# *Editorial*

In previous issues of the *Newsletter* I have had the pleasant and often exciting task of reporting on and celebrating many important developments and achievements for the Society. Not least among these developments, though less tangible than our exhibitions, our publications and ever-growing Powys collection, is the fact that an increasing number of members are taking an active part in the Society's work. The current *Newsletter* shows this quite clearly, for we have a number of new contributors, including Karl Orend, director of the Alyscamps Press, which has published *Henry Miller – A Bibliography of Primary Sources*, as well as work by Frédéric Mistral, Rafael Alberti and D. H. Lawrence, Janet Fouli of the University of Tunis, Henning Ahrens and Robin Patterson, one of the leading collectors of North America.

Indeed, developments in the Society have arisen so swiftly that we have decided that it is time to pause and take stock, to consult our members on what exactly they want from the Society, as well as what they are able to contribute to it. Some will want us to press on with an ever greater range of activities; some will be more cautious; some will not want us to change at all. Yet circumstances bring changes, whether we want them or not, and is it only by consulting our membership that we can ensure that we are moving in the right direction. To this end, we have enclosed with this *Newsletter* a *Membership Survey*, designed by the Executive Committee, and I would strongly urge every member of the Society to devote a little time to completing this and to return it to John Batten as soon as possible. Whatever your views, they will be taken into account and the results of the survey will be published in the November issue of the *Newsletter*, as well as being discussed at the Conference.

Members will be pleased to learn that the first *complete* edition of *Porius* has now been published by the Colgate University Press and is distributed by the Syracuse University Press. The Society is currently attempting to negotiate special terms for members and we hope that copies will be on sale at the Conference.

Meanwhile, our Powys collection continues to grow, with generous donations of manuscript material, drawings and books from Eveline Alty and Jack Wallace.

Annual Conference of The Powys Society — *see page 22*
Walking Weymouth Sands — *see page 28*

We are, of course, extremely grateful for these gifts and would also be pleased to hear from any other member of the Society who knows of material which might be added to the collection.

Jeff Kwintner has also asked us to announce that he is interested in corresponding with members of the Society interested in the application of John Cowper Powys's philosophy to everyday life. Jeff can be contacted at: Flat 7, Hatherley Court, Hatherley Court Road, Cheltenham, Glos., GL51 6EA.

**Paul Roberts**

## *Theodore Powys and Andrew Melrose*

Last year I purchased a series of ten letters written by T. F. Powys to his literary agents, Curtis Brown Limited, covering the period 1917 to 1920. All but two of the letters are addressed to Frederick Chard, a director of Curtis Brown. As Theodore's dealings with his literary agents at this time are touched upon in his letters to John Cowper Powys, published in the 1993 *Powys Journal*, the following letters may be of interest to readers of the *Newsletter*.

By 1917, Theodore, then in his forty-second year, had been writing seriously for about fifteen years since retiring from his Suffolk farm, but he had published only two works. The first was the privately printed edition (100 copies) of *An Interpretation of Genesis*, in 1907, and in America early in 1916 Arnold Shaw had published *The Soliloquy of a Hermit*. Although the *Soliloquy* advertised *Mr. Tasker's Gods* for the autumn of 1916, the novel was not published by Shaw, who had expressed reservations about publishing the book as early as February 1916 (see John's *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn*, Volume 1, p. 198).

R. P. Graves in his *The Brothers Powys* refers (on page 114) to Theodore's state of misery at this time. Louis Marlow (Wilkinson) also records Theodore's despondency and depression during this period in *Welsh Ambassadors* (see pages 169 and 171–172). It is likely that this lack of success in terms of his writing only added to Theodore's problems. Therefore it is not surprising that Theodore, hoping to improve his publishing fortunes, should be willing to allow the publisher, Andrew Melrose, 'quite a free hand', as he notes in his letter to John of July 9th 1917, in relation to the proposed English publication of the *Soliloquy* and other works, even to the extent of permitting Melrose to choose a new title for the *Soliloquy*.

The earliest letter in the series is dated May 19th 1917:

Dear Mr Chard

I thank you for your letter received this morning. I think it would be well for me to sign the contract when you have concluded the negotiations

with Messrs Melrose in regard to the publication of the *Soliloquy of a Hermit* in England. Mr Arnold Shaw says in his lettter to me 'If the proposal from Mr Melrose as per the enclosed copy of a letter from them to Mr Frederick Chard meets with your approval you are at liberty to close the contract with Messrs Melrose.' I have not yet received a marked copy of *The Soliloquy* from America, it has perhaps been lost. I send another copy which can be handed to Mr Melrose. I leave the matter of correction and alteration intirely [*sic*] in Mr Melrose's hands having a complete confidence in his judgment [*sic*]. Mr Melrose may chose [*sic*] what title he wishes. Neither will, in the case of *The Soliloquy*, there be any need to send the proofs to me. Mr Melrose's corrections can quite well be the final ones. I gather from your letter that it will be worth while to send you the manuscripts of the stories and Novel even though they are not typed. I hope to send them to you next week.

Your sincerely

Theodore F. Powys

In a postscript to this letter Theodore states, after due reflection upon the possible loss of the marked copy of the *Soliloquy*, 'I am posting *The Soliloquy* to you today in a registered packet.' The marked copy of *The Soliloquy* duly arrived, despite Theodore's misgivings, and so on June 4th 1917 he sent the marked copy to Frederick Chard. The manuscript of the novel mentioned in this letter was *Amos Lear*.

By June 20th 1917 Theodore had concluded the agreement with Melrose for the publication of *The Soliloquy*:

Dear Mr Chard

I have safely received the agreement for *The Soliloquy of a Hermit* in duplicate. I will retain as you say the one signed by Mr Melrose, and I enclose to you the other that I have signed.

Your sincerely

Theodore F. Powys

Events moved quickly and Melrose appeared to be showing interest in both *Amos Lear* and *Mr. Tasker's Gods*. On July 2nd 1917 Theodore was again writing to Chard:

Dear Mr Chard

I thank you very much for your letter. I would like to say that I am willing to put myself entirely in Mr Melrose's hands in the matter of *Amos Lear*. I will of course come up and see him if he really thinks it necessary. However I should be very glad to escape the journey to Town if possible as I suffer from a weak heart, and if my saying that I give Mr Melrose an absolutely free hand in altering and correcting it – will save me the journey I should be very thankful.

Mr Melrose may only wish that parts of *Amos Lear* should be left out,

that could be done, if you allow it – following his suggestions exactly – at your office.

I do not expect that Mr Melrose would wish me to add any more to the story, and it would not be at all easy to do so. In the matter of altering near to parts that Mr Melrose would like left out, that might be done – so long as the original style is not changed – by yourself, if it is not a trouble to you. However I will do exactly as Mr Melrose wishes and as you advise and I thank you very much for so kindly offering to arrange the interview.

Yours sincerely

Theodore F. Powys

P. S. If Mr Melrose really thinks that the M.S. had better be returned to me so that I could re write the whole novel in order to meet his wishes I am of course willing to do so, though it would take time – T. F. P.

This extraordinarily deferential letter reveals the lengths to which Theodore was prepared to go in order to secure publication of *Amos Lear*, even a journey to London! In *Welsh Ambassadors* (pp. 179–180) Louis Marlow, when writing about Theodore's celebrated visit to London in December 1923, remarks that Theodore had not been in London 'for very many years, and I don't think he has gone since.' The reference to Theodore suffering from a weak heart was not simply an excuse for avoiding the visit to London. Following the introduction of conscription Theodore had been rejected for military service in 1916, when an army doctor in Dorchester discovered a problem with his heart (see Graves p. 114 and p.127). In the *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn* (p. 204) John mentions that Theodore had spoken of 'pleading conscientious scruples'. Such a plea was unnecessary as, following further medical examinations in 1917 and 1918, Theodore was exempted from military service on each occasion.

On August 25th 1917 Theodore was again writing to Frederick Chard:

Dear Sir

A parcel containing the typed manuscript of a novel (*Mr. Tasker's Gods*) should by now have reached you from New York. Could you kindly let me know when it arrives.

Yours truly

Theodore F. Powys

On January 15th 1918 Theodore returned the proofs of *Soliloquies of a Hermit*:

Dear Mr Chard

I thank you for your letter and the one set of proofs of the *Soliloques* [*sic*]. I have gone through the proofs and I now return them to you, and also enclose a letter for Mr Melrose. I very much hope that the little book will be a success.

Yours sincerely

Theodore Francis Powys

*Soliloquies of a Hermit*, published by Melrose in 1918, was not a commercial

success, although a 'revised' edition was published by Melrose in 1926. In a letter to Louis Wilkinson of October 1921 Theodore writes 'If you see any very rich man who is a great fool you might advise him to buy the *Soliloquies*. I received 7*d* yesterday for two copies sold during the past half year.' In the same letter Theodore adds: '*Amos Lear* remains with Mr Melrose.' *Amos Lear* had been accepted by Melrose in late 1919 but he did not publish the book or any other works by Theodore, despite the fact that attempts had been made to interest him in a number of other novels, including *Georgina, a Lady*, *Father Adam*, and *Sheep's Clothing*.

The final letter in the series, addressed to a Mr R Savage of Curtis Brown, and dated June 3rd 1920 refers to 'a new book' the title of which is not widely known:

> Dear Mr Savage
>
> I am sending you by todays [*sic*] post a new book called *Like Will to Like*. I intended that it should be named *Birds of a Feather*, but I see that this latter title is the name of a play.

In an unpublished *Bibliographical Addenda* to his 1967 bibliography, Peter Riley writes that he had not come across any reference to this novel in any letters or other papers relating to T. F. Powys. Riley goes on to describe three separate manuscripts of *Like Will to Like*, including a complete 'fair copy' in thirty-two chapters written in fourteen exercise books. I have not established the present whereabouts of these manuscripts, though I suspect they are housed in the Powys collection at the library of the University of Texas. I would be interested to hear from any reader who is able to confirm the location of these manuscripts.

This little collection of letters was sold by Bertram Rota Ltd in June 1938 (for a guinea!) and remained in a private collection in America until last year. The letters are of some interest in that they help to dispel any lingering belief that Theodore was reluctant to publish his early work.

**Griffin Beale**

## *'Imperfectly Realized? ... I like My Slip-Shod Style.'*

Writers do not usually tolerate any tampering with their manuscripts; but the correspondence between John Cowper Powys and Dorothy M. Richardson[1] reveals two occasions when she looked at his manuscripts. The diaries during the same period note other instances, when Phyllis Playter advises changes, and J.C.P. defers to her judgement and is convinced that her opinion improved the book he is writing. I propose to study his attitude towards these manuscripts as they reach completion, and his attitude towards both Phyllis and Dorothy as they offer their advice.

In April 1937, J.C.P. sent the typescript of *Morwyn* to Dorothy Richardson's

husband, the artist Alan Odle, for him to make some illustrations. Alan Odle was an unconditional admirer of J.C.P.'s books, one whom J.C.P. thought of as the ideal reader,[2] and J.C.P. liked his style of pen-and-ink drawings. Alan was an unsuccessful artist whom J.C.P. wanted to help, in this case by publishing the illustrations, which he was sure would be perfectly suited to *Morwyn*. Indeed, Alan read the typescript of *Morwyn* with great enthusiasm, and immediately started work on drawings for it.

Meanwhile, Dorothy Richardson also read the typescript. Here is is necessary to go back in time: in September 1929, J.C.P. had invited *her* to criticize *Wolf Solent*. He anticipated a negative criticism, and this squares with his attitude towards himself in relation to other people: in his *Autobiography*, and in his correspondence with others, he would frequently put himself in an inferior position, and praise or flatter his interlocutor. However, *Wolf Solent* was already published, and whatever D.M.R. might say about it, there was no question of altering a word of it. Her criticism might be useful for future reference, but it could not touch the creative impulse which had already been completed.

Her comments on *Wolf Solent*, in her letter of December 15th 1929, were approving; moreover, she began by saying 'there is no word in *Wolf* I would alter' [Beinecke]. From then on, J.C.P. sent the Odles copies of all his books published since their first meeting in 1929, but apart from her positive comments on *Wolf Solent*, she had shown enthusiasm only for the *Autobiography*. It was Alan who had read them all with obvious delight, even being moved to write a letter of appreciation for *Maiden Castle* [n.d.: January? 1937; Beinecke] – he who rarely wrote a letter.[3] Hence it was to Alan that J.C.P. sent the typescript of *Morwyn*. However, Dorothy wrote to J.C.P. on May 10th 1937, asking 'for my wone private & personal ends, nothing to do with the drawings' [Beineke] whether Cassells had begun setting up the type. Just over a month later, she sent J.C.P. the results of her proof-reading, 'done coldly & callously'.[4]

Why did she take the initiative in proof-reading *Morwyn*? She had previous experience of proof-reading, having read H. G. Wells' *Autobiogaphy* (at the author's request) in 1934.[5] It may well be that she felt she owed J.C.P. a debt; for he had written a booklet, *Dorothy M. Richardson*, published in 1931 by Joiner and Steel and adapted in two instalments in *The Adelphi*, also in 1931. His purpose in writing this was to boost sales of her novels, for he felt, and frequently repeated, that she was 'the most neglected of modern writers'. This booklet, written in two weeks in the spring of 1930 while he set aside the writing of *A Glastonbury Romance*, is a lavish encomium of D.M.R.'s achievement as a woman writer. She had been asked by a publisher (William Jackson) to supply 'a short paragraph on each of her books' and, knowing that J.C.P. recommended her books during his lecture tours through the U.S.A., she sent the publisher's request to him. He immediately did what she had told him *not* to do; that is, he put aside his own book in order to write about her books. Every day he would read aloud to Phyllis

Playter and discuss what he had written; this was his habit at this time, whether he was writing fiction or non-fiction, and he *did* allow Phyllis to modify what he had written. His diary entry for Saturday May 3rd 1930, includes the following: 'I began a rather feeble essay on Dorothy Richardson. The T.T. [Phyllis Playter] will improve it later on.'[6]

J.C.P. had dashed the essay off in a fortnight and sent it to D.M.R., giving her a free hand to modify anything she liked.[7] She had just written a similar book for the same publishers,[8] and J.C.P. could take the attitude that she was more experienced than he was at this type of writing. He had extravagant praise for her style in *John Austen and the Inseparables*, writing to her on January 29th 1931:

> Good Lord! do you call this book, on Austen's cuts, your pot-boiling style? Think of having the top-reach of precise & elegant style, as so many sweat to reach it, as your pot-boiling style – but of course, I am enough of an aged war-horse of criticism to know exactly what you mean. Its a style without necessity – I do catch that – and one that takes what you will from this or that trend of the time ...' [Beinecke]

She did not alter his manuscript in any way; in fact, she seems to have passed it on to the publishers without even reading it, and only read it when it was about to be published. She wrote to Bernice Elliott on March 19th 1931:

> I have now read the substance of his kind comments on my work in the form of a long essay to appear almost immediately in two parts in the London *Adelphi*. I am not quite sure whether to be jubilant or horrified. But he will be pleased & for that I rejoice. [Beinecke]

How could she modify a text of which she was the subject, especially one that praised her in such glowing terms? When a friend wrote congratulating her on the *Adelphi* article, she replied: 'My own emotions are mixed', but she recognized that 'it is a generous effort and just like him'.[9] Her appreciation of the spirit rather than the letter of J.C.P.'s essay is further shown in a letter to Hugh Walpole of June 8th 1931: 'Agreeing with your criticism of Mr. Powys' essay, I must just remark that is was written in a mood of furious indignation over the state of my sales and the who-reads-this-deadly-bore-now tone of my U.S.A. press.' [Beinecke]

J.C.P.'s essay in *The Adelph* and its re-issue by Joiner and Steele, made very little impression on the reading public. However, the *carte blanche* that J.C.P. had given D.M.R to modify his text obviously remained in her mind. The next book of his that she saw before publication was the typescript of *Morwyn*. This was her chance to repay him for his praise of her.

Sh knew that he thought very highly of her writing – the essay published by Joiner and Steele gave ample evidence ot his; she may not have realised what a constant reference she was to his efforts at writing. While he was writing his *Autobiography*, he told her: 'But I am copying *you* in the sense of – I mean labouring *after* you – in the sense of trying to give not quite 'imperfectly realized' surroundings.' [Letter of December 1st 1933; Beinecke] His diary also bears

witness to her influence on him at the moment of writing. On March 10th 1933 he wrote:

> Then I went up to Attic and worked at this chapter about Sylvanus – too easy a thing for me! *So* easy, that I cannot believe it is what Dorothy Richardson calls 'properly realized' – I fear it may be 'I.R.', as she calls it, in the margins of her MSS when *she* writes too easily 'Imperfectly Realized!' [NLW Aberystwyth]

After *Weymouth Sands* and the *Autobiography*, he recorded her impact on his writing of *Maiden Castle*:

> *Worked hard* at Chapter VIII wh. is a very important chapter from my own private point of view – & let's trust that the reading of our friend Dorothy Richardson's *Clear Horizon* has given me a greater scrupulously serious attempt to avoid *Imperfect Realizations*! [Monday November 11th 1935; NLW Aberystwyth]

While the influence of Dorothy Richardson is apparent while J.C.P. is writing, the influence of Phyllis Playter permeates his whole life. One can interpret this as providing the setting in which he can write, and it is clear that he associates Phyllis and Dorothy Richardson in certain respects. In the 1931 diary[10] he writes: 'She [the T.T.] says that I must regard her top garden as part of the house part of her nest in the mystic Dorothy Richardson sense ...' [Wednesday June 17th; p. 149] and again: 'She has changed the position of the bed we sleep in & last night was out first night in the new position. It is *very* nice! How clever she is! How far sighted! How good in the Dorothy Richardson sense!' [Tuesday June 23rd; p. 154] In this context we may remember that Dorothy Richardson's heroine, Miriam, attributes to women the art of creating atmospheres, in *Revolving Lights* [1923].[11]

More to the point is the influence of Phyllis Playter on J.C.P.'s writing; however, this does not occur at the moment of writing, but before and after. The diary for 1930[12] contains the following: 'But she said at breakfast today that she got more satisfaction in her Life Illusion by helping me to write Six Massive Books that we project than by 'travelling about Europe'.' According to the diaries, he would spend the day writing, and then read to Phyllis what he had written. According to her reception of his writing, he would either go back and rewrite it, or go on. For he wrote that 'The T.T. has a critical penetration – & don't 'ee think I don't know it – that is *just* as good – & *better* in many ways – than either of these mistresses of the art' [D.M.R. and Ruth Suckow; diary entry for Monday January 25th 1932; NLW Aberystwyth]. This influence of Phyllis's on his writing is recorded in connection with *A Glastonbury Romance*,[13] *Owen Glendower* (diary entry for Monday December 18th 1939, when she thought the last chapter was too crowded, and he re-wrote it), and *Porius*:

> Last night the T.T. read aloud to me the last chapter of *Porius* & she did *not like it Too Boy-Scout-ish rough à la Mr Wolf Solent* & *conceited* & *over-riding*

> So I shall *revise* & *re-write* yes! yes! yes! I shall write a much slower more deliberate & perhaps even more *eloquent* Finale I won't say I'll write a *prose* – a Prose ending in Ruskinian Symphonic prose! But I'll do something something something VERY Different. [Diary entry for Monday August 25th 1947; NLW Aberystwyth]

These references and quotations go beyond the time span of the *Dorothy M. Richardson* essay and *Morwyn*, and show that the influence of Phyllis was a constant one. In a letter to Dorothy Richardson [J.C.P. 25; December 31st 1932, 9 p.m.], he writes a more public appreciation of Phyllis's help than those of the diaries (whom did he intend to read the diaries?):

> I can't *tell* you what a help Phyllis is to me in my writings. She *won't* let things pass; that are carelessly written from the top of my brain; and under her inspiration I am still re-writing the beginning of my new Romance about Weymouth, Portland, Upwey, and Chesil Beach.' [Beinecke]

If Phyllis did read all his work aloud, or if he read to her, how can one account for the mistakes in his carbon copies of *Morwyn*? The mistakes quoted in J.C.P. 49 (June 30th 1937) are grammatical ('More thousands of cats') and spelling mistakes – superficial mistakes that she would surely have corrected. Even if she *heard Morwyn* rather than *read* it, she would have eliminated the grammatical mistakes and discussed the careless vocabulary. In the same letter, J.C.P. writes that there were a lot of mistakes: 'up to page 197 practically *200*', he adds: 'Oh! *damn*! but I didn't put down *commas*.' The diaries do not record any reading of *Morwyn* or discussion of it by Phyllis.

Why should she not have read it as a work in progress, as she read the other books, both beforehand and afterwards? Was the subject one she was out of sympathy with? Did she feel, in his first 'Welsh' novel, started only eighteen months after their first arrival in Wales, somehow alien towards it? Was she put out by his determination to write *Morwyn* before *Owen Glendower*, which he had been thinking of as early as May 1935 [J.C.P. 36; Beinecke]? Was she disorientated by his later attribution to her of the inspiration for it [diary entry for September 17th 1937; NLW Aberystwyth], discreetly withholding her support for this alone of all his books? For is *was* the least successful of all his books, the first of his novels since 1929 to be rejected by Simon and Schuster, his publishers in New York, on the grounds that it was founded on an idea, a violent attack on vivisection.[14]

J.C.P. wrote later: 'I hold the view that the really great thing in writers of genius and the things that will influence posterity are *not* the things which are premeditated and intended, but the things that rise up from the depths of the writer's unique soul, and are diffused through his work.'[15] *Morwyn was* 'premeditated and intended' as an anti-vivisection book, and its anti-vivisection ideas, while present in *Weymouth Sands*, are not 'diffused through [J.C.P.'s] work'. It was an experimental work, and both the later 'Welsh' novels, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius* (both

read in manuscript by Phyllis), and the later mystical fantasies, may well owe something to it. Like *Dorothy M. Richardson* delaying *A Glastonbury Romance*, its writing held up the writing of another novel (*Owen Glendower*), and the urgency of the rival inspiration may have been detrimental to it.

J.C.P. knew that his writing was careless. He wrote to D.M.R.: 'I myself am lazy beyond belief & hurried and impatient in style ... I can't help, in my hurry to get ahead, writing in that skimble-skamble way!' [J.C.P. 20, February 1932; Beinecke] Knowing this, she only wanted to help, but found that she was intruding: not only was she challenging his authority as a writer, she was also challenging Phyllis's prerogative as a privileged proof-reader. Yet her initial comments on *Morwyn* had been favourably recieved:

> At breakfast we found the contract for *Morwyn* from La Belle Sauvage[16] & also a heavenly letter from Dorothy Richardson about it & about Mr Odle's reception of it & drawings for it – all this she described with her own genius for slight signs & tokens & straws of the wind, & tangential indications – & she did say, off her own bat, that 'twas the most *Real* description of Hell she knew.' [Diary entry for Thursday May 6th 1937; NLW Aberystwyth]

Alan's drawings were enthusiastically received a few days later:

> The chief event this Morning was the arrival not of the Post but of the *Parcel Post* which comes in the middle of the morning. This brought those ***MORWYN ILLUSTRATIONS*** by *A. Odle* wh. we have been corresponding with 'Miriam' her wone self otherwise Dorothy M. Richardson about. His picture of the *Ship of Doom* was stupendous & so also of the man in a tremendous style of A.O. as he did for *Rabelais*.[17] [Diary entry for Wednesday May 26th 1937; NLW Aberystwyth]

However, Alan's drawings had been asked for, and D.M.R.'s corrections had not; his contributions (which were necessarily an interpertation of the text) were very welcome, but her proof-reading was accepted with great reluctance. He writes in his diary for June 23rd 1937:

> I must do *something* about making use of the elaborate & most careful corrections of *Morwyn* made by Dorothy Richardson which are of precious and characteristic interest – like Charlotte Bronte correcting the work of *Mr Peacock* or of *Harrison Ainsworth*. And ought to be kept for posterity. But what to do I can't think for I like my *slip-shod* style. I *deliberately* use it.' [NLW Aberystwyth]

Only a week later, he tells D.M.R. what he has done with the 'wonderful Corrections in your precious & now well known hand'. At this stage he has received Cassell's galley-proof and is checking it: '*Some* of your suggestions I've rejected on grounds that'll give me an opportunity for the most complicated defences, full of wondrously roundabout considerations. Others I've rejected on pure private manias such as *my Familiar Demons* compel. Others again on the

purely fantastic ground of worrying the mind of the Printer with too *many* changes.' [J.C.P. 49, June 30th 1937; Beinecke]

He gives the impression that he is very grateful for the trouble she has taken, but his reasons for rejecting some of her suggstions place him well beyond any argument, on grounds that are absolutely personal and undebatable. Her response is to warn him that his U.S.A publishers may reject the book: 'I can well imagine a science-at-all-costs worshipping American publishers' reader having a very happy time being cleverly unpleasant over *Morwyn*. But you'll not be discouraged because S[imon]& S[chuster] do as they are told?' [D.M.R. 35, n.d., but received by J.C.P. and acknowledged in his diary on Wednesday July 7th 1937; Beinecke] She was quite right: Simon and Schuster rejected *Morwyn* and it was not published in the U.S.A.

*Morwyn* was a failure, 'remaindered at 3*s*.6*d*.'[18] In December 1937, when D.M.R. asked for news of the book, J.C.P. wrote:'No Mr Pollinger [his agent] told me Mr Flower was very sad about the poor sale of *Morwyn*' [J.C.P. 50, December 22nd 1937; Beinecke] Mr Newman Flower, the director of Cassells was, like J.C.P., an ardent anti-vivisectionist and may well have accepted the book for this reason. However, he did not accept Alan's illustrations for it. J.C.P. gives no reason for this in his reference to it in the diary [Friday August 5th 1937; NLW Aberystwyth], but it may be that the drawings would have increased the cost of the book to more than the publishers thought was reasonable.

It might seem that J.C.P. was unsuccessful in the books he wrote at top speed whilst in the middle of other writing; but this is not the case – in fact, it only seems to apply to these two books with which Dorothy Richardson or her husband were involved. Perhaps this accounts for a shift from J.C.P.'s (or Phyllis's) unbounded admiration for D.M.R. to a more nuanced attitude. The diaries give many examples of their appreciation of her qualities; but a year after *Morwyn*, the Dent 'complete edition' of *Pilgrimage* (including *Dimple Hill*) was published. Phyllis's enthusiasm (which dates from her discovery of D.M.R.'s books in 1923) now appears mitigated:

> She spoke about the unique quality of Dorothy Richardson & how her way of bringing in things that are not *nice* in the Pateresque or Jamesian sense – heightens the illusion of reality. Then she spoke of the inevitable *limitations* of a work entirely founded upon *Memory*. And we thought what a huge *gap* of 40 years nearly between when Miriam begins and our present day.' [Diary entry for Sunday October 23rd 1938; NLW Aberystwyth]

By this time the Odles had met J.C.P. and Phyllis Playter for the last time (their last meeting having taken place in August 1937). The correspondence between them continues, however, and in 1943 there is a request for another Odle drawing, this time to serve as a frontispiece for J.C.P.'s *Rabelais*.[19] The drawing already existed, as Alan had made a number of illustrations for Rabelais' works,

so there was no need for him (and Dorothy) to read J.C.P.'s typescript. D.M.R., who could have helped J.C.P. to translate the French of Rabelais, was not asked: instead, J.C.P. got the help of Dr Enid Starkie of Oxford University. There are two possible reasons why J.C.P. did not ask D.M.R. for help he knew she was qualified to give. The most likely is that he did not want to take her time, gratis, while she was still struggling to finish *Pilgrimage*. He knew that she often had to postpone writing her own work anyway in order to earn money by doing 'pot-boilers': translation work, or articles for literary journals. But he may not have wanted *her* to look at his manuscripts and correct them, for reasons that are as vague and personal as the ones he gave her for not using her suggestions for *Morwyn*. In any case, Phyllis resumes her interest in his writing and continues to listen to and to read his chapters as he finishes tham, and to discuss them with him. This is recorded frequently in the diaries. Thus there is no need for a *second* adviser.

In one case, J.C.P. *does* accept the help of another person: he had been asked to write a 5,000-word introduction to the Macdonald edition of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, edited by Malcolm Elwin. Realising that he had gone over the word limit, he had himself made cuts in the typescript to bring the word-count down. Malcolm Elwin writes:

> But instead of being deleted, his cuts were left in square brackets '*for your own private eye as a biographer* interested in Sterne as a thrilling figure,' and he added, 'if you prefer to delete *other* passages and *restore* some of what *I* have deleted, do so by all manner of means, for as you know I'm not ... *in a literary sense I am* not a particular man!'
>
> In fact I accepted only one of his proposed cuts and the published introduction is over 6,000 words.' [20]

Here J.C.P takes the initiative. His cuts are reluctant, dictated only by a sense of excessive length; and he leaves them clearly legible, hoping that his editor will make use of them – which the editor does. He has made them with Phyllis's help, as the diary attests: 'I am correcting my Sterne Preface with the T.T.'s help & I find her wonderfully helpful.' [Thursday, September 18 1947; NLW Aberystwyth]

It is clear that any suppression of the creative impulse is unwelcome. Phyllis's advice to him on one or two occasions (*A Glastonbury Romance*, *Porius*) to *re-write* chapters led him into a new creative effort, which he enjoyed, and which he felt *improved* the stories. Such advice was therefore positive, and acceptable. D.M.R.'s correction of *Morwyn* was negative because it merely suppressed inaccuracies in the text, and did not lead to any creative reassessment of the story – as its poor reception by the reading public showed. The best proof-reading of all is that of Malcolm Elwin, which leaves the writer's original inspiration intact. Thus, even before they met in October 1950, Malcolm Elwin earned J.C.P.'s confidence, for he proof-read all his subsequent books, serving the interests of both the author and the publisher at the same time (he was a reader for

Macdonalds, who published the two Sterne prefaces to *A Sentimental Journey* and *Tristram Shandy*, as well as everything after *Porius* until 1967).

Should D.M.R. have been more discreet in her proof-reading of *Morwyn*? She *had* been given *carte blanche* to make changes of any kind to *Dorothy M. Richardson*, a privilege which she did not exercise but which she transferred to the next typescript which came her way ; and she *was* constantly irritated by the proof-readers of *Pilgrimage* for Duckworths, who altered punctuation that she had written deliberately, thus affecting the reader's interpretation of the text. Maybe her fault lies in not seeing that J.C.P.'s 'slip-shod style' was *also* deliberate. It needed to be recognised and given the status of a signature.

**Janet Fouli**

## Notes

[1] 1929–1952, to be published by Cecil Woolf and edited by Janet Fouli; the manuscript letters are held in the Dorothy M. Richardson Collection at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library (henceforward referred to as Beinecke).

[2] J.C.P. wrote to D.M.R. on December 23rd 1938: ''Tis queer how a person writes with another person (particularly solitary) in mind, & how greedy a person is to hear every detail of what that other said' (here he wants to read Alan's reactions on reading *The Pleasures of Literature*).

[3] D.M.R. wrote to Henry Savage on May 6th 1951: 'Alan loved his work and behind him, eagerly reading, I used to hide by quoting A. my own difficulty in getting throught anything beyond *Wolf Solent*, bits of *Glastonbury* and *The Pleasures of Literature*, embodying his life-work as a lecturer and, for me, his one solid contribution. All the rest I would exchange for Theodore's *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* and Llewelyn's little book on Switzerland. [Henry Miller], I feel, shares J.C.P.'s over-elaboration and reiteration.' [Beineke]

[4] J.C.P.'s diary entry for Thursday June 17th 1937; J.C.P.'s manuscript diaries are held in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth [NLW].

[5] Did D.M.R. know what J.C.P. thought of her proof-reading of H. G. Wells's *Autobiography*? For he wrote in his diary on Tuesday September 25th 1934: 'Mrs Lucas ... brought a perfectly charming letter from *Dorothy Richardson* who, having finished H.G. Wells's Autobiography, what a lucky chap to have her help is soon off to Cornwall ...' [NLW Aberystwyth]

[6] *The Diary of John Cowper Powys 1930*, ed. Fredereick Davies. London, Greymitre Books Ltd, 1987.

[7] On May 8th 1930 J.C.P. wrote to her: 'In fact this is to give you (or Mr Odle if he's inclined to do it for you) carte blanche to thicken this out or thin it or alter and change it as may seem most diplomatic from your closer knowledge of the kind of thing needed. Imagine that you & I are both composing an appreciation of another person altogether, a *third* person ... So don't reply to this scrawl till the MSS arrives (as it will in a few days) and then remember that the better you prune it and revise it the better I shall be pleased.' In his next letter to her, on June 20th 1930, he further wrote: 'For I tell you I'm ready to sign anything you've added or cut or changed ...'

[8] *John Austen and the Inseparables* (London: William Jackson, 1930); Jacsons also commissioned the essay on D.M.R., but the firm was taken over by Joiner and Steele in

1931, and it was they who published J.C.P.'s essay in 1931; Frederick Joiner had been a reader for Jacksons.

[9] Letter of May 6th 1931 to Peggy Kirkcaldy [Beineke].

[10] *The Diary of John Cowper Powys, 1931* (London: Jeffrey Kwintner, 1990).

[11] Pages 257–58 in the Virago complete edition of *Pilgrimage*, vol. 3 (London, 1979).

[12] *The Diary of John Cowper Powys 1930*.

[13] 'I have revised chapter XXVI about Whitelake Cottage as she told me to & I have improved it quite a lot.' (Diary entry for Friday June 26th 1931)

[14] See J.C.P.'s letter to Ormond Coulan, August 4th 1937 [Beinecke].

[15] 'Finnegan's Wake' (1939), reprinted in *Obstinate Cymric* (Caernarvon: The Druid Press, 1947), pp. 35–36.

[16] Allusion to Cassells' emblem of a huntress with bow and arrow.

[17] Cassells did not accept the illustrations for *Morwyn* and they were presumably returned to Alan Odle. During the War, when the Odles were living in Cornwall, an impecunious tenant of their flat in London sold a number of books and drawings that they had left behind, and these were not retrieved. The *Morwyn* drawings may or may not have been among there. After Alan Odle's death in 1948, the drawings that remained in Dorothy Richardson's possession wer given to his sister-in-law, Rose Isserlis Odle, who sold them to a Swiss collector. Her daughter-in-law, Sheena Odle, the former literary executrix of Dorothy Richardson, now has no record of them.

[18] Malcolm Elwin, 'John Cowper Powys and his Publishers', in Belinda Humfrey, *Essays on John Cowper Powys* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1972), p. 288.

[19] In a missing letter from J.C.P. to D.M.R., referred to by her on August 13th 1943. *Rabelais* eventually appeared in 1948, after Alan Odle's death, with the drawing he and J.C.P. had intended as the frontispiece; ir was published by The Bodley Head.

[20] 'John Cowper Powys and his Publishers', p. 291.

## *The Third Montacute Lecture*

### Katie Powys, An Inner Life

As is the custom, Angela Pitt delivered her lecture in the Baptist Schoolroom, a venue which must have been very familiar to Katie who, from the end of her father's ministry in the village until her own departure for East Chaldon in 1923, had lived in and run a small-holding just across the street.

We were welcomed by Pastor Leslie Harrison. Angela was introduced to an audience of Society members and village people by Frank Kibblewhite. That was not a particularly demanding task since she lives in Montacute and was well know to everyone present.

Katie has been the subject of recent Conference papers by Angela and Peter Powys Grey, both published in *The Powys Jounral*. We were, however, to hear Katie presented in a very different and domestic fashion, which was entirely appropriate to the setting and the audience. Angela concentrated upon her time in the village and quoted extensively from her unpublished diaries. Some of these extracts reinforced the image one has of a highly strung and sensitive individual

struggling to come to terms with relationships and the real world. Others gave fascinating insights into such things as her involvement, with Gertrude, in the running of the Sunday School, or her practical and unsentimental attitude to small creatures. Again, as was fitting for a village talk, there were slides, many of which we had not seen before. They provoked a great deal of comment and discussion.

There are only two people in Montacute who remember Katie. They do so with affection, but only qualified approval. Angela Pitt's painstaking research into Katie has, I think, been enhanced by her empathy with and understanding of the complexities, sensitivities and stalwart Powysian independence of her subject. As I left the hall I glanced across the white-painted gates that had led to her small-holding; I am sure I was not alone in feeling that I had come a little closer to understanding the most enigmatic of the Powyses. I also wondered whether her diaries will one day be available to us all.

Leslie Harrison is shortly to retire from his ministry in Montacute. He was instrumental in making the Baptist Schoolroom available to the Society and it is expected that it will continue to be so. We wish Leslie a long and happy retirement.

**E.W.B.**

## *Llewelyn's Stone*
### A Controversy

*Following the articles by Leslie Harrison and Neil Lee in the November 1993 issue of the* Newsletter, *we received many letters concerning the interpretation of the inscription ('The living, the living, he shall praise thee') on Llewelyn Powys's memorial stone. Clearly, the question of whether Llewelyn Powys chose the inscription is important: but if he did not, then who? It is hard to imagine any of those in a position to choose an epitaph – those who had known, loved and respected him – choosing something so apparently contrary to his stated beliefs. However, the matter is clearly more than simply one of words carved upon stone. What we have here is an argument about the very nature of Llewelyn Powys and his work (and, since the man, his work and his beliefs are so inextricably bound together in Llewelyn Powys) the question of his stone is the question of his worth. This is an important debate and we are pleased to publish two of the responses which we have received, the first of which is introduced by John Batten.*

During the late summer of 1991 I went on a walk around Montacute with the local Ramblers, which was followed by their annual service in the Baptist Church. It was to that congregation that Leslie Harrison preached the sermon on Llewelyn which finally appeared in the last *Newsletter*. I say finally because he took a great deal of persuading, and it was only when John Cornelius, Montacute born and

bred, brought to the '93 Conference Llewelyn's book of children's Bible stories, with the Hezekiah illustration, that he finally succumbed.

The article drew a greater response from members than is usual. The first to react was Jonathan Schrire who 'phoned from Cape Town asking what evidence there was that Llewelyn actually chose the inscription for his stone. Unable to answer the question, I began to seek the evidence in some of the more obvious books: *The Cry of a Gull*, *The Brothers Powys*, and so on; or more precisely, Eve did, because she is so much better at that sort of thing; but she drew a blank. Peter Foss was asked. He thought Alyse had written something about it, but he had just moved house and all his papers were in boxes. Meanwhile, I had posed the question in a letter to Griffin Beale. He instantly replied as follows:

> I found the answer within two minutes by looking in a delightful little book, quite scarce, published by a printer called Philip Reed of Chicago in 1954. The book is Llewelyn's essay on *Thomas Bewick 1753–1828 'To which is now added: A letter from England from Alyse Powys.'* Alyse concludes the letter by saying '... and it is marked by a rough monument of Portland stone on which are carved *words chosen by himself* 'The living, the living, he shall praise thee,' words which could hardly be more fitting for so ardent a life-long worshipper of the visible world.

Shortly afterwards, thirteen boxes of books from Mr Bissell's collection rested briefly with us on their way to the Dorset County Museum. They drew Eve like a magnet, and it was while dipping into Llewelyn's *The Cradle of God* that she came across the following lines:

> The prayers of Hezekiah have a fine quality about them. What noble words to be placed over a man's grave would those be when he begs God not to deprive him of the residue of his years! 'For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee.'

That seemed to be corroboration, if it were needed, of what Alyse had said.

**John Batten**

## *from Jonathan Schrire*

... The combined evidence of the three references – Alyse's letter in the Bewick essay, the Thomas Shoel comment, and now *The Cradle of God* reference which your wife found – confirms beyond doubt that Llewelyn Powys chose that quote for his memorial epitaph.

Pity, really! From the time I first became interested in Llewelyn Powys, I felt that the quote jarred with the rest of his philosophy. Why would an avowed atheist choose for his memorial a quotation in which God is lauded? Yes, I know that the common-sense interpretation answers this question. Llewelyn loved fine writing, grew up knowing the Bible, found the Hezekiah story especially apt, and chose that quote because it so powerfully emphasised the ultimate value of being alive.

Those who are fully alive will praise God because those who are dead cannot. Life is everything, death nothing.

Llewelyn Powys's use of God here is on a par with an atheist exclaiming 'Good God!' It does not mean that he believes in the God he has invoked. It is a manner of speaking; a way of making a point, not to be taken ponderously and literally. It is simply a continuation of his lifelong emphasis: 'To be alive, only to be alive, may I never forget the privilege of that!'

But by mentioning God, Llewelyn Powys provided people who cannot stomach his atheism with a hook on which to hang a completely different emphasis. Such people gleefully seize on the mention of God to claim that Llewelyn was really, under all the atheism, a true believer in the supernatural! Instead of seeing the thrust of the quote as glorifying Life, they choose to see it as glorifying God! Which is what Pastor Harrison has done.

I hope that someone whose opinion carried more weight than mine will write to say how silly Harrison's thesis is. He had found three instances (and I'm sure there are many more) in which Llewelyn Powys mentions God in an uncritical way, and on this slender body of evidence he concludes that Llewelyn was deep down a believer! Against this, as Harrison himself acknowledges, one can compile several books of quotes in which Powys vehemently denies the existence of God. For anyone who knows Llewelyn Powys's writings, it is unnecessary even to bother to quote. But let me pick a couple – chosen almost at random – which enable Powys to answer Harrison from that 'sweet web of dust' where he now reposes:

> It is as clear as day that the affairs of the world are not under the direction of an intelligent and sensitive deity. (*The Glory of Life*)
>
> There is no immortality. There is no God either. The recognition and acceptance of these denials are the beginning of all wisdom. (*Love and Death*)

In fact, Pastor Harrison's attempt to claim Llewelyn Powys for his fellow believers is not based only on those few mentions of God. It is also based on Harrison's belief 'that we are all religious by nature'; that none of us can gaze at the sunset without feeling that God is there. This argument, that the beauty of a rose is sufficient proof of God's existence, was last seriously used in theological argument in Victorian times! Since Darwin, apologists for God have had to come up with arguments a lot more sophisticated than that. I recommend to Pastor Harrison an entirely superb book, *The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins, whch will explain to him how the beautiful rose or the peacock's tail has evolved without the intercession of God.

What this also shows so clearly is that Harrison has missed the very central thrust of Llewelyn Powys's life; one can, *must*, have an almost mystical appreciation of the wonders of the earth, *without having to ascribe any of it to God.*

The deepest religious mood is a religious mood *that in no way depends on*

*a belief in God. The highest form of faith is a Godless faith.* (*The Glory of Life*)

> The purpose of life is happiness ... which can be fulfilled by a free appreciation of the natural poetry of existence.

That natural poetry stands alone, is its own justification. It does not demand a belief in 'some mighty Presence behind the beauty'. There is enough magic and wonder for us to worship in the world around us, without having to look behind it for a Creator,

You mention in your letter a posy of flowers left on Llewelyn's stone. I'm sure you're right in thinking that Llewelyn would have liked that. I am equally sure that he would have *dis*liked Harrison's theory about him! In one of his *Somerset Essays* Llewelyn quotes from a letter written by his brother Bertie. In this letter Bertie corrects some minor mis-statement of Llewelyn's and writes: 'This is not true. *In fact it is a lie.*' This was much my feeling after reading Harrison's article and I feel pretty sure it would have been Llewelyn's as well!

**Jonathan Schrire**

## *from Peter Foss*

I read with much interest the article by Leslie Harrison concerning the inscription on Llewelyn Powys's memorial stone on Chaldon Down, but I wonder whether it tended to repeat the fallacy one has met with before that the inscription implies a 'return to God' or some kind of reluctantly held Christian message behind Llewelyn's outlook on life. I am quite sure that such a reading would have been anathema to Llewelyn.

The enigmatic use of this quotation indicates no little irony. The original words, of course, were offered up by Hezekiah (*Isaiah* 38, 19) during his life and in thanksgiving for a recovery from illness, such an emphasis being negated in Llewelyn's case by the stone itself which exists by virtue of Llewelyn's death. True, Llewelyn cited the lines when he himself had narrowly escaped 'the pit' – in *A Pagan's Pilgrimage*, for instance, where he likens himself to a rabbit, which, with a clap of his hands, had escaped the jaws of a stoat (189). To this extent, and to this extent only, Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving was meaningful to Llewelyn in his 'struggle for life'.

Of the other more arbitrary allusions to the line in Llewelyn's writings, that in *The Cradle of God* (129) is significant. The story of King Hezekiah's struggle against the Assyrians is paraphrased with some emphasis upon the irrationality of the Hebrews' faith. Here the comment on the king's thanksgiving is confined only to the grandeur and poetry, and we cannot infer any view on Llewelyn's part about the meaning and appropriateness of the lines in this context, even though he had every opportunity to offer one. That Llewelyn wished for the quotation to be inscribed on his stone, as he implied in *The Cradle of God*, is given credence by Alyse Gregory's letter prefacing *Thomas Bewick 1753–1828*, a re-publication of Llewelyn's essay on Bewick by the Gravesend Press of Lexington, 1951. This

appeared a few years after the stone was put in place on the coastline (on October 3rd 1947), where Elizabeth Muntz carved the wording during the autumn.

Although Llewelyn's stone evidences his death, the inscription on it emphasises the *living*. Its tone is defiant, as are its form and location, the antithesis of all those churchyard stones with their allusions to God and eternity which he and his brother John treated with such irreverent scepticism. It is wrong therefore to suggest that Llewelyn had deep within him a 'desire to praise God', for everywhere he mentions the word he does so with distrust and irony. In both essays from *Earth Memories* mentioned by Mr Harrison, the allusions to God and to what might be described as the complacency of a God-faith, are undermined by the catastrophes brought about by material circumstance. In 'The Partridge', the moment of grace is shattered by the cry of the bird, the strike of a rat and the abandoning of the fledgling's nest', and in 'The Blind Cow', one of Llewelyn's darkest essays, the sense of hopelessness engendered by man's destruction of the environment is a reminder that negative forces also hold sway.

These essays are, somewhat uncharacteristically I think, pessimistic, but thetyare also profoundly *anti* the idea of a God. From an early age Llewelyn possessed, simultaneously, an instinctive reaction and an instinctive faith – a reaction against the religion of his forebears and a faith in the affirmative principle of life and nature. During the 1930s he developed a philosophy which acknowledged what he termed the 'mystery' behind matter, that which infused and structured the material universe. This he equated with a species of Epicurianism which responded to the pagan religion of *Numa*, the numinous quality of the world. It was to this that Llewelyn Powys directed his praise (the 'thee' of the inscription); and, in doing so, I believe, intended such a 'grave'-stone with such an inscription to challenge those of us who come after to pass on the same praise of *material existence*: 'the living, the living, he shall praise thee'. In the final analysis, it is only by being *in life* and being *alive*, that we can do that; and, of course, by opposing stupidity and *looking after life* (as Llewelyn strongly implies in 'The Blind Cow') that we can be reconciled to that-which-is (to all intents and purposes Hezekiah's *truth*).

**Peter Foss**

## *No Tea! No Tea!*

### A Memory of Peter Powys Grey

Peter Powys Grey, only son of Marian Powys, died in NewYork in October 1992. Tributes to his memory from Glen Cavaliero, Morine Krissdóttir and Charles Lock are to be found in *Newletter* No. 17. While I would not presume to add anything to the poignant recollections of those friends who knew him so much

better than I, the brief time which he spent with my family, just weeks before his death, remains a treasured memory. His warmth, his gratitude for even the smallest kindness, his sensitivity and charm, but above all, his talk I shall never forget. But while I can never forget it, I can never quite remember it to my satisfaction. Never quite recapture every modulation of his booming voice, the eloquent gestures of his enormous hands and the pauses and digressions of a natural raconteur.

Our conversation was as ceaseless as it was Powysian, but not, I think, without purpose. I am prompted to attempt to retell one of Peter's stories because, after a long period of reflection, I feel convinced that Peter was aware before we met, that his life was drawing to a close and was, in at least one instance, recounting events that he wished to have placed on record.

Inevitably, much of our talk was about his mother, whom he loved dearly, and his Uncle Jack, with whom the relationship was more ambivalent. Peter felt that the bond between Marian and her oldest brother was so close as to make him, in John Cowper's eyes, an unwanted intruder. What he described to me as their 'love-hate relationship' can be glimpsed in the entry for June 4th 1930 in John Cowper' *Diary*. It describes an encounter between them after Peter, out of childish curiosity, had shadowed his uncle, who was seeking some quiet spot in which to relieve himself. It ended with him being carried screaming, kicking and biting to be reported to his mother. That incident, vividly remembered by Peter almost seventy years later, may have some bearing on the story I am about to tell.

Many years afterwards Peter fell in love with a beautiful young woman and they decided to marry. As his wife-to-be was a lapsed Roman Catholic, they thought it would ease matters if they were not married in America. Peter wrote to his Uncle Jack and asked whether they might be married in Wales. J.C.P.'s reply was not encouraging. It began with a dozen reasons why a young man should not get married and concluded with the words 'But if you must get married, for God's sake don't do it in Corwen.' However, all was not lost because Aunt Gertrude came to the rescue and invited them to stay at Chydyok and be married at East Chaldon, after which they were to make their way to Corwen.

Peter's account of the bizarre events associated with the wedding arrangements, the ceremony and the reception at Chydyok would double the length of this piece. Among other things, Uncle Littleton, who had come to give the bride away, was allotted Katie's room and became almost apoplectic when he awoke to the realization that there was a large hammer and sickle flag draped above his bed. Then there was the Reverend Ezra Ramm, who was to officiate. He seems always to have been accompanied by a young man, whom he introduced to all and sundry with the words, 'This is my son, who failed.'

Despite the various alarms and excursions, they were duly married and eventually set off for Corwen, where they arrived earlier than anticipated. Peter could not wait for the tea-time appointment to introduce his bride to John and

Phyllis. Although unexpected, they were made very welcome and the new Mrs Powys Grey made an even greater impression on his uncle than Peter had imagined, for he seemed quite unable to take his eyes off the girl; so much so that conversation became stilted. In this embarrassing situation Peter cast frantically around for some diversion and launched into an account of their wedding, laying particular emphasis on the eccentricities of the Reverend Ramm. No sooner had he committed himself to this light-hearted approach than he realised from his uncle's grim expression that he had made a mistake, but there was no going back. Eventually his now faltering description was cut short by J.C.P., who burst out, 'How dare you make fun of a man of the cloth!' Peter, having profited from that childhood confrontation, made a hasty retreat, thanking Phyllis and saying that they looked forward to returning for tea as arranged.

Peter described their hotel as being situated at the foot of a steep hill-side, immediately below Cae Coed, which was most easily approached by a zig-zag road which lay across the gradient like a strung bow. There was, however, an alternative, direct but precipitous, path down the escarpment, fit only for the reckless and nimble of foot. It was this they took, slipping and sliding, hand-in-hand, coming to rest in the foyer of the hotel, breathless but filled with relief at their escape. At that moment, and before they had uttered a word, the swing-doors burst open, framing J.C.P., towering like a thunder-cloud, and shouting 'No tea! No tea!': and then they closed and he was gone.

The only detail Peter could recall afterwards, was that John was wearing boots which were unlaced. It was his absolute conviction that no man of seventy, even with his boots laced, could have taken that track down the hill, and he could not possibly have arrived that quickly by road. Years later, after John Cowper's death, Peter spent several days with Phyllis in London. For reasons he never understood, he did not ask her about the events of that day or the apparition at the hotel.

During the first Powys Society Conference, at Churchill College, Peter told this story to Professor G. Wilson Knight, who was fascinated by it and strongly urged him to write it down, but he never did so. Almost as soon as Peter Powys Grey left for New York after the 1992 Conference, I wrote thanking him for the pleasure of his company. My letter ended: 'Wilson Knight was absolutely right, you must write up *No Tea!*' News came of his death before the letter was posted.

The Theodore Dreiser story of John Cowper 'appearing' is well known. I am sure this one had to be placed on record and confident that Peter was too kind a man to disparage my clumsy attempt to do so.

**John Batten**

***Have you looked at the publications list recently?***
***See inside the back cover.***

## *The Powys Society Annual Weekend Conference*

August 27th – 30th 1994

at

The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester

We return to Cirencester this year, to a programme which should provide something to interest every member. Items will include: Glen Cavaliero on Mary Casey; Peter Foss on Llewelyn Powys; Ben Jones on Frances Gregg and *The Mystic Leeway*; Catherine Lieutenant on John Cowper Powys and Rabelais; Paul Roberts on the Syracuse University collection of early Powys manuscripts; Oliver and Christopher Wilkinson with a dramatised reading; and the results of the *Membership Survey*.

As usual, **further details will be sent only to those returning the enclosed pro-forma**, indicating their interest in attending.

## *'A Blurb Virtuoso'*

'I admire your blurb for him: it couldn't be done better – & I am a blurb virtuoso – have *had* to become it!' John Cowper Powys's comment[1] to Louis Wilkinson is an acknowledgement of one of the byways of the Powys canon – the public endorsement of another writer's work. These endorsement – scattered on dust-jackets, in magazine advertisements and on publicity flyers – reflect both his public role as lecturer and novelist and his more private role as 'sage of Corwen', offering encouragement to writers and would-be writers through a seemingly endless correspondence.

These endorsements range from mini-essays taking up entire panels of a dust-jacket, to the more usual phrase or two, and in one case a single word; typical of dust-jacket endorsements then and now. A parallel group of endorsements exists chosen by publicists from already printed Powys material. Both types of endorsement can offer clues to the usefulness of Powys's name to contemporary publishers and their advertising departments.

This accessory, as it were, to his writing career, may have begun in the spring of 1916, with the publication of Wilkinson's *The Buffoon* and Edgar Lee Masters' *Songs and Satires*. Wilkinson's portrait of him aroused contradictory feelings in Powys. R. P. Graves reports that Powys 'had felt compelled to go out and sit under a tree to "earth" his hatred' after first reading the novel,[2] yet Knopf, the publisher, was able to quote Powys on the front of the dust-jacket as saying the novel displays 'the presence of a new and formidable hand in our recent fiction ... a powerful work animated by a shrewd and searching psychology ... a masterly

book, solid and four-square.' In a case of having one's cake and eating too, the jacket also reported 'Many people will recognise in one of the book's leading characters a clever, subtle and amusing portrayal of a well-known lecturer.'

Powys's lecture career was certainly instrumental in publicising his friend Masters. Macmillan, Masters' publisher, did not seek out a new quote from Powys but found one ready-made in the newspapers. In 1915 the *New York Times* had reported that Powys called Masters 'the natural child of Walt Whitman ... the only poet with true Americanism in his bones.'[3] This tag followed Masters for over forty years. *Songs and Satires*, Masters' first book to follow the *Spoon River Anthology*, prints an ad. for the latter book in which Powys's quote is attributed simply to the *New York Times*; his next book, *The Great Valley* (also 1916), prints a similar ad., this time attributing the quote to 'John Cowper Powys in *New York Times*'. In 1958, the 23rd printing of the *Spoon River Anthology* is still using Powys's comment, this time on the dust-jacket; of course, the comment is simply what the newspaper *reported* Powys as saying.

This pattern, of soliciting endorsements for new works, or of printing previously published comments, would be repeated throughout Powys's career, with the use of his name often following the vagaries of his reputation. In the teens and twenties, when his lecture career was at its peak and his cribbed lectures available in *One Hundred Best Books* and elsewhere, such printed works would be mined by the publishers of Theodore Dreiser, Joseph Conrad, Gilbert Canaan, Arthur Ficke and Vincent O'Sullivan. Much later, when Powys's lecturing was mostly a memory and his critical books rarely dealing with contemporaries, publishers of both Georges Simenon and of Henry Miller still managed to find a Powys quote ready-made to advertise their author, By the early 1930s, when his fame as a novelist seemed briefly to match that as a lecturer, there was a regular crescendo of Powys endorsements – from the famous (*Alexanderplatz Berlin*) to the totally obscure (*Fourteenth Street*). Later, with Powys's reputation dwindling, regular publishers took less interest in soliciting his opinion, and his name was more likely to be seen in association with out-of-the-way, often 'vanity press', publications – a tribute to Powys's growing *rapport* with readers and correspondents, rather than with publishers and advertisers. Somewhat surprisingly, by the end of the 1950s, mainstream publishers were once again receptive to Powys's opinion, and young writers such as James Purdy and Philip Callow were heralded in advertisements quoting their eighty-five year old admirer.

The blurbs themselves range from the single work 'Rabelaisian' used to describe C. E. S. Wood's *Heavenly Discourse*, to a page or so for both Reginald Reynold's equally Rabelaisian *Cleanliness and Godliness* and Clifton Cuthbert's novel of labour strife *Another Such Victory*. Some blurbs could have been written by a publicity department without Powys's intercession; 'a triumph ... the kind of book you cannot stop reading until you finish it ... carries your interest breathlessly along.' (*The Incompetents* by R. E. Spencer) No doubt many blurbs

*were* more the result of the publicity department than undiluted Powys. When a blurb was solicited for Powys biographer Richard Heron Ward's allegorical novel *The Leap in the Dark*, John Cowper responded with a three-page analysis; out of this, Gollancz' publicity extracted ten words for a make-up sentence. Often, extracts from letters used for publicity sound the real Powysian note: 'I found myself again and again identifying with the characters, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, for I am born hermaphrodite and instinctively become one of the heroes or heroines.' (*Write Me From Rio* by Charles Edward Eaton)

Those in search of more Powys blurbs may wish to take up the suggestion offered in a letter to Wilkinson of July 2nd 1961: 'I have just written a letter to a Mr. Neville Braybrooke about a short novel of his that is to be published by Secker and Warburg, entitled *The Idler*.' There is a limit, however: 'I go and refuse point blank to write a blurb for this American Tale of his "Raintree County" by Ross Lockridge, Junior' (to Wilkinson, October 17th 1948). Perhaps, having spent the best part of a decade on *Porius*, Powys could not bring himself to offer even a polite 'solid and four-square'.

**Robin Patterson**

## Notes

[1] January 8th 1943 (Wilkinson had written to Aleister Crowley).
[2] *The Brothers Powys* (1983), p.117.
[3] 'Spoon River Poet Crowned by Briton': the *New York Times, March 29th 1915, p.9.*

## Powys endorsements

1. Louis Wilkinson, *The Buffoon*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1916 (dust-jacket quote).

2. Edgar Lee Masters, *Songs and Satires*, New York: Macmillan, 1916 (ad. for *Spoon River Anthology* quotes, anonymously, J.C.P. lecture, p. 175. Similar ads. in later Masters books do credit J.C.P., e.g *The Great Valley* (1916) and *Towards the Gulf* (1918). Occasionally found on the dust-jacket of *Spoon River Anthology* itself, e.g Macmillan 1958, 23rd printing).

3. *The Publishers' Weekly* (New York), February 10th 1917, p. 456 (J.C.P. on Vincent O'Sullivan's *The Good Girl*, quoted from *One Hundred Best Books*; in ad. for Small, Maynard & Company, Boston. *The Good Girl* was first published in London in 1912; this is the first U.S. publication).

4. *The Publishers' Weekly*, May 5th 1923, p. 1369 (J.C.P. on Gilbert Canaan's *Round the Corner*, quoted from *One Hundred Best Books*; in Thomas Seltzer ad.; *Round the Corner* was first published in 1913).

5. Joseph Conrad and F. M. Hueffer, *Romance*, Garden City: Doubleday, Page, 1923 (dust-jacket quotes J.C.P.'s review of *The Arrow of Gold* in *Reedy's Mirror*, Sept 4th 1919; this edition of *Romance* is part of the 'Deep Sea Limp Leather Edition' of Conrad's works; J.C.P.'s quote is also used to advertise 'The Personal Edition of

Conrad', issued by Doubleday, Page in 1925 (the *New York Times Book Review*, Feb 22nd 1925, p. 15)).

6. Arthur Davison Ficke, *Selected Poems*, New York: George Doran, 1926 (dust-jacket quote taken from the same 1915 lecture which supplied Macmillan with a Masters quote).

7. Theodore Dreiser, *Chains*, New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927 (dust-jacket quote, taken from J.C.P.'s 1915 essay on Dreiser in *The Little Review*).

8. *The Nation* (New York), April 23rd 1930, p. 498 (J.C.P. on 'The Group'. Organised in 1918, 'The Group, A Clearing House of Opinion For the Intellectually Adult', featured J.C.P. at least twice, on Nov 12th 1929 and April 5th 1932, Says J.C.P., 'It is really something for the culture of our Megalopolis, this audience that you have at The Group.').

9. *The Saturday Review of Literature* (New York), June 28th 1930, p. 1166 (Simon and Schuster ad. for *Fourteenth Street* by Percy Shostac quotes J.C.P. This novel in verse appears to be the author's sole book; according to a 1934 *Fortune* magazine article on Simon and Schuster, it was one of the company's ten worst sellers).

10. Charles Fort, *Lo!*, New York: Claude Kendall, 1931 (dust-jacket quote; Fort was Dreiser's discovery; the full text of J.C.P.'s opinion is in *The Fortean Society Magazine* for January 1942; the English edition of *Lo!*, published by Gollancz later in 1931, prints an almosy identical quote on its jacket).

11. *The Atlantic Monthly* (New York), Dec 1931, p. 42 (Viking Press ad. prints J.C.P.'s opinion of Alfred Boblin's *Alexanderplatz Berlin*; Viking published the novel in September).

12. Dorothy Richardson, *Dawn's Left Hand*, London: Duckworth, 1931 (published in November; the dust-jacket prints lengthy quotes from J.C.P.'s 1931 work on Richardson; also printed, on p. 255, of *Dawn's Left Hand*; more quotes from J.C.P.'s Richardson essay appear on the dust-jacket of her next novel, *Clear Horizon* (London: J. M. Dent & The Cresset Press, 1935); Virago's 4-volume edition of *Pilgrimage*, 1979, quotes J.C.P. on the back cover of the first three volumes).

13. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, March 26th 1932, p. 625 (Viking Press ad. for *Unclay* quotes J.C.P.: 'The best of all my brother's works, rivalled only by *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, but in many respects superior to even that remarkable work.' This comment does not appear on the dust-jacket of the book).

14. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, Dec 3rd 1932, p. 297 (Simon & Schuster ad. for *God's Angry Man* by Leonard Ehrlich; J.C.P.'s is one of twenty-eight quotes; this novel of John Brown was published in October 1932; apparently Ehrlich's sole published book, it was very popular and there were several later editions.

15. *The Publishers' Weekly*, April 29th 1933, p. 1382 (Alfred A. Knopf ad. prints J.C.P.'s opinion of *The Incompetents* by R. E. Spencer; Spencer published several other novels).

16. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, June 3rd 1933, p. 632 (Harcourt, Brace ad. for *Pity is not Enough* by Josephine Herbst; major early novel by this author).

17. Elizabeth Drew, *Discovering Poetry*, New York: W. W. Norton, 1933 (dust-jacket prints lengthy J.C.P. quote).

18. James Hanley, *The Furys*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1935 (dust-jacket quote; also quoted on the U.S. edition, Macmillan, 1935, and on two subequent Chatto & Windus Hanley publications: *Stoker Bush*, 1935, and *The Secret Journey*, 1936).

19. Benjamin DeCasseres, *Broken Images*, New York: DeCasseres, 1936 (No. 11 of the series of paper-bound works known as 'the DeCasseres Books'; both J.C.P. and Llewelyn are quoted on the rear wrapper; they are not on the first ten but do appear on at least one later work, No. 13, *Fantasia Impromptu*, 1937; No. 8, *Saint Tantalus*, 1936, includes the printed dedication, 'To the Dioscuri John Cowper Powys and Llewelyn Powys. "And so these two sons of Zeus ascended to the heavens together and became the Constellation Gemini – known to men as Castor and Pollux."').

20. Charles Erskine Scott Wood, *Heavenly Discourse*, New York: Vanguard Press, 1927 [later printing *c.* 1937] (dust-jacket quotes J.C.P.: 'Rabelaisian'; his shortest contribution?).

21. Alan Devoe, *Phudd Hill*, New York: Julian Messner, 1937 (dust-jacket quotes J.C.P.; essays by J.C.P.'s friend and neighbour; Devoe, 1909–1955, published six other books).

22. Clifton Cuthbert, *Another Such Victory*, New York: Hillman-Curl, 1937 (lengthy dust-jacket quote by J.C.P. takes up part of the front flap and all of the back flap; fifth of six novels by Cuthbert whose first, *Joy Street*, has an introduction by J.C.P.).

23. *The Times Literary Supplement*, March 26th 1938, p. 200 (Secker & Warburg ad. prints J.C.P.'s opinion of *The Other House* by Chris Massie; one of many novels by this author).

24. Publisher's flyer headed 'Opinions On/Lytton Strachey/A Critical Study, by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar' (quotes J.C.P.'s opinion; *Lytton Strachey* was published in Bombay by Allied Publishers, 1938; that edition does not print a J.C.P. blurb; Srinivasa Iyengar's books often mention Llewelyn Powys and *Lytton Strachey* is dedicated to him).

25. Mary Siegrist, *Flame Rises on the Mountain*, New York: Exposition Press, 1942 (dust-jacket quotes J.C.P.; third of three books of poetry by Siegrist, 1882?–1953; she reviewed *Samphire* in 1923).

26. *Thomas H. Bell, Author/Oscar Wilde/Without Whitewash* (publicity brochure soliciting subscriptions for Bell's unpublished study of Wilde; *c.* 1942; p. 14 prints letter from J.C.P. to Bell about the book; see J.C.P. to Wilkinson, Oct 3rd 1940 for a discussion of Bell and his manuscript).

27. Reginald Reynolds, *Cleanliness and Godliness*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1943 (extraordinary dust-jacket blurb by J.C.P. takes up the entire back panel; the U.S. edition, Doubleday, 1946, prints only a small excerpt from J.C.P.).

28. Harry Lee Stuart: Stuart's 1947 novel *The Ginger Flower* (New York: North River Press) prints on the dust-jacket J.C.P.'s opinion of an earlier Stuart novel, *I Am the Truth*. *I Am the Truth* was published by Burton Publishing, Kansas City, in 1938.

29. *The Times Literary Supplement*, March 6th 1948, p. 137 (Andrew Dakers ad. for *The Free Society* by John Middleton Murry prints a lengthy opinion).

30. John Theobald, *The Earthquake and Other Poems*, Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1948

(dust-jacket quote; Theobald reviewed *A Glastonbury Romance* in 1932 and discusses J.C.P. in his published correspondence with Ezra Pound [*Letters/Ezra Pound/John Theobald*, 1984]).

31. J. R. Goodman, *A Self-Portrait*, New York: Exposition Press, 1949 (dust-jacket quote; Jack Rawlins Goodman was 24 when this work was published).

32. Georges Simenon, *The Heart of a Man*, New York: New American Library, 1951 (Signet paperback No. 964, quotes J.C.P. in the write-up on p. (1); this is taken from a letter to Clifford Tolchard published in *World Review*, July 1950).

33. W. Penn Kime, Jr., *The Bright Circle*, New York: The Exposition Press, 1951 (front dust-jacket quote above facsimile signature of J.C.P.; lengthy analysis of this short novel on inside front flap and entire back panel. A typescript collection of letters from J.C.P. to Penn Kime is held in the George Arents Library at Syracuse University).

34. James Hanley, *The Closed Harbour*, London: Macdonald, 1952 (dust-jacket quote; this new J.C.P. quote appears on many Hanley editions through 1972).

35. R. H. Ward, *The Leap in the Dark*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1954 (brief dust-jacket quote excised from a much longer appreciation J.C.P. sent to the early Powys biographer, Ward).

36. Rosalind Wade, *Come Fill the Cup*, New York: Pantheon, 1956 (dust-jacket quote; probably first appeared on an earlier novel of Wade's, perhaps *Cassandra Calls*, 1954).

37. James Purdy, *63: Dream Palace*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1957 (dust-jacket quote; excerpts from this quote were used to advertise several subsequent Purdy works).

38. *The Bookseller* (London) Feb 22nd 1958, p. 953 (Heinemann ad. for Henry Miller prints lengthy J.C.P. quote; this is from the 1955 work, *My Friend Henry Miller*, by Alfred Perlès, in a letter from J.C.P. to D. T. Zaccaginini, who is, I believe, Powys bibliographer Dante Thomas).

39. *The London Magazine*, July 1958, p. 10 (Heinemann ad. prints J.C.P.'s opinion of *The Centenarian* by Gilbert Phelps; in a letter to Wilkinson of January 31st 1958, Powys discusses this novel, saying, 'For myself, I find it very difficult to follow – or to understand exactly what is happening!').

40. *The Bookseller*, September 1958, p. 10 (Heinemann ad. for *Common People* by Philip Callow quotes J.C.P.).

41. John Varney: Varney's 1960 collection, *Spun Sequence* (London: Villiers) prints on the dust-jacket a J.C.P. comment on his 1926 book of poems, *First Wounds*).

42. Eric Barker, *A Ring of Willows*, New York: New Directions, 1961 (dust-jacket quote; taken from introductory material included in Barker's *In Easy Dark* (n. p.: Hardy & Ruth Hanson, 1958); *A Ring of Willows* is *In Easy Dark* under a new name; J.C.P. quote is not taken from his introduction to two previous Barker books).

43. Rayner Heppenstall, *The Blaze of Noon*, London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962 (dust-jacket quote; *The Blaze of Noon* was first published in 1939 by Secker and Warburg).

44. J. Phoenice, *The Third Day. A Reflective Autobiography*, London: Villiers, 1963 (dust-jacket quote).

45. E. H. Visiak, *Medusa*, London: Gollancz, 1963 (the front of the dust-jacket quotes J.C.P.: 'A tremendous book'; *Medusa* was first published in 1929 and was reissued by Gollancz in 1946; J.C.P. writes to Wilkinson on Dec 24th 1946 saying, 'I promised him [Kenneth Hopkins] faithfully to compose for his printing press, wherever it is, an essay on Visiak ... a step rather to be avoided than persued!' [*K.H. told me this was never written. P.R.*] *Medusa* was published on June 13th 1963, four days prior to J.C.P.'s death, making this blurb the likely last J.C.P. work to appear in his lifetime).

46. Charles Edward Eaton: his *The Girl from Ipanema* (Lunenburg: Stinehour Press, 1972, prints a dust-jacket comment by J.C.P. on *Write Me from Rio. Write Me from Rio*, Eaton's first collection of stories, was published in Winston-Salem by John F. Blair in 1959; it does not quote J.C.P.).

47. James Purdy, *Malcolm*, New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987 (p.[i] of this paperback prints J.C.P.'s opinion; a longer version is printed in *Powys Notes*, Spring 1988; *Malcolm* was first published in 1959 – with a different J.C.P. comment on the dust-jacket).

**R. P.**

## *Walking Weymouth Sands*

### A Powysian Weekend: June 18th & 19th 1994

In setting the background to John Cowper's diary references to the writing of *Weymouth Sands*, Morine Krissdóttir has said, 'In February 1932 he began writing the novel that was to become *Weymouth Sands*. Unlike *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands* required little background research; *Weymouth* came almost totally out of the 'deep vases' of his own memories, specifically out of his abiding childhood love of Dorset and the town of Weymouth, which he remembered as bathed in sunlight.' We all know that it turned out to be his pre-eminent novel of place; a celebration of Weymouth in which its monuments, spires and ruins, the Nothe, Portland Bill and Lodmoor, and all the memorable features of a timeless landscape speak to us above the murmur of a distant sea.

Today, Weymouth is as unfashionable as John Cowper's novels, but it remains essentially the bucket and spade, Punch and Judy seaside town he knew, remote from motorways and redolent of all our childhoods. For all these reasons, there is no better place for a Powys walk and we look forward to the one which had to be postponed last October.

The scope of the book requires that it should be explored over two days, on each of which there will be a leisurely walk, of about two hours' duration, around the locations of the novel with frequent stops for readings and exchange of ideas. Wessex members will probably make the journey each day, but if you live further afield why not consider a week-end break in Weymouth? Bed and breakfast

accommodation in *Brunswick Terrace* can be booked for under £20 a night. If there is sufficient response, a Powysian activity will be organised for the Saturday evening. It will be helpful if members wishing to take part complete the leaflet enclosed with this *Newsletter*.

**John Batten**

## *Reviews*

### *Correspondance Privée*: the letters of Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys, translated and edited by Nordine Haddad.

Paris: Criterion, 1994. ISBN 2 7413 0089 5. 215 pp. 89FF.

In the early summer of 1993 I placed an advertisement in the *Times Literary Supplement* asking for information on the location of the full correspondence between Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys. I had by then been searching for some years and had just completed the publishing of the now standard bibliography of Henry Miller. I had always wanted to publish Powys and here seemed ideal material – if I could find it. The Village Press edition of Powys's letters to Miller was tantalising incomplete and I could not imagine why they had not published both sides of the exchange unless Miller's letters were lost, especially as the Village Press published a whole series of Miller-related titles in their list, among them his essay on J. C. Powys – *The Immortal Bard*.

It did not take long to receive a reply from Paul Roberts who informed me that not only were the letters on both sides located but that an edition was in preparation by the French publisher Criterion under the editorship of Nordine Haddad, who also acted as translator. As it turned out the final location had been checked by a friend of mine years ago, but obviously not well enough!

In time I was to meet Nordine Haddad and his publisher, Fabienne Rubert, and was impressed by the care and attention they had brought to this project, which among many British publishers would have been deemed unworthy. It is sad but true that both Miller and John C. Powys have far more books in print in France than they do in England. New editions of both writers appear in Paris almost every few months at most. In many Paris bookstores one can see a small section devoted to each, including books such as *Ducdame* or *In Spite Of* by Powys or *Time of the Assassins* and *Sunday after the War* by Miller – books which are almost never seen in Britain. In fact, Miller's books are mainly available in Britain via the American editions of New Directions and Capra Press, distributed by Norton and Airlift but, since they rarely appear on the Whittaker catalogue, virtually no-one knows about their availability. Powys meanwhile is confined to very rare appearances (with the exception of *Wolf Solent*) and the occasional out-of-print

titles spotted by chance in London bookstores. That important English language authors should be better served abroad is sad but by now commonplace – James Joyce, Anaïs Nin, Djuna Barnes and John Fante are among them. One book of Henry Miller's considered not worthy of paperback publication in England has sold over eighty thousand in Germany. I have often asked myself whether this imbalance was really to do merely with a writer being out of vogue – but I have finally decided that usually it is not the case and there are other issues at hand; issues which need to be addressed if, for example, the Powys family aren't to be degraded to the eccentric taste of a few zealots instead of the major figure which John undoubtedly is and the important minor writer status which I personally hold for Llewelyn and T. F. Powys. There are many literature graduates who could not name a single Powys novel. If literature students do not know them and bookstore managers do not know them they are in danger of oblivion as literary figures. Only publishing and accessibility will save the day – without it the constant activity of academics and specialists is merely self-serving and, while valuable to some, is ultimately enhancing the vacuum.

Henry Miller first met John Cowper Powys in New York at the time of his lectures during the First World War. The exact date is uncertain but in a letter of April 2nd 1958 Miller wrote to Lawrence Durrell about Powys 'And Old Friar John, as he calls himself, was one of my first living idols. I a lad then of about 25 and he in his forties. The first man I beheld who was possessed by his daemon. Talk such as I had never heard again in my life. Inspired talk. And now at 80 he is still inspired, still writing masterpieces ...'

Perhaps it was at the series of lectures held in 1916 at the Hudson Theatre near to Miller's father's tailor shop, but whenever the encounters with Powys took place they were to be a lasting influence on Miller and his work – 'All the authors I was then passionate about were the authors he was writing and lecturing about. He was like an oracle to me.' Miller continued to attend Powys's lectures at the Labor Temple and elsewhere for years. After one of the Labor Temple lectures Miller and his friend Schnellock argued so vociferously with Powys that his brother Llewelyn had to intervene. Miller remembered Powys as vastly erudite – when asked if he had read Knut Hamsum Powys replied 'I'm sorry I don't speak Norwegian', or words to that effect. In 1923 Miller would attend a lecture by Powys on Conrad in which there was talk of 'the deep mystery underlying the throes of authorship' – by this time Miller would be embarked on the early stages of his writing career – the time of Clipped Wings. His adventures with June had begun. Although it would become more obvious in the later stages of his writing career, the influence of Powys on Miller's writing style and his tastes in language, literature and subject matter was already deeply ingrained – it would last a lifetime.

It is strange that this edition of the letters between Miller and Powys should begin with an omission – the omission being the very first letter that we know

Miller wrote to Powys and the letter which began their real friendship – that of March 11th 1950, which begins:

> Dear Mr Powys
>
> In the midst of the book I am now writing – on books – I suddenly thought of you and of the very great influence you had upon me years ago, when I was just a lad. I used to attend your lectures in New York, and of course read everything I could lay hands on.'

Miller goes on to explain that he has just written a 'tribute' to Powys into one of his books, how he obtained the address and the depth of the influence Powys had upon him. It is a letter of great praise, deferential, 'A long deferred testimonial of faith and reverence'. While professing not to, the letter begs an answer and it is with this answer that the present book begins.

As far as I can tell, the rest of the sequence of letters is complete with possibly some letters lost – it is hard to understand why after a warm long letter of August 2nd 1959 nothing else is heard from Miller until his final letter consoling Phyllis Playter on Powys's death. This is particularly strange since we know Miller didn't forget Powys because in 1962 he obliged a jury of the Prix Formentor to send a cable of homage to Powys after Miller had failed to secure him the prize ahead of Ewe Johnson.

The translations of the letters are genearlly well handled though I, like many, baulk at 'N. du Pays de Galles, *Angleterre*'. Similarly the notes and annotations are well done for the intended French audience – generally very informative though one could have tracked down Oliver Onions, husband of Berta Ruck (V. Woolf – *Jacob's Room* passim) with a good literary dictionary. The introduction to the book was written in what I would call a Millerian way and those who are familiar with the style will recognise it immediately – ecstasy and exclamation marks. I think it likely that Miller saw Powys before 1917 – in his time with Pauline rather than Béatrice, evidence coming from an unpublished letter and his interest in Russian literature which Powys lectured on in 1916 near Miller's home. Béatrice, in fact, awakened Miller to Hamsun much later – Haddad seems to confuse the attendance of lectures probably some 5–7 years apart when he links his date of 1917 for the first lecture to the story about Hamsun told above and remembered again in 1950 by them both in letters included here.

The letters throughout are presented clearly, with notes at the end of each letter. Transcription has followed the principles of the 1975 Village Press edition of Powys's *Letters to Henry Miller*. Following the body of the text the appendices include a single letter in defence of George G. Olshausen to Powys – the former offering thanks for Powys's willingness to offer a recommendation of literary merit in defence of Miller's then banned *Tropics*. This is followed by a letter in defence of Miller by Powys, sent to Dante T. Zaccaginini, and by Miller's brief essay on Powys — *The Immortal Bard*. For the sake of completeness it might have been worthwhile to extract Miller's comments on Powys from *Books in my Life*,

which are very distinct from *The Immortal Bard* and recall both the early lectures and Miller's beginning of the correspondence. A reason for omitting this may be the use made of the material in the introduction – to avoid too much repetition. It is sad that the publishers have chosen not to include the photographs which they originally intended to include in this edition – virtually every other edition of Miller's letters has some photographs which add greatly to the enjoyment of the book.

I would not exactly agree that this collection is a critical edition, as formerly advertised, since it is in some ways incomplete and does not explore in detail the real influence of Powys on Miller, rather just taking Miller's word for it. Miller loved to rave about and boost his favourite authors – Cendrars, Dostoievsky, Hamsun, Giono and so on – but Powys was a consistent reference point for all his life – as late as August 9th 1979 he is still urging Durrell to read *A Glastonbury Romance* (the book he had described to Durrell in 1958 as 'super-human ... utterly phenomenal'). In fact Miller read also Llewelyn Powys ('every book as it came out') and in *Books in my Life* noted that he intended to read the works of T. F. Powys (he read at least one).

The select bibliography with which the book ends is a good reminder of the respect with which both these writers are held in France – it is in a way fitting that these letters should first be published in Paris where both authors are more highly thought of than in their homelands. For the sake of those who don't read French I sincerely hope the book will be speedily made available in English. I was offered the option for my Alyscamps Press but withdrew when another bidder appeared. There has been a vogue over the last few years for books of Miller's letters (to Durrell, Nin, Cooney, Brenda Venus, Hoki Tokuda, Deltiel, Emil Schnellock, Stroker magazine,and soon James Laughlin) and this will be yet another to help to build up a complete picture of his life. Sadly, Powys will seen as the secondary figure but, as Miller realised, whatever the public taste, history will judge John Cowper Powys by far the greater writer.

**Karl Orend**

## *Der aufgefangene Fall: essays zu Technik, Dichtung und Natur.* Elmar Schenkel. Edition Isele, Eggingen, 1992

In Germany, John Cowper Powys is still a nonentity – both among scholars and the general reading public. There is one man only who is, almost single-handedly, trying to spread his fame. This man is Elmar Schenkel, who has not only written the most recent PhD thesis (1983), but also numerous articles and essays about Powys.

But Schenkel isn't a Powysian only. He is man of many talents, writing poetry and short prose and editing literary magazines, besides his job as professor of English literature at Leipzig University.

The latest proof of the man's multiverse of interest is a book of miscellaneous studies entitled *Der aufgefangene Fall* ('The Caught Fall'). Its first essay is concerned with archery – and Schenkel's quiver is filled with the most diverse arrows indeed, arrows he shoots across the gulf dividing life and literature, or life and thought. In his essays he leisurely but concentratedly follows his intuition and imagination. At their best thay are poetical, be they about the body and literature, about philosophers such as Hugo Kükelhaus or Owen Barfield, about lumbago, computers or reading.

Schenkel's all-pervading concern, expressed again and again in the course of the book, is the danger inherent in science and literature cut off from life – from the life of the body, which itself is slowly but steadily getting ever more (and quite literally) out of touch with the former.

Many of his essays paraphrase this concern, among them one about J. C. Powys and Goethe. In it, Schenkel stresses Powys's admiration of the German poet – an admiration unusual for an Englishman. He at first points out John Cowper's tributes to Goethe (e.g. in *The Pleasures of Literature* and in *Visions and Revisions*) and then enters into a more detailed discussion of their related ideas.

One of the basic relations Schenkel discovers consists in the efforts of both men to fuse their thought and life, on the one hand, and to realize and live the inter-relationship between Man and the cosmos, on the other. Schenkel claims that Powys regarded Goethe as someone whose 'complex vision' was working in a harmonious rhythm and, therefore, as someone whose vision of life was true. Goethe, according to Schenkel, was one of the last scholars who covered both science and the arts, who did not specialize, but tried to see the whole, very often in a single organism, which was to be the microcosm representing the macrocosm. This necessarily stresses the claims of both men that our sense-impressions are real and that we are, therefore, able to discover the truth about the world through our senses – which means a basic acknowledgement of the reality of life in its diverse forms. And this acknowledgement Schenkel regards as both the testimony and one of the most lasting achievements of each of these writers.

This conclusion is certainly correct and in tune with Schenkel's main concern, as I have tried to sketch it. Sometimes, however, the scope of his reading, which seems to be enormous, leads him to hasty associations. It is unnecessary, I believe, to mention Husserl, Heidegger and Adorno in the context of this essay. There certainly are parallels; but none of these men was a 'teacher of the art of life', as Schenkel calls both Goethe and Powys. Moreover, Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis and his almost unbearable terminology make him a less than honourable companion for Powys. Schenkel may have intended to do him good by alluding to those established philosophers, but if Powys cannot stand alone, his thought is not worth much. Goethe, on the other hand, makes good company, since he is a kindred spirit. This arrow did not go amiss.

**Henning Ahrens**

# *Letters to A. R. Powys from Home*

As with the letters to Llewelyn Powys from home which I described in the *Newletter* for April 1992, I have a small collection of letters to A. R. Powys, 'Bertie', from his parents, six from his mother, Mary Cowper Powys, eighteen from his father, the Revd C. F. Powys. The latter range in date from September 10th 1902 to April 9th 1915, the former from 1903 to 1914; they span the period, therefore, (no doubt with plenty of gaps) from the age of twenty-one to his thirty-fifth year. Their format is the same as those to Llewelyn.

At the beginning of the period, A.R.P. had just begun to train and practice as an architect, first with Mr Cave in Exeter, then William Weir, a specialist in old buildings, and then in London working in the office of his brother-in-law, Harry Lyon, in Kensington High Street. Before the end of the series he had become the Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ('SPAB'); that was in 1911, and he held that post till his death in 1936.

During this period also he married, in 1904, Dorothy Mary Powys, his seventh cousin and the daughter of another clergyman, the Revd Annesley Powys of Headingly, Leeds (his vicarage, late Victorian, no longer exists). It was actually John Cowper Powys who made the first acquaintance with this distant Yorkshire relation, when he was lecturing in those parts and Annesley Powys saw the notice of his lecture.

There are many references to these and other events and to A.R.P.'s financial affairs in the letters, but there is nothing really exceptional about them. They do, however, give the flavour of the happenings at the Vicarage in Montacute, which throughout the period of these letters was A.R.P.'s 'family home'. Both parents write frequently of the doings of other members of the family, especially, of course, of those who are younger than A.R.P.

Willy, aged fifteen, is 'a very observant companion & finds nests & notices birds very quickly' (M.C.P., May 20th 1903)

'Llewelyn & Willie went to Langport this morning & had some good skating – Gertrude has a cold which I hope will be soon better, but she has had to keep at home – The others went to Pit pond' (C.F.P., Jan 17th 1903)

'Gertrude has paid a visit to Mr Dickins at Pen Villa. I am sorry, but I hope it may be for her benefit in the end. I have a dread of Dental work' (C.F.P., Oct 28th 1904)

The letter of March 28th 1904 from C.F.P is the only one I have seen addressed to 'Albert'; he is *always* 'Bertie'. This letter does not seem to justify the unaccustomed formality:

My dear Albert

I enclose a cheque for 15£ for the Quarter. They tell me that you will be going to Burpham for Easter. I hope you will have a pleasant visit to John & Margaret. I am glad that you are able to go on at Mr Cave's office during

this period of waiting for Mr Weir's work. ... We are all rejoicing in the fine weather the garden is getting gradually into order. Llewelyn & May have got the tennis lawn to look quite ready for play & May has been working hard in the Mabelulu Domain.

With much love

I remain

your ever affec Father

C. F. Powys

'We are all very much pleased to hear of your 'rise' as the people call it – Father is very glad, & so we all are, for it shows you are doing your work carefully.' (M.C.P., May 20th 1903)

C.F.P.'s letter of May 18th 1903 provides a vignette of the daily affairs of the large household:

My dear Bertie

Your letter arrived by this evening post. We are all pleased that you have received an advance in your salary – it shows that Mr Cave appreciated your work. ... We have had a beautiful May Day. May & Llewelyn have been playing tennis hard before tea. This evening there will be a Bible Meeting in the School. John Froom [groom] has gone with Bobby to Yeovil to fetch the Deputation, who keeps at a respectful distance from the Vicarage because of the Mumps. However Willie is rapidly recovering, & is now off to secure an egg for me of a golden crest, the nest of which he found in Stoke Wood, when walking with Mother this afternoon. There is to be a School Teachers Meeting on Saturday at Montacute House grounds over which I have been asked to preside, in the absence of Mr Phelips. It may be rather peculiar, as an M.P is coming to speak, & other great guns to thunder the fires of education upon us unfortunate Parsons, if we do not please them & hold up a white flag

With much love

Your ever affec Father

C. F. Powys

C.F.P. was at Burpham on September 22nd 1904 when he heard from A.R.P. of his intended marriage:

My dear Bertie

Mother forwarded your letter to me without opening it & I was at Littlehampton with John & Margaret and so did not receive it until after post time. I am pleased to give my consent. We are all fond of Dorothy, and I trust that you will help one another to live an upright holy life & to be useful & do good, where-ever your home may be. For the present you must endeavour to be patient & self-possessed. I hope you will pass the final examination this autumn, which will be a step in the right direction, & that you may work on bravely for some few years with Mr Weir. By doing

our duty well & thoroughly where we may be placed, we lay the best possible foundation for the future. I hope to go home tomorrow.

God bless you & Dorothy now & for ever

I am, your ever affec Father

Charles F. Powys

'I am glad that you will have a sight of Dorothy before she leaves for Holland. The Baltic Fleet may be on its way home, I hope it won't mistake Dorothy's steamer for a Japanese Iron-clad. Their doings are no joke. I only hope the Czar will recall his Admiral, & send the fleet to "sail away", where there is nothing to shoot except sea-gulls.' (C.F.P., Oct 28th 1904)

'I did say I think that I would give you 20£ this Quarter. But starting your married life you must want the money, so please spend it as profitably as you can, & you may look upon 5£ of the 25£ as especially for the purpose of furnishing your rooms, with any needful & useful furniture. I like to give you the same as I give Theodore. Dear John has generously of his own desire reduced his allowance to 60£ a year, as he is earning a better income than formally [*sic*].' (C.F.P., June 28th 1905)

'I am sending a cheque for 5£ to help with your housekeeping. I hope that the coming year may bring you & many others more work & more bread & cheese. I am glad that Llewelyn is with John in America this Winter for John's sake; and I hope that Llewelyn will be able to do his part creditably. Katie is much better now getting all right again. She went with me to Yeovil this morning; when we were going up the Preston Hill by the Church on our way home, some of the harness suddenly gave way, but a good auctioneer or something of that sort came & mended the harness with some string & drove me home, while Katie returned to get it properly repaired. ... May is gone today to Burnham to play hockey with the South Petherton team, & tomorrow she & Katie go to Martock to run a paperchase with the Vassals, I wish you could join them. However steady work is after all the best thing to keep us in the right path.' (C.F.P., Jan 12th 1909)

'Please consider the 25£ donation I sent last April, and any thing I may have given you previously as a free gift, not to be repaid. But pay off Mr Wilkinson's advance of money as soon as you are able. I think you are right in not being in a hurry to make a definite partnership with Harry Lyon, but the matter requires thought. I feel myself that I should like to think of you working again with Mr Weir, even tho' it involves you going into lodgings from time to time. I am glad that Lucy is a help to you & Dorothy. Katie is going to Chaldon tomorrow to help Theodore & Violet.' (C.F.P., Nov 10th 1909)

*These transcripts and extracts have been prepared at short notice to fill three pages; they will be followed as opportunity arises.*

**Stephen Powys Marks**