

native and a poet of the Central Coast, I have long since abandoned Jeffers as a model of either personal or poetic conduct. His inhumanism (which is really more like antihumanism) wielded as an ideological bludgeon diminishes much of his writing, just as Rich's genderism and Pablo Neruda's communism often compromise their imaginations with canned political formulas, rhetorical evidence of righteousness but tedious and redundant as art. Yet Jeffers, as Pound called Whitman (and like the insufferable Pound himself), is "a pigheaded father" who despite his faults has much to teach. I've learned from him to ignore current trends and hold to my own vision of what must be written; to trust my own voice (as Duncan advised) and to take seriously the truth of my own experience; to attend to the reality of the physical world and attempt to embody it in my writing; to have no patience with vanity and ego (including mine) and to beware of poetic presumptuousness and frivolousness alike. The words "beauty" and "beautiful" appear repeatedly in Jeffers's verse, and in their recurrence reveal that Beauty—mostly in the form of his coastal landscape and the constantly changing ocean and their creatures—is what he values above everything and what serves as evidence and embodiment of a trans-human divinity. Even for a non- or anti-religious poet, the mystery of creation is an inexhaustible subject, and Jeffers at his best opens a big window on a realm of limitless wonder.

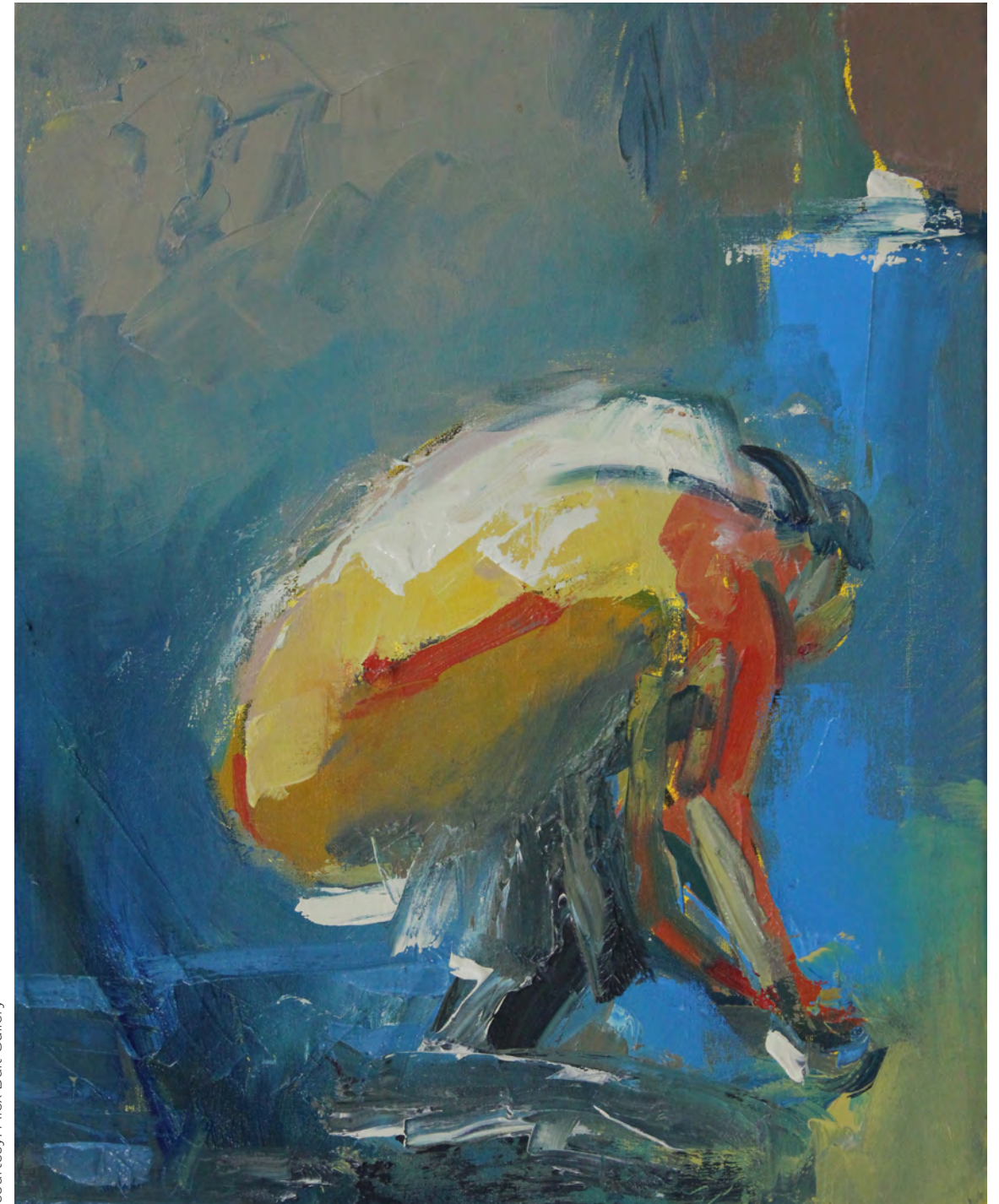
Further Reading

- Melba Berry Bennett, *The Stone Mason of Tor House: The Life and Works of Robinson Jeffers*
- Charles Bukowski, *Selected Letters Volume 4: 1987–1994*
- T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*
- William Everson, *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast as a Literary Region*
- Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind*
- Dana Gioia, *Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture*
- Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by Richmond Lattimore
- Randall Jarrell, *Poetry and the Age*
- Robinson Jeffers, *The Beginning and the End*
- _____, *Not Man Apart*
- _____, *Rock and Hawk*, edited by Robert Hass
- _____, *Selected Poems*
- _____, *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*
- _____, *The Women at Point Sur and Other Poems*
- James Karman, *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*
- Stanley Kunitz, *A Kind of Order, A Kind of Folly: Essays and Interviews*
- Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*
- Henry Miller and James Laughlin, *Selected Letters*
- Czeslaw Milosz, *Visions from San Francisco Bay*
- Kenneth Rexroth, *Assays*
- Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin, *Selected Letters*
- Adrienne Rich, *Your Native Land, Your Life*
- Oscar Williams (editor), *A Pocket Book of Modern Verse*
- Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason*
- William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*

Stephen Kessler is a poet, prose writer, award-winning translator, and the editor of *The Redwood Coast Review*. His recent books include *The Tolstoy of the Zulus* (essays), *The Sonnets* by Jorge Luis Borges (as editor and principal translator), *The Mental Traveler* (novel), and *Burning Daylight* (poems).

URSULA O'FARRELL

Paradise Revisted, 2012
oil on canvas, 20 x 16 in.



courtesy: Alex Bult Gallery