

TO JEFFERS AT LAND'S END

By his strange, shallow river far inland
where earth is only shorn, windswept wastes
 of sage and lava rim,
bleakly reminiscent of a drawn sea,
I have read the poems: the "Hurt Hawks,"
and the "—Republic;" have listened
to the heart's beat of "Birth-Dues"
and have been gripped down deep
by the shock of those poems from Sur —
For on that coast I have toiled up
the long lupined headlands blue as the sea,
and felt the pulse of beauty's tragedy
mock my eyes as it broke upon the black rocks and was water again.

Here there is land—
The shock of silent hills
beating their blue upon the ear like wind.
There are waters, shallow rivers, alkaline lakes, and tuled sloughs—
where the geese call, and the Crane and Pelican are heard like voices
 of the terrain.

Here, too, is beauty's tragedy forever reminding the eye that we
 are mortal.

Yet I cannot quite understand the cry of your despair—
for it is we who weep before the tragic skies,
Who do not understand and are like children reaching for the moon.
Too late we watch the high sun ascending to Noon,
and while we wait the earth unmindful of Destiny or Fate
gives birth to grass, wears distant rock to sharper lines
 against the sky—
and the hawk unstayed by threat of death or broken wing
skims ceaselessly, a scythe above the sage
where rabbit and the rattler lurk,
its vision accurate as a gauge.
Its search beside these poems — derision.

Wendell B. Anderson