden magnetic attraction
is a mistake, awkwardness, something to be sorry for.

But to loiter, however briefly, in a clearing
where two paths intersect in the matrix of chance.
To stop here speaking the few words that come to mind.
A greeting. Some earnest talk of weather.
A little history of the day.

To stand there then and say nothing.
To slowly look around past each other.
Notice the green tang pines exude in the heat
and the denser sweat of human effort.

To have nothing left to say
but not wanting just yet to move on.
The tension between you, a gossamer thread.
It trembles in the breeze, holding
the thin light it transmits.

To be held in that
line of force, however briefly,
as if it were all that mattered.

And then to move on.
With equal energy, with equal pleasure.

Carmel Point

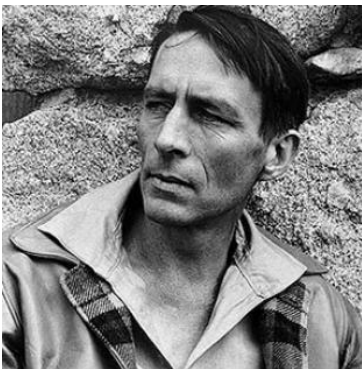
The extraordinary patience of things!
This beautiful place defaced with a crop of suburban houses—
How beautiful when we first beheld it,
Unbroken field of poppy and lupin walled with clean cliffs;
No intrusion but two or three horses pasturing,
Or a few milch cows rubbing their flanks on the outcrop rockheads—
Now the spoiler has come: does it care?
Not faintly. It has all time. It knows the people are a tide
That swells and in time will ebb, and all
Their works dissolve. Meanwhile the image of the pristine beauty
Lives in the very grain of the granite,
Safe as the endless ocean that climbs our cliff.—As for us:
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and ocean that we were made from.

Credit

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Author

Robinson Jeffers



Drawing on the "beauty of things" in nature, Robinson Jeffers wrote poetry that highlighted the difference between the natural world and the condition of the modern man



Ars Poetica #100: I Believe

BY ELIZABETH ALEXANDER

Poetry, I tell my students,
is idiosyncratic. Poetry

is where we are ourselves
(though Sterling Brown said

“Every ‘I’ is a dramatic ‘I’”),
digging in the clam flats

for the shell that snaps,
emptying the proverbial pocketbook.

Poetry is what you find
in the dirt in the corner,

overhear on the bus, God
in the details, the only way

to get from here to there.
Poetry (and now my voice is rising)

is not all love, love, love,
and I’m sorry the dog died.

Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)
is the human voice,

and are we not of interest to each other?

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