

Editorial

A society which is not effectively managed will soon collapse. Worse still, it may flounder along ineffectually, bringing its cause into disrepute. Accounts have to be kept, letters written, events arranged, publications edited and decisions made. Not everyone who supports the cause for which a society has been founded will be willing or able to undertake such work and, inevitably, there is the danger that a small group will come to dominate all that is done. The Officers and the Committee of The Powys Society have always sought to avoid this danger by regularly consulting the members and by encouraging as many as possible to take an active part in the Society's work. Our constitution was a major step in ensuring that the Society could be both effectively managed and remain responsive to the wishes of its members. Even so, the Committee has recently reviewed certain aspects of the Society's work and has proposed changes to the constitution which will, if adopted, provide an opportunity for every member, not simply those able to attend the Annual General Meeting, to express their views on the running of the Society by taking part in the nomination and election of the Officers and members of the Executive Committee. Details of the proposed changes are given elsewhere in this *Newsletter* and I would strongly urge every member to use their vote to ensure that the work of the Society can continue to flourish.

Two other new initiatives are launched in this edition of the *Newsletter*: the founding of a network of local groups, co-ordinated by Chris Gostick and the establishment of a Powys Reference Project under the guidance of Robin Patterson. Each of these initiatives offers members the chance to share their enthusiasm and knowledge in ways which will both be enjoyable and further the aims of the Society. In addition, we carry reports of a number of events which

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many members have attended and enjoyed, as well as of our hugely successful 1995 Conference.

Members will also be delighted to learn that as plans for the Literary Gallery to be opened at the Dorset County Museum in 1997 begin to take their final form, it is becoming clear that the Powys family are to be represented by a substantial permanent exhibition. Although this is separate from the Powys Society Collection, the two will inevitably complement one another and do much to establish beyond question the importance of this remarkable family.

With so many activities and developments taking place it is hard to decide which is potentially the most significant. However, the importance of the announcement by John Powys, that he has accepted control of the Powys Estate from his father Francis, can surely not be overestimated. As his announcement makes clear, John Powys is deeply committed to furthering the reputations of all members of the Powys family and to working closely with the Society to achieve this. We welcome the privilege of working with him.

These are, indeed, exciting times.

Paul Roberts

A personal view of the 1995 Conference

I'm not exactly sure why I've never been to a Powys Society Conference before, perhaps something to do with location, or the time of year, or maybe just too busy doing other things – although I should have known that to come out after a number of years hidden away amongst the general membership, as I did at Weymouth last year, was to risk being gently coerced into all sorts of other activities. So, having responded to John Batten's persuasion to give it a try, I was only half surprised at Paul Roberts' suggestion on the very last evening that I should also write the conference report! These Powysians do very quickly give you a great sense of belonging!

So, for whatever reason, 1995 was my year to turn up at Kingston Maurward, that imposing country house set in acres of gardens on the outskirts of Dorchester, which doubles as the Dorset Agricultural College when not acting as the unofficial headquarters of the Powys Society. So, how was it for me? Well it was good. No, it was better than that – it was terrific. Perhaps it was something to do with the focus on biography and the 'telling of lives', which seemed particularly apposite given the sudden wealth of new published material, such as Morine Krissdóttir's brilliant selections from JCP's Diaries, Oliver Wilkinson's first volume of the letters between JCP and Frances Gregg, and the first volume of Paul Roberts' *Uncollected Essays*, all of which provide a different sort of evidence

to that of the fiction itself, so emphasising the contrast between what we feel, think, say and do, and the impossibility of finally distinguishing truth from imagination, from myth, from uncertainty, or even from intentional falsehood.

The most remarkable thing about the three days was that it was not just a discrete series of presentations and activities, but that these all gradually merged into a much more intimate process, so that the whole became somehow greater than each of the essential components. For me, the crucial culmination of the conference was on Sunday evening, with readings from the *1939 Diary*. Readings is a completely inadequate word for what was carefully scripted into a major dramatic presentation. In the dusk of that long summer evening in that lovely big room, while Christopher Wilkinson acted as the essential narrative chorus, Oliver Wilkinson became John Cowper, and Morine vividly transmuted Phyllis Playter back to life; showing us the Twig in the Crystal. Suddenly, I really believed I was in that tiny house in Corwen, with Petrushka and his Dancer. For me, and I think for others too, reality merged into myth, and biography will never be quite the same again.

I was also impressed by the very high quality of all the formal presentations, especially their powerful blend of academic rigour couched in warm and simple language. I particularly liked Frank Kibblewhite's disarmingly understated introduction to the fine exhibition of the work of Gertrude Powys in the Dorset County Museum on the first evening, which we shared with the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, and would willingly have listened for much longer. On the second day, Michael Ballin, John Williams and Morine Krissdóttir all gave carefully crafted and stimulating presentations, each from a very different perspective, but all somehow both reflecting on and supplementing each other. And on the final day, Charles Lock was somehow able to bring all these themes together in his own fascinating paper on the Rhetoric of Revelation. I hope all of these papers will be published in next year's *Powys Journal*, as they are all far too important not to achieve a much wider audience, and a more considered response.

Special thanks must also go to Sven Eric Täckmark, who entertained us quite effortlessly with his account of travelling to meet John Cowper and Phyllis at Corwen in the late 1930s. Yet again the reality shifted, for here was someone who had actually been there. Appeared in the diary. Had participated in these great events.

Finally, Herbert Williams brought yet another link into this chain, by talking about the making of his television film of *The Great Powys*, which we all then watched. And somehow the reality spiral twisted again, for in that one room we not only had many of the people actually appearing on the screen, but another fictional JCP and Phyllis, and all mixed in with actors themselves playing fictional characters that we had all believed were our own individual imaginations! Again, truth, reality, fiction, myth. No boundaries. Although I know it does not please

everyone, I happen to like Herbert's film very much, and was glad of the opportunity to see it again and to discuss it more widely. But it is his vision of JCP. It is not mine. And I'm not really sure I want to share mine, and to have it tested against other realities! But it was an effective coda to the series of more formal presentations.

For those of us with no responsibilities it was three relaxing days in wonderful surroundings, in hot summer sunshine, being intellectually enthralled, educated, stimulated and amused in equal measure. I think I may have made it sound as though it was all about JCP and Phyllis in Corwen, but it was much, much more than that, and if I have missed anything it was the great informal discussions on such an astonishing variety of Powysian topics that filled every spare moment that deserves special mention. What a fascinating and varied set of enthusiastic people! I am well aware of the effort that it takes to create such an environment, so special thanks must go to John and Eve Batten for their endless attention to every detail, as well as to Morine and the Committee, who all worked so hard to create the illusion that such events somehow happen quite spontaneously on summer days in country houses.

I was particularly disappointed to miss the Sylvia Townsend Warner evening arranged by Janet Pollock. Excitement was already mounting as I crept away back to London in the warm Monday dusk, surprisingly sad at having to leave. I shall certainly be sampling the delights of Uppingham School in Rutland next year – indeed my only real disappointment is that I have to wait for another whole year! A few days like this every 3 or 4 months could add enormously to my quality of life! But I need to be careful, I know, or I might end up on the organisation rota myself, and if this year's Conference is anything to go by, it is always going to be a hard act to follow.

Chris Gostick

The Sylvia Townsend Warner Evening

The last evening of the Conference was a special event in celebration of Sylvia Townsend Warner. Organised and orchestrated by Janet Machen Pollock, the large reception room of Kingston Maurward was packed with Powysians and with specially invited friends and relatives of Sylvia.

The evening began with an informative and witty introduction by Claire Harman, who talked about the interconnecting links between Theodore Powys, Sylvia Warner and David Garnett. Roger Peers followed with a reading of an unpublished section of Warner's unfinished biography of Theodore. Why the biography was never completed remains something of a mystery, but as Roger read so perceptively from the typescript, the audience recognised what a witty

and penetrating view of Theodore was emerging. Richard and Jane Garnett came from Cambridgeshire especially to read from Richard's recently published book *Sylvia and David: The Townsend Warner/Garnett Letters* (Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1994). The skilfully chosen selection, which concentrated especially on those letters referring to Theodore, captivated the listeners.

A reception followed in the Great Hall and as the conversation and wine flowed, the strong links between Sylvia Warner and Theodore Powys were made ever stronger by new friendships. It was a splendid way to end the 1995 Conference.

MK

Report of the Annual General Meeting

21st August 1995, at Kingston Maurward
College of Agriculture, Dorchester

There were 35 members of the Society present.

1 Minutes of the last A.G.M. These were approved and signed as a correct record.

2 Matters arising from the minutes There were no matters arising.

3 The Secretary's Report. John Batten reported that the Committee had met twice since the last A.G.M.

Committee meeting of 19th November 1994

a The Vice-Chairman reported on his thus far disappointing efforts to obtain some grant aid for the Society's Collection.

b The Treasurer gave a detailed account of the Society's finances and estimated that 98% of subscription income would be spent on providing the *Journal* and *Newsletter* for members in the current year.

c It was reported that stocks of the Society's publicity leaflet are low and it was agreed that it should be revised and reprinted.

d Arrangements for future conferences were discussed, with particular reference to their duration and frequency. Committee agreed that a two-day conference should be introduced on a trial basis, beginning in 1996, and that the next conference be held at Uppingham School from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th August 1996.

e The recommendations of the Publications Committee on the composition of an Advisory Board for *The Powys Journal* were agreed.

f The Chairman reported on the provisional plans for the representation of the Powyses in the Writer's Gallery at Dorset County Museum. It was agreed that Morine should write to the Curator expressing the hope that more space might be allocated for the purpose.

g A report on the condition of the Gertrude Powys paintings, purchased by the Society was received. It was agreed that restoration work should be carried out on the six most in need of it and that there would be an exhibition of GMP's work at the Dorset County Museum in August.

h Louise de Bruin announced that she was standing down as joint editor of *The Powys Journal* in September 1995. Both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman thanked her warmly for her contribution to the creation of a publication of the highest quality.

Committee Meeting of 21st August 1995

a A report was received on the conservation work carried out on the Gertrude Powys paintings owned by the Society. These were on view in the exhibition of her work at the Dorset County Museum.

b Judith Stinton, co-ordinator of the new Literary Gallery at the Dorset County Museum, described her plans for the presentation of the Powyses in that exhibition. The Committee was pleased by the expansion and development of an earlier draft scheme.

c The Secretary reported on the meeting of the Publications Committee of 19th August as follows: *a.* Thanks were expressed to Glen Cavaliero for his compilation of an *Index* to the *Letters of John Cowper Powys to His Brother Llewelyn*, and to Stephen Powys Marks for the indexes to *The Powys Journal* and *Newsletter*. *b.* It was agreed that the publication of a guide to a Powys walk in Sherborne will be undertaken next year. *c.* Consideration was given to the possibility of publishing JCP's 1934/35 Diary, enhanced by side notes and contemporary photographs. Cost and the market will be researched before any decision is taken. *d.* It was agreed that the possibility of producing a talking book tape of the writings of the three brothers should be given further consideration. *e.* Membership Survey data relating to the *Newsletter* was discussed with the Editor and Publications Manager.

It was reported that there had been three open meetings for members of the Society and their friends since the last Conference: *a.* On 19th November 1994 the annual Montacute Lecture was delivered by Oliver Holt, who spoke with great charm about Littleton C. Powys. *b.* On July 1st and 2nd a group of about thirty spent a week-end in Montacute, exploring Powys places, listening to readings and enjoying a social evening. *c.* On the 111th anniversary of Llewelyn's birth about thirty members and friends gathered at East Chaldon, to drink his health and walk to the stone. Thanks to the kindness of Mrs Cobb and Janet Pollock we were also able to visit Beth Car and Chydyok. These meetings were attended by many members who do not come to conferences.

4 Treasurer's Report The Treasurer pointed out that the accounts for 1994, with his report drawing attention to the salient points, were printed in *Newsletter* 25. In them he had tried to anticipate any of the questions which might be asked, and there were in fact no questions. He drew attention to the substantial sum of

money passing through the Society's hands, more than £20,000 coming in and nearly £20,000 going out.

This year there were three major items of expenditure: publication work, the GMP exhibition and the restoration of the GMP paintings. *The Powys Journal* and three *Newsletters* were estimated at £4,700. Two indexes had also been published: an *Index* to the five volumes of *The Powys Journal*, which would be sent out without charge with the *Journal*, and had been donated, and an *Index*, compiled by our President, to the *Letters of JCP to Llewelyn*, published in 1975; this had cost £113. The exhibition would make an important contribution to publicising the work of the Society; this would cost under £1,000. The restoration work on the GMP painting would be in the region of £2,000.

Some 270 subscriptions for 1995 had been received so far, similar to the position at the same time last year; and there should be a tax refund on covenants of about £180, which was a valuable addition to our income. The Peter Powys Grey books had brought us a net income of £1,400, £1,327 of it this year. As *The Powys Journal* and the three *Newsletters* would account for more than 90% of our income, our other expenditure was to a considerable extent financed out of non-subscription income. The overall expenditure this year would exceed income, but this was not a matter for concern, as the purpose of the funds was to pursue the aims of the Society within prudent limits; restoration work would not be recurring, though there was likely to be some continuing expenditure on the collection. The Treasurer was satisfied with the state of affairs. He was thanked by the Chairman.

5 Chairman's Remarks Morine Krissdóttir paid tribute to the support she receives from the other Officers of the Society and the members of Committee. She spoke of the work done by Sarah Linden, Frank Kibblewhite and Bev Craven in designing and mounting the Gertrude Powys Exhibition and Stephen Powys Marks in cataloguing it. The support of the Museum, through whom the restoration of paintings had been negotiated on very favourable terms, was acknowledged. Thanks were also expressed to those people who had loaned paintings for exhibition. Commenting on the reference in the Secretary's report to plans for the Museum's Literary Gallery, the Chairman said she was now satisfied that the Powyses were to have a significant presence there. Speaking of her own literary work, Morine referred to her editing of John Cowper's 1934-35 diary, and the preparation, in collaboration with Roger Peers, of the full text, augmented by side notes and period photographs, to be entitled *The Dorset Year*, which the Society might publish if it considered it financially viable. Commenting on the announcement which John Powys had made to conference on the previous day the Chairman said that we were all relieved to hear that he had committed himself, not only to the well-being of the Society, but also to the publication of the Powyses. She explained that John is now legally the copyright holder for the works of John Cowper Powys, Theodore Powys and Katie, the

copyright literary executorship having been made over to him by his father, Francis Powys. He therefore had control of what is and is not published and had asked her to become his literary adviser. The job would be unpaid and would bring many headaches. It would involve advising on the best strategy for getting books and manuscripts into print, after which it would be up to the literary agent, Gerald Pollinger, to find a publisher. In closing, the Chairman spoke of the time-consuming nature of the administrative work her office entailed.

6 Election of Officers The election was conducted by the President, Glen Cavaliero, and the following were returned unopposed (proposers and seconders shown in parentheses):

Chairman Morine Krissdóttir (*Francis Feather, Griffin Beale*)

Vice-Chairman Paul Roberts (*Bev Craven, James Dawson*)

Secretary John Batten (*Leslie Harrison, Charles Lock*)

Treasurer Stephen Powys Marks (*Louise de Bruin, Kathleen Feather*)

7 Election of Committee The election was conducted by the President, Glen Cavaliero, and the following were returned unopposed:

Griffin Beale (*Timothy Hyman, Bev Craven*)

Louise de Bruin (*Jacqueline Peltier, John Williams*)

Bev Craven (*John Williams, Timothy Hyman*)

Timothy Hyman (*Derek Langridge, Isobel Powys Marks*)

Frank Kibblewhite (*Louise de Bruin, John Williams*)

John Williams (*Bev Craven, John Williams*)

The overseas representatives all agreed to stand and were thanked by the President. They are Marius Buning, Francis Feather, Charles Lock, Jacqueline Peltier and Sven Erik Täckmark.

8 Appointment of Auditor

Stephen Allen (*Stephen Powys Marks, Glen Cavaliero*)

The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Society for the work he does.

9 Report from the Powys Society of North America Michael Ballin, President of PSNA, said that the activities of that Society were more or less confined to the publication of *Powys Notes*, the next issue of which would be devoted to *Porius*. He referred to the PSNA conference to be held at Toronto in September on the theme 'Powys and the Nineteenth Century'. He said that he and Richard Maxwell anticipated standing down soon from their roles in the Society and spoke of the possibility that it too might consider holding regional meetings as a means of overcoming the problems of travelling great distance. He was thanked by the Chairman.

10 Local and Regional Meetings The Chairman said that the setting up of regional groups had been discussed in Committee and the Secretary referred to his earlier report of successful events in Somerset and Dorset and expressed the hope that, with some initial help, groups of members elsewhere in the country might arrange their own activities. He reported that the Committee had resolved

to appoint someone to co-ordinate those activities, and that he expected early developments in the matter.

11 The Time and Place of the Next Conference This was announced as Friday 23th August 1996 till Sunday 25th August, beginning and ending in the afternoon. The Secretary explained that the shorter Conference was a response to members' concerns about cost, and it was hoped that the 'middle England' venue would attract newcomers. He said that it was probable that Conference would return to Kingston Maurward in 1997.

12 Any Other Business There was none and the meeting was declared closed.

John Batten

The Powys Estate

At this year's Conference, John Powys made an extremely important announcement concerning the Powys Estate. This has been transcribed from a recording and is printed below in full.

Good afternoon.

Francis, my father, very much wanted to be here today, but unfortunately circumstances prevent him being. For this reason I am filming as much as I can so that he can share the moments with us. He would particularly have liked to hear Morine's talk about the *Diaries* which Sally, my mother, so doggedly transcribed over the years.

My father has passed to me his literary copyright and executorship, and as a professional librarian I have every intention of fostering the preservation of this literary heritage with the full help of my English-teacher wife Amanda and son William, and, of course, including the sound advice of cousin Stephen who has already done so much for the Society. I shall continue my father's support for the Society by allowing it twenty-five years' free right to publish material. I have also asked Morine to be my literary adviser, which she has generously agreed to. I would also like to thank the Society for their support and Mr Pollinger for his efforts.

Thank you very much.

John Powys

The Role of the Literary Adviser

The above announcement by John Powys speaks for itself. It is a cordial reassurance to members of the Society that the heritage of the Powys family is in

capable and sensitive hands.

The editor has asked me to expand slightly on my Chairman's Remarks at the last A.G.M (see page 5 of this *Newsletter*) on the role of the Literary Adviser.

An author can usually decide for himself whether a work of his should be republished or perhaps published in a different medium. For example, John Cowper Powys refused to have *A Glastonbury Romance* made into a movie although it might have made all the difference to his financial future. Similarly Phyllis disapproved of his 'tracts for funny ones' but he was pressured by his publishers and his need to make a living by his writing. It is always difficult for an author, who usually needs the money, to decide dispassionately whether what he writes will enhance or harm his standing as a serious writer. It is even more difficult for a literary executor or copyright holder, especially one responsible for several authors, to decide what best should be published, in what form, by what publisher. He may feel, for a variety of reasons, that he would like advice from someone who has knowledge of the author[s] and their publishing history, awareness of the present best scholars and editors working on the author[s] in question, for example Powys, and information about the past performance of their publishers.

The adviser is precisely that: an adviser. The literary executor can ask his/her advice or not, and he can either take it or reject it. *Ultimately it is the literary executor who makes the decisions.* John Powys has asked me to fill this role of literary adviser and I have agreed to do so without charge. There are many experts in the Society whom I can, in turn, call on for advice from time to time if I feel it is advisable.

Morine Krissdóttir

A Theft

In conjunction with this year's Conference, the Society mounted an exhibition of the paintings, drawings and engravings of Gertrude Mary Powys at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester. The exhibition, 'Dorset Landscapes & Powys Portraits', the first of its kind to be held in Dorset, was to have remained open to the public from 20th August to 15th September 1995, but it was decided by the Officers that it must close immediately following the theft of one of the most important exhibits, a small oil painting of Charles Francis Powys drinking tea, which was completed in about 1920. This painting, which is reproduced on the front cover of this *Newsletter*, was one of Gertrude Powys's finest works, was exhibited both in Paris and London, and was for many years a treasured possession of John Cowper Powys. The painting is now the property of the artist's niece, Isobel Powys Marks, and is, unsurprisingly, one of the favourite works in

her collection. Mrs Marks was one of a number of individuals who entrusted works to the exhibition in order to supplement the Society's own collection. The extreme distress which this theft has caused, both to Mrs Marks and to everyone else involved in the exhibition, can easily be imagined.

To seek to attribute blame is useless; for the blame lies with one person alone, the thief who, during the evening of Saturday 19th August or on Sunday 20th August, stole the painting and can now, we assume, merely gloat secretly over it. The Museum has never before suffered the theft of an item from a public exhibition; nevertheless security measures have now been rigorously re-examined, particularly with regard to the Literary Gallery which is currently being planned.

It is hard to imagine why this particular painting should have appealed to anyone unaware of its significance in the history of the Powys family, and such a thought casts into even deeper shade this despicable crime. The police and the authorities investigating art thefts have been informed, but should the painting be returned undamaged, no further action will be taken.

'Dorset Landscapes & Powys Portraits' had been intended both as a celebration of the work of Gertrude Powys and as an opportunity for the general public to learn of her work. The Society and its members had invested an enormous amount of time and a considerable amount of money in mounting this fine exhibition. That has largely been wasted. More importantly, however, private individuals had entrusted precious works into the care of the Society and the Museum and that trust has been betrayed by the act of a callous individual.

Any information regarding the stolen painting should be sent, in confidence, to Stephen Powys Marks, Hamilton's, Kilmersdon, near Bath, Somerset BA3 5TE (tel: 01761 435134).

Paul Roberts

The Society's Constitution Proposed changes

The Society's constitution is now seven years old, and the Society itself is much larger than it was when the constitution was formulated; it seems desirable, indeed necessary, to reconsider it from time to time. The most significant defect is the restriction of the Society's elections to those who attend the AGM, themselves only a proportion of the members who happen to attend the Conference each year. This seems a very undemocratic proceeding. A system of nomination and voting by post would give all paid-up members, many of whom live at a considerable distance in this country and abroad, an opportunity to choose who runs their Society. While this may seem to mean the loss of an

important function of the AGM, there would be a tremendous gain in participation for the membership as a whole, with a greater gain in participation. A number of other changes, mostly minor, is proposed.

A postal system of voting would need two stages: (1) a slate of nominations would go out with the April *Newsletter*, with invitations for further nominations for Officers and Committee members; (2) if there were further nominations, voting papers would go out with the (promptly despatched) July *Newsletter*, with voting papers returned before the AGM so the new Officers and Committee could be appointed at the AGM. At present, we have the President's Committee of Nominations which prepares the slate of nominations, and elections, if any, take place at the AGM. As long as the suggested system is co-ordinated with the issue of newsletters there need be no increase in postal costs, but there would be advance preparation to be done.

It appears that the existing President's Committee of Nominations was included in the constitution in order to get away from the possibility of a group of people cosily being re-elected year after year without the opportunity for challenge. This purpose would be served equally well or better by a postal system, and it is therefore proposed to delete the Committee of Nominations. (Our President is pleased with this suggestion!) There will still, however, have to be a system of nomination; what is proposed is in line with the practice of several other societies.

The Committee comprises a Chair, Vice-Chair, Hon. Secretary, and Hon. Treasurer (these four are defined as the 'Officers of the Society'), and seven other members of the Society (eleven in all), and such other honorary officers (existing Committee members) as the Committee may think necessary. At present all Committee members retire each year; it would be beneficial to introduce an element of assured continuity by requiring only two of the seven Committee members to retire each year (which is similar to what happens in many societies). Officers would continue to hold office for one year only. The year of office would start after each AGM, and the appointment would be made at the AGM. It is not felt that the Committee should be *required* to meet near the AGM, though it may wish to do so. An additional power is provided to enable the Committee to deal with a persistent absentee.

At present there is no specified period for sending out notices of the AGM, including the agenda; this has been implicit in the need to notify nominations at least one month before the meeting. With the change to postal nomination and ballot, an explicit minimum period is required: four weeks is proposed. In addition, the period for submitting resolutions for the AGM is lengthened to enable a copy to be inserted, if thought desirable, in the July *Newsletter* which will carry the AGM notice. It will also be necessary to require notice of the **date** of the AGM to be published still earlier as a date before which things have to be done under new Rule 4.6(d); this can be done in the April *Newsletter*.

At present there is nothing to prevent members who have not paid their subscriptions voting in elections for Officers and Committee, nominating or seconding candidates, or taking part in the proceedings of the Committee. In fairness to those who fund the Society it is considered that only those who are paid-up (and, of course, honorary members) should be able to take part in these functions. A new Rule 3.6 is proposed. One of the consequences of this new requirement is that reminders for subscriptions will need to go out early enough to alert those who want to make nominations under Rule 4.6(d) but are not paid up. It is proposed to amend Rule 3.3 to allow reminders to go out after three, instead of six, months after the date on which subscriptions are due.

These changes to the constitution, set out in detail below, have to be approved in a postal ballot by a two-thirds majority of members voting; at least two months has to be allowed for the voting. This means that ballot papers have to go out with this *Newsletter* in order to bring the new arrangements into operation for the next round of nominations and appointments in 1996.

Your Committee has considered the changes as a package, and recommends them to you. A copy of the existing constitution is enclosed on a loose sheet, and a ballot paper is also enclosed, to be sent to reach the Hon. Secretary by 19th February 1996.

PLEASE USE YOUR VOTE.

The proposed amendments to the Constitution

1 *amend Rule 3.3 to read:*

- 3.3** A member who has failed to pay the annual fee within three months following the due date will be so notified by the Honorary Treasurer. Should the member fail to pay the fee within a further six months, his or her membership will be considered to have ceased.

2 *add new Rule 3.6:*

- 3.6** No person shall take part in the proceedings of the Committee, or vote, or propose or second a nomination or resolution, or be nominated, or request an extraordinary general meeting, under any of the Rules of this constitution, unless he or she is either a paid-up member or an honorary member of the Society.

3 *amend Rule 4.6 to read:*

- 4.6** With the exception of the President, the Committee is chosen as follows:
(a) The Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Hon. Secretary, and the Hon. Treasurer, who are the Officers of the Society, are each chosen by postal nomination and ballot to be held as specified below. Each Officer will be appointed for a term of one year from the end of the AGM at which the appointment is announced, and is eligible for re-appointment.

(b) At each AGM two of the other Committee members, including any Honorary Officers not included in Rule 4.6(a), shall retire; those retiring shall be, first, members appointed under Rule 4.6(h) and thereafter those longest serving on the Committee since their last appointment; in the event of a tie the members to retire shall be chosen by lot unless it is agreed between them which of them shall retire. Each will be chosen by postal nomination and ballot to be held as specified below for a term of three years from the end of the AGM at which the appointment is announced, and is eligible for re-appointment.

(c) A slate of nominations shall be prepared in consultation with the Committee by the Hon. Secretary or another member of the Committee appointed by him or her; that person shall ensure that nominees are willing to be appointed and to attend meetings as require, and, in the event of a ballot being held under Rule 4.6(e), shall obtain and approve brief statements of appropriate information from all nominees subject to the ballot, for distribution with the voting papers.

(d) Not less than three calendar months before the AGM there shall be distributed to the members of the Society the slate of nominations for the Officers and for other Committee members to fill vacancies arising out of Rules 4.6(a) and 4.6(b). At the same time there shall be distributed to the members an invitation to submit further nominations for Officers and Committee members; each such nomination shall be made by a proposer and seconder in writing, accompanied by the nominee's agreement to stand in writing; such nominations shall be made to the Hon. Secretary not later than two calendar months before the AGM.

(e) If any nominations are received under Rule 4.6(d), a postal ballot shall be conducted as necessary by sending to all paid-up or honorary members of the Society voting papers not less than four weeks before the AGM and a Scrutineer (not being a person for whom votes may be cast in the ballot) shall be appointed by the President for the purpose of Rule 4.6(f); voting papers are to be returned to reach the Scrutineer not less than five days before the AGM;

(f) The votes received under Rule 4.6(e) shall be counted by the Scrutineer assisted by an Officer of the Society or other member of the Committee approved by the President.

(g) The Officers and other members of the Committee who have been chosen under Rules 4.6(d) and 4.6(e) shall be appointed at the AGM and shall take office after the AGM.

(h) In the event of a vacancy occurring between AGMs, the Committee is empowered to fill it.

(i) If a member of the Committee fails to attend at least half its meetings in a year and also fails to satisfy the Committee that there are good reasons for absence, the Committee shall require that member to resign, notwithstanding that his or her term of office has not been completed.

4 amend Rule 4.8(k) to read:

(k) meeting not less than twice a year at the call of the Chair to review the state of the Society's affairs and to take such action as it may consider suitable. Minutes shall be taken of all the proceedings of the Committee and shall be open to inspection by any member of the Society by applying to the Hon. Secretary.

5 add new Rule 4.9:

4.9 Notwithstanding Rule 3.6, the Committee may invite any person to attend a

meeting of the Committee in order to advise it and take part in discussion, but such a person shall not have a vote.

6 *amend Rule 5.2 to read:*

5.2 (a) Notice of the date of the AGM (provisional if necessary) shall be sent to every member of the Society not less than three calendar months before that date; if the date is provisional the AGM shall not be held at an earlier date than that contained in the notice.

(b) Notice of the AGM, including the date and proposed agenda, shall be sent to every member of the Society not less than four weeks before the AGM.

7 *amend Rule 5.3(b) to read:*

(b) the appointment of the Officers of the Society and other members of the Committee.

8 *amend Rule 5.6 to read:*

5.6 Any member wishing to move a resolution at the AGM must send the resolution to the Hon. Secretary with the names of the proposer and seconder not less than six weeks before the date of AGM.

Joseph Cobb

Joseph Cobb of West Chaldon died on October 26th 1995 at the age of 86. The funeral service was held at St Nicholas Church, East Chaldon on November 3rd, attended by relatives and many friends in the community in which he lived. The Powys Society was represented by Morine Krissdóttir.

Mr Rothwell, the former agent of the Weld Estate, gave the address and reminded the full church both of Mr Cobb's long life as a successful tenant farmer of the Weld Estate and of his long association with the Powyses, particularly Theodore. His address ended with a paragraph from Llewelyn's essay about Bat's Head which sums up the special quality of the downs of Chaldon so loved by Joseph Cobb.

This warm association will continue as Powys members who enjoyed Mrs Cobb's hospitality at the Llewelyn birthday walk will know.

MK

Book News

The first part of Susan Rands' fascinating and detailed study of the life and work of John Cowper Powys's brother-in-law Thomas Henry Lyon is published in the spring 1995 issue of *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries* (available at £4.50 from Mr N. Annett, 3 Johnstone Drive, Broomhill, Tiverton, Devon EX16 5BU). The study is to be continued in the next two issues of the journal.

The Aylesford Press (158 Moreton Road, Upton, Wirral, Cheshire L49 4NZ. Tel: 0151 678 7749) is currently offering for sale a number of original issues of *The Aylesford Review*, featuring articles by and about members of the Powys family and their circle. Copies of Eleanor Farjeon's study of *Elizabeth Myers* (1957) are also available.

Hedley Morgan, Frank Kibblewhite and a number of other booksellers now have an extensive range of books by and about the Powys family and their circle, including many fine first editions and other scarce titles, on sale at the Words Etcetera bookshop at 2, Cornhill, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1BA. Tel: 01305 251919.

Carl Hanser Verlag, acclaimed by many as Germany's finest publisher of contemporary fiction, is launching its new translation of *A Glastonbury Romance* by Klaus Pemsel at this year's Frankfurt Bookfair. In conjunction with this, they have published a brochure, *Bogen 42: John Cowper Powys*, containing an essay by Elmar Schenkel and passages from Powys's Preface to the 1955 edition, published by Macdonald, translated by Pemsel. The publisher may be contacted at the following address: Carl Hanser Verlag, Kolberger Str. 22, 81679 München.

Elmar Schenkel has also edited a special John Cowper Powys issue of the journal *Akzente*, to be published to coincide with the new translation of *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Elstree Books (of 12 West View Gardens, Elstree, Herts WD6 3DD. Tel: 0181 953 2999) have recently published a catalogue of 77 items by and about the Powys family and their circle.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has published a new, annotated edition of A. R. Powys's standard work, *Repair of Ancient Buildings* (see the note opposite). This is offered at a special price to members of The Powys Society and may be ordered using the form enclosed with this *Newsletter*.

Arbor Vitae Press has recently published *Chedworth and Other Sites*, a collection

of poems by Annabel Thomas, edited by Powys Society member Jonathan Wood. The poems explore the Gloucestershire landscape with a profound awareness of the interplay between past and present and are illustrated by the author. The edition consists of 125 copies, the first 26 of which are signed and lettered by the poet, the remaining copies being numbered by the editor. Perfect bound in cream card covers, the book is available at £6.99 (signed) and £4.99 (numbered) from Arbor Vitae Press, BM Spellbound, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques should be made payable to J. M. Wood.

Paul Roberts

Repair of Ancient Buildings

The remarkable thing about A. R. Powys's *Repair of Ancient Buildings* is that, in spite of now being sixty-six years old, it is, with one important exception, still regarded as relevant and up-to-date advice by those who follow the precepts of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, of which ARP was Secretary from 1911 till his death in 1936. (The exception is the recommended treatment of wall-paintings which is now recognised to have been seriously mistaken.)

Repair of Ancient Buildings, originally published as a series of articles, was first published in book form in 1929 by J. M. Dent & Sons. Being scarce and much sought after, and fetching high prices, it has been reprinted twice by the SPAB. The first reprint in 1981 was produced under my direction, and incorporated three additional pages of notes on the text and sixteen of modern appendices prepared by the Society's Technical Adviser, Mrs Adela Wright. The present new edition of 1995 is without the appendices but has five pages of notes, including the warning about wall-painting already referred to. The original text and illustrations were retained in both reprints.

The first edition was widely reviewed and highly praised. The reprint of 1981 has sold well also, but you might find it interesting to look at the review of it in *The Powys Review* 10 (pages 67–72). The reviewer, John Thomas, a professional librarian, was not so thrilled, although his review was full of learning; he felt that there were other more modern texts which were more relevant to today, thus missing the essence of Powys's book, which is the *approach* and *frame of mind* which must inform the work of repair.

A leaflet for the book is enclosed with this *Newsletter*, with a special offer for members. A copy of the new edition has been presented to the Society for its collection in the Dorset County Museum.

Stephen Powys Marks

A Montacute Weekend

1st–2nd July 1995

If we are rash enough to go into therapy it is our childhood that receives the greatest attention and so when we study our chosen gurus we look at the emotional and physical landscapes of their formative years.

John Cowper was already into his teens (did they have such things in those days?) when the Revd Charles became vicar of Montacute. The family had been introduced to Wessex in 1879 when father became a curate in Dorchester. It was to Montacute that John and Littleton made those epic Sunday runs from Sherborne – ten miles each way. From 1879 until the end of the Great War Montacute was the epicentre of the Powys Family. What can a visit in 1995 tell us?

We met at the Phelips' Arms on Saturday at lunch time. (My first lesson – another Po-iss word, 'Fee-lips', not Felips.) Numbers throughout the weekend hovered about twenty and newer members of the Society looked around for



The Montacute weekenders shown in the churchyard, with the gravestone of the Revd Charles Francis Powys and Mary Cowper Powys on the left.

familiar faces – happily we found a warm welcome from John and Eve Batten and there were others from the Weymouth weekend last year. Notable were John Cornelius, who is a wealth of information about the area, and Isobel Powys Marks, who was able to provide unique vignettes of the family.

We started in the Borough, Montacute, at A. R. Powys's fountain – remodelled by the US Army during the last war.* Next the church and churchyard with more of the splendidly chosen readings. The weather was glorious. Next call was Wash Lane where we were introduced to one of the original stones of *Wood and Stone*. This was much weathered but clearly recognisable.

Next stop was the Vicarage garden where we read and speculated on the precise location of the Mabelulu (against a wall and beside the kitchen garden) [see the back cover]. We then took the path through the fields via Montacute House and then drove to East Stoke church with its fascinating early tympanum.

A good number had dinner at the Phelps' Arms and afterwards joined the Battens at their enchanting Keeper's Cottage. There was much Powys talk and we heard a recording of George Steiner's introduction to the first Powys Conference in Oxford in 1972; there were at least two people with us who were there on the night.

Morine Krissdóttir talked of the diaries she has been editing. *Petrushka and the Dancer* must be one of our best reads of 1995: poignant, penetrating, hilarious and crass. 'The Enema' is a constant presence, like a foghorn or a Wagnerian *leitmotif*.

Sunday dawned not so fair but we were still able to walk round Ham Hill and I have a piece of Ham Stone on my table. It is difficult, now, to imagine the hill a hundred years ago when it was alive with miners, masons, malcontents and preachers. Only the badgers remain in the sand which they love.

We had a splendid lunch at Keeper's Cottage and then crashed (some literally) down the hill to Pitt Pond, the pride and joy of Jack Parker who, with a band of helpers, has spent enormous energies on restoring a Victorian landscape. We saw one of the crayfish (freshwater lobsters) which threaten the banks, and learned how the pond is managed, how the silt is trapped and removed – continuing efforts without which the pond would disappear.

It was a most interesting and enjoyable weekend for which many thanks to John and Eve Batten who did so much. Also, as novice Powysites, thanks to those who shared their knowledge and insights. For us a piece of Powys landscape is now fitted in place.

Paul & Susie Dye

** The fountain, with its drinking trough, has since been thoroughly restored in accordance with photographic evidence. I have looked at the gravestone of CFP and MCP very recently with its very restrained classical elements and wonder if A. R. Powys was involved in its design; it is certainly worth investigating. SPM*

Powys at the Cheltenham Festival

At the Cheltenham Festival on 11th October 1995, an appreciative audience heard a moving reading of 'A Forging of Fire: the Letters of John Cowper Powys and Frances Gregg'.

These letters were first read by Micheline Patton and Oliver Wilkinson at the Powys Society Conference in 1992, but this second reading was subtly different and even more satisfying. Directed and introduced by Christopher Wilkinson, the two actors read more slowly and with a kind of inevitability that comes with a deep understanding of the characters involved.

Oliver always reads with discriminating variation and delicate gradations. This night it was as if the words were not being read, but rather, remembered from a long-ago world. Micheline Patton has been having some difficulty with her voice and I wondered for the first few minutes if she would be heard. But the audience responded to this soft but authoritative reading by giving what is perhaps the highest compliment it can give an actor: the theatre became absolutely silent. The effect was as if Frances herself – worn-out, but never giving up – were speaking across the void of silence to the man she never stopped loving; who never stopped loving her: 'Our hands never let go.'

Afterwards on the cosy bar of the Playhouse Theatre friends and admirers met to pay tribute to a memorable performance and two magnificent actors.

TCM

A Powys Reference Project

The establishing of the Powys Society Collection at the Dorset County Museum provides the opportunity to centralise both material by the Powyses and material about them. A listing of all known published material relating to the public reputation of the Powyses is to be held in the Collection, with a view to publication both on paper and on disc, making such material more widely known than at present. The extent and variety of such writings also allows the opportunity to counter the perception that the Powyses are somehow peripheral to the literary mainstream, maintained as a sort of backwater cult by crankish admirers. So many of the Powyses' contemporaries – authors as varied as Theodore Dreiser, E. E. Cummings and Edna St Vincent Millay – have received lengthy published treatment of their influence and reputation that the lack of such an up-to-date reference source for the Powyses acts as a sort of self-perpetuating barrier to the proper appreciation of their role in the creative milieu.

The Committee of the Society has invited me to co-ordinate the collecting of such material, and I urge anyone knowing of relevant material to contact me. Any

published information relating to any aspect of the Powyses' reputation is of interest: newspaper notices, literary histories, poems, chapter epigraphs, acknowledgements of any sort – all are welcome. A particularly fruitful source is published selections of letters: see collections by Patrick White and by Malcolm Lowry for recent examples.

A blank information sheet is provided and can be copied by interested members; a less formal gathering of information is equally welcome. The important thing is to have as comprehensive a reckoning as possible in time for the opening of the Museum's Literary Gallery in 1997.

Please send details of any relevant publications to Robin Patterson:

2434 Applewood Drive, Oakville, Ontario, Canada L6L 1V9

Robin Patterson

Letters to the Editor from Neil Lee

Much has been written in recent *Newsletters* about the memorial stone to Llewelyn Powys which stands on Chaldon Down overlooking the English Channel, but some intriguing questions remain unanswered in these articles and in my correspondence with other members I have discovered that I am not alone in seeking out some answers. Neither am I the only one who feels that in some way I have been spiritually 'duped' – by lack of information. I write in the hope that someone may be able to answer my query satisfactorily. It concerns the removal of the stone from its original location.

Two years ago, as a new member of The Powys Society I made my first (and to date, only) pilgrimage down to Chydyok and to 'Llewelyn's Stone', initially to pay my respects to the memory of a man I admired more than any other. The 700 mile round trip was made at great expense, but I returned satisfied having uttered my pagan prayer at the 'graveside' (or so I believed) of my literary and philosophical hero. When I later discovered that the stone had been removed from its original location, whilst the ashes had not, I somehow felt cheated. Since then I have corresponded with a number of our members who have echoed my sentiments and this has prompted me to air them in the pages of our *Newsletter* which provides an open forum for debate amongst the membership.

Dorset Essays was one of the first Powys books which came into my possession, and upon seeing the photograph of Elizabeth Muntz carving the stone 'marking the place where the ashes of Llewelyn Powys are buried', I decided that I must visit the place. Later I learned from back issues of the *Newsletter* that the stone had been moved. In the November 1992 issue Paul French writes, 'the stone no longer shows the exact spot where his ashes are buried' – and even worse – 'the

main right of way, the 3000 year old ancient British track which Llewelyn features in his essay 'Gypsies' (*Dorset Essays*) has been ploughed'. Later in the July 1994 *Newsletter* Paul French writes that the original location of the stone 'was fifteen or twenty yards further west and somewhat more forward'. This would tally with Jack Rushby's description of the original location. The removal of the stone presents, to my mind, a number of problems. First, if the stone has been removed, and the ashes have not, then what is there to indicate where Llewelyn's ashes lie? This would also mean that one of the beloved members of the Powys family lies in an unmarked grave. How could this possibly be allowed to happen?

I use the word 'grave' advisedly because that is exactly what it is; we can talk about a 'memorial' stone and about a simple metal box containing Llewelyn's 'ashes' as much as we like, but the fact remains that this is a headstone which marked the grave of Llewelyn Powys.

I have long felt that this is important and recent research has shown why. Llewelyn himself writes in *The Cradle of God* when commenting on the words of Hezekiah which appear on the stone, 'What noble words to be placed over a man's grave.' etc. Also in *The Cry of a Gull*, Alyse Gregory described her frequent visits to the site after Llewelyn's death, whilst she was still living at Chydyok, and she refers always to visiting 'Llewelyn's grave' and this is obviously how she saw it; not simply as a 'memorial stone', not only a box of ashes, but 'Llewelyn's grave'. I have a vague feeling of unease which suggests to me that until the memorial 'headstone' and the ashes are re-united, then Llewelyn Powys' grave will remain desecrated. A bit strong perhaps, but nevertheless that is my feeling. It would be helpful to those who share my concern, (and I know from my correspondence that there are a few) and especially for new members, if someone could answer the questions of why the stone was moved, who moved it, and upon whose authority? Or perhaps an even simpler question would be 'Why do the mortal remains of someone whom we love and admire so much lie in an unmarked grave?'

Neil Lee

Reviews

Angus Wilson: A Biography, by Margaret Drabble.

London: Secker & Warburg, 1995. 670pp. ISBN 0 436 20038 4. £20.00.

Angus Wilson was the Society's first President, as befitted one who had for so long been an outspoken champion of the novels of John Cowper Powys. In accepting the office he was to lend lustre to it in its early days; while his attendance at the first conference in 1972 and at Buxton four years later were unforgettably to

enliven those occasions with his enthusiasm, good humour and total want of 'side'. Margaret Drabble not only makes mention of the Society in this elaborate and scrupulous biography but also includes a photograph from the Cambridge gathering, in which more than one familiar figure can be seen.

Wilson was himself an outstanding novelist, and his biographer is critically astute as to the nature of his genius and the way in which, like Powys, he drew upon family background (a most eccentric one in his case) and upon his imaginative compulsions and obsessions. But what she also makes clear is the virtual miracle of his novels and biographies being written at all; for following his initial success he resigned from his post at the British Museum and set out to earn his living as a full-time writer. This involved him in a truly fearsome round of university teaching, reviewing, literary conferences and lectures – the latter on a scale to suggest comparison with John Cowper's own peripatetic feats. It is hard not to feel, in the end, that the process swallowed him: his final novel appears to be the product of will-power and contrivance rather than of the seething energy that marked its seven predecessors.

In this connection the role of John Cowper Powys in Wilson's life is characterised by a certain irony. Concerning the latter's visit to Blaenau-Ffestiniog in 1962, Drabble writes:

It was a significant encounter. Powys represented *par excellence* the lonely road. He had accepted no compromise, from the world, from publishers, from their readers. He had remained himself.

The case is over-stated, as the sorry tale of *Maiden Castle* and of *Porius* shows; but none the less here was an ideal integrity which, however, may well have exacted a self-defeating price. As Drabble comments, 'the road of excess does not always lead to the palace of wisdom.'

In due course Wilson himself was to withdraw from the world, to St Remy in Provence, partly for financial reasons and partly out of revulsion from the society that both sustained and was reflected by the Thatcher government. And now he too was to know the pains of declining readership and critical neglect. His long final illness was a deeply sad ending to such a gregarious, generously expended life; yet it was eased, as that life itself had been, by his devoted partner Tony Garrett, whose drily humorous companionship sustained the ebullient writer throughout his exacting literary career. Margaret Drabble deals most sympathetically with their relationship: her close friendship with them both ensures that she writes with understanding and is not intrusive. Less fortunately, this intimate knowledge of their circle may account for the excessive attention paid to their social life; one wearies of the profusion of guest lists, appointments and dinner menus. Like so many contemporary biographies, this one is far too detailed and thus far too long; card-indexes and computers may be to blame. (One recalls with ever increasing gratitude and admiration Sylvia Townsend Warner's beautifully judged selectiveness in her life of T. H. White.) None the less

Angus Wilson: A Biography repays its readers. It is humane and wise and it gives one a graphic, if at times an unintentionally minatory, account of the literary history of the time. In placing John Cowper Powys in the context of a later age than his own it should provide Wilson's successors as his champion with food for thought – and not all of that of a consoling kind.

Glen Cavaliero

Windows on Modernism : Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson
edited by Dr Gloria Fromm.

Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995. 696pp. £58.50.

This remarkable collection of letters stands as a dual memorial: to the novelist Dorothy M. Richardson who wrote them, and to the scholar Gloria G. Fromm who patiently and lovingly collected and edited them – sadly, a task that her early death left just short of completion. The volume serves also as a tribute to the devotion of Harold Fromm, Gloria's husband, who finished her work and saw it through to publication, helped by fellow scholars and friends whose support is acknowledged in his graceful Prefatory Note.

Gloria Fromm's General Introduction argues the case for the place in literary history of *Pilgrimage*, that unique series of books that Richardson wrote as 'chapters' of a single novel. The range of Fromm's scholarship will not surprise any reader of her biography of Richardson (1977, re-issued 1995), nor will her sensitivity and perception. What will especially interest Powysians is the emphasis, given its proper weight in this collection, that Richardson placed on John Cowper Powys's influence over her work and thought, once he had 'edged his way into [her] life', in 1929.

Richardson was then 56 years old, far into her long experience, shared with the artist Alan Odle, of life on the edge of poverty; of virtual dependence on the generosity of friends to supplement the barely livable income brought in through reluctant advances from publishers unconvinced that she might eventually succeed, the writing of journalistic pot-boilers, translations, hackwork editing and so on; of continual moving from one small living-space to another, in London or Cornwall, in search of relief for Odle's asthma: in short, of frustration and deprivation. In the face of such circumstances Richardson maintained a remarkable buoyancy of spirit, grounded in her deep commitment to life and literature. As to the former, at one level the letters make very clear how much she owed for practical assistance to the wealthy and generous Bryher, the recipient of more of these letters than anyone else; and Bryher's lover, H. D., known to Powysians not only as a poet, but as a lover of Frances Gregg, close to the Powys circle.

More importantly, the letters reveal on almost every page Richardson's zest for both the 'natural' world and the 'social' world about her, and in the possible

aptness of language in relation to them, even in times of stress. 'We live more or less disabled by perpetual cold wind, cold rain, and cold thunderstorms', she told Bryher, just after 'feasting' on a '*splendiferous* cargo of envelopes' sent her by H. D. 'I don't know when my congealing book will be ... finished.' That zestful spirit could be silenced only by genuine catastrophe. Having, like the rest of the world, watched the coming of World War II to the point of its outbreak, she began a letter, 'Dears, John and Phyllis, The rest would appear to be silence. For there are no words for the evil let loose.'

Yet it is her deep, sensitive love of literature itself that more than anything else fills these letters. She *cared* about good writing, trusted her judgements, understood her tastes. In 1922 she thanked Odle's friend Henry Maitland for a poem he had sent her and lectured him briefly on 'the very thing [in poets] that upsets me, their complaints, their restlessness and impatience.' Yet her note is one of encouragement, not the reverse. She could be moved to cheer (H. D., for example), or to lament. So in August 1924 she began a short letter to Bryher, 'Fifty times [a] day I take myself by the shoulders & say Conrad is *dead* and I can't or won't take it in;' and ended, 'But – Conrad is dead. Joseph Conrad, is *dead*.'

Powysians will observe with delight how the entry of John Cowper Powys into Richardson's immediate literary landscape in 1929 brought enlargement of scope and fresh, lasting excitement. Here Gloria Fromm has done the reader the favour of including some of Powys's letters to Richardson, a device that, together with dozens of references to Powys that appear in many of her letters from 1929 onwards, makes clear how important this friendship quickly became. For the two had not only rich knowledge of several literatures, but full willingness to explore, discuss, and argue over their differences as well as their shared likings, with great good-humoured energy.

If the reader finds any reason for regret in connection with this volume, it must surely concern the dearth of letters (35 in number) from the years 1901 to 1920. This is no fault of the editor's – and yet those two decades included the period of Richardson's close relationship (and for a time sexual involvement) with H. G. Wells and her friendship with his wife; of her membership in the Fabian Society where, whatever else it involved, she must have seen something of Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, who in 1944 were, with Wells, to constitute the 'amazing trio of widowers' referred to in a letter to Powys; of her early friendship with Odle, leading to their marriage; the period of the first World War; and so on. Having recently edited the correspondence of Wells and Shaw, I understand the editor's problem. I can only applaud her resolving it by means of those first useful, succinct accounts with which she prefaced the sections into which she so judiciously organized the letters.

J. Percy Smith

The Mystic Leeway by Frances Gregg, edited by Ben Jones,
with An Account of Frances Gregg by Oliver Wilkinson.

Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995. 194pp. ISBN 0 88629 250 6. £17.50.

One of the most remarkable qualities of Frances Gregg was her ability to retrieve a sense of her own identity against the efforts of almost everyone she knew. Perhaps trained from birth in the wisdom of acquiescence by the hysterical tyranny of her mother, she became, was forced and allowed herself to become, the means by which the identities of others were established, what John Cowper Powys might have called, in another context, the 'Not I' which revealed the 'I' of, among others, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, Louis Wilkinson and John Cowper Powys. For Pound she became the little disciple, cultivated because it was necessary to have someone to dazzle; for H. D., the girl whose woollen underwear highlighted the bohemian chic of her lover; for Louis Wilkinson, an unsuccessful English wife and an unacknowledged collaborator; for John Cowper Powys, the Cathy to his Heathcliff, the Sadista of his erotic phantasies and, somewhere between the two, Lucrezia to his Lorenzo – 'Lucrezia, in a hired costume – hired by Jack without reference to the structure of his Lucrezia.' She had earlier appeared on the stage as Pygmalion but the performance was not a success, for she had been rehearsing Galatea all her life.

In a very real sense, Frances Gregg epitomised that sinking into the inanimate, that effacement of self which characterised the mature philosophy of John Cowper Powys. Yet just as, behind Powys's philosophy, lay a bed-rock of 'proud humility', so, behind Frances Gregg's submission to the needs of others, there lay the foundation of her fiercely intelligent, proudly defiant self.

Towards the beginning of *The Mystic Leeway*, Frances Gregg writes:

I do not know ... what I seek, nor towards what bourn I am eternally pressing. I do not know. Nor do I know who it is who weeps darkly within me, longing for its "home".

The book is itself a 'mystic leeway', a hard-won space between confusion and understanding, a means both of coming to know herself and of asserting that selfhood. It is both tragic and strangely fitting that, having finished the book and made sure the manuscript was safe, she should walk out into the night and to her death in the Plymouth blitz. *The Mystic Leeway* is the testament of her search for the "home" of identity.

And yet – and yet – even now we find it hard to speak the name Frances Gregg without adding 'Louis Wilkinson's wife' or 'John Cowper's first great love': she still exists by virtue of her companions. And there is no doubt that, so far as the world at large is concerned, her companions are (or have been) of more interest. *The Mystic Leeway* somehow manages to redress the balance. Full of fascinating anecdotes of Pound and Powys and Yeats and H. D. as it is, Frances Gregg herself inhabits the book, no longer merely the 'Not I', but now both 'I' and 'Eye', for

here her 'otherness', her lack of belonging (as a profound sceptic in the midst of the Modernist movement, for example), provide a new perspective through which to view these familiar figures. As such, the book will undoubtedly become both an indispensable source of biographical material and, so much more importantly, a source of enlightenment, a sharing of the joy of existence.

There were two people with whom Frances could be Frances; two who did not seek to recreate her; two whom she loved and trusted beyond question. They were her children: Betty, with whom she died, and Oliver. Writing of the mass service at which Frances Gregg was buried, Oliver Wilkinson laments that he had brought no flowers. Flowers he has brought now, and more, with his tireless work to establish his mother's reputation, his lectures, his articles, editing the correspondence with Powys, and now his marvellous introduction to this book.

A handsomely produced paperback edition, *The Mystic Leeway* has been edited with great skill and sensitivity by Ben Jones, who provides a penetrating analysis of Frances Gregg's place in the social, cultural and literary context of her time. This is a fine book which deserves to be widely read.

Paul Roberts

The Mystic Leeway Ben Jones most kindly brought along several copies to the Conference in August. Most were sold, but we still have 4 copies for sale at £16, including post and packing.

Please telephone Stephen Powys Marks (01761 435134) to order a copy.

First come, first served!

Regional Groups and Local Activities

For some time now the Committee has been concerned that whilst members are spread far and wide around the world as well as throughout Britain, Society activities are largely concentrated in the Wessex area. There was also a very positive response to the questions on introducing more local activities in the recent membership survey, with 68% of the 139 members responding indicating interest in being involved, and 28 members offering to help organise local activities. A significant number of those responding also expressed a general wish to have more contact with other members. So the Committee has now asked me to help try and establish some local groups or networks.

As a first stage, I shall shortly be writing to everyone who offered to help organise local events to see if they are still willing to be involved and to seek ideas for possible activities. Unfortunately, not all those responding to the question-

naire gave their names, so if you are interested in being involved, and have not been contacted by me in the next week or so, please get in touch at the address below. I shall also be interested to have **any** suggestions from **any** members of possible activities or events that they would like to see organised.

The most popular events in Wessex have tended to be walks around localities from the books, together with appropriate readings, such as the recent walk to Llewelyn's memorial stone above Chydyok to celebrate his birthday; more focused events such as the annual Montacute Lecture; or more general discussions on particular topics of local interest. Other possibilities include short papers on individual books or themes, followed by discussion; or simply social events just to get to know other members of the Society, which might also include readings of particular favourite passages, or discussion of items of general interest such as copies of reviews, letters, diaries, etc. (of which everyone in the Society with the exception of me seems to have an endless supply!)

This would also be a tremendous opportunity to generate wider interest in the Society and in the Powys family more generally, perhaps by holding open meetings in local libraries, museums or other such venues, which could also include small exhibitions of books or other items of interest. Regrettably, the Society cannot subsidise or underwrite such events financially, so it will be important to minimise costs as much as possible, or to ask for contributions from participants. But I will be pleased to discuss any proposals for particular events, to give what advice and assistance I can on organisation, and to participate on behalf of the Committee. Other members of the Committee will also do everything possible to assist and support any local events. I will also prepare geographic lists of members, and assist with publicising events.

To be effective, local activities must be related to the particular interests and enthusiasm of individual local members and areas. It took me a good long time to begin to get involved in Society activities myself, and so I was slow to appreciate the richness and variety of the knowledge and experience of members, but this seems another really good opportunity to extend that knowledge and enthusiasm through local networks and wider Society activities.

I do hope you will want to help increase the influence of the Society by participating and supporting local activities, and I look forward to hearing from you with suggestions and proposals. I can assure you that I will be interested in them all, however novel or unusual they might be! So do write!

Chris Gostick
Old School House, George Green Road, George Green,
Wexham, Buckinghamshire SL3 6BJ
Telephone: 0175 357 8632

Chris Gostick

To Richard Heron Ward

The following eleven letters from John Cowper Powys to Richard Heron Ward have been transcribed for the *Newsletter* by Robin Patterson from originals in his own collection. Letters 1-7 were sent from 38 High East Street, Dorchester, and Letters 8-11 from 'Bodlondeb', 7 Cae Coed, Corwen. The letters are printed exactly as they were written, but where a word of explanation is essential it has been added in square brackets.

By the time he began work on *The Powys Brothers* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London, 1935) the twenty-five year old Ward had already published three novels, *The Compelled Hero*, *The Spring Term is Over* and *The Progress to the Lake*, as well as a play, *An Experiment in Fear*. A fourth novel, *The Sun Shall Rise*, also appeared in 1935.

Although the letters contain much of interest to our members, attention will undoubtedly focus on John Cowper's discussion of Ward's treatment of Theodore Powys. Ward's chapter on T. F. Powys begins:

'But the really great philosopher, and perhaps the greatest of all,' said Theodore Powys ..., 'the really great philosopher is Freud.' There was something of bathos in this statement. One had expected better things of T. F. Powys, ...

John Cowper gently tried to suggest that Theodore had been speaking ironically, while Littleton Powys more bluntly stated in *The Joy of It* (republished by The Powys Society in 1993) that Theodore had been in 'one of his moods'. Whatever the truth of the matter, several members of the family clearly felt that Ward had been deliberately led astray in his evaluation of T. F. Powys, a view with which Ward himself later came to agree.

We are grateful to Robin Patterson for his work in making these important letters available.

PR

Letter One

Oct 9th 1934

Dear Heron Ward

What an enthrallingly interesting letter this is of yours! Aye! but I am so pleased at your appreciation of my book [*Autobiography*] & it gives me much great & peculiar satisfaction to note our really most significant points of Resemblance!

As to our parents, you know, there is, even there, a most singular resemblance. My outward peculiarities & my physical peculiarities and my ways are like those of my Father — but my "soul" is like that of my Mother! Twas to avoid hurting any woman's feelings that I deliberately omitted all women except street-girls and to make a "clean sweep", so to say, I left out not only my mother but my sisters, all

of whom are remarkable characters. But, quite apart from this, my mother's posthumous wishes and living character would have prevented my saying a word about her — not because of my exterior cult for my Father, but because of her own almost maniacal dislike of publicity. My attitude to my Father is and was very largely her attitude. It is her soul in me that makes a cult of him — just as it is her soul in me that renders me dumb about her, dumb with exactly the same sort of almost savage reticence that she always displayed about herself.

I can write freely of my Father just as she would speak of him to me & to others as of a sturdy deep-rooted tree of sound wood & powerful growth and open to the air, for all his curious proud reserves! But her own attitude to publicity, even of the most cautious kind, was a very different thing from his calm reserve & pride. It was a dangerous and almost religious passion, and though this passion of "sacred malice" has broken loose in me over what I reveal of my own Dionysian & Maenad-like, or Tieresias-like, zany-isms, a veritable navel-string of sacred repression will I suppose forever prevent me from saying a word in public print about her not because of remoteness from her, but because of an indissoluble identity with her! You see I have dedicated the book to her as if she were still alive!

Most interested was I, my dear Heron Ward, in what you say about eating chocolate! I have never gone as far as you in my reactions against greediness (tho' I have been quite as bad, pardie!, in my day) but I entirely agree that its quite impossible to feel the same about drink. I expect because drink does, after all, have a powerful mental effect.

I do congratulate you on your prospect of getting married next Spring. I think it is most wise (quite apart from the pleasure!) to start early upon this subtlet & most complicated of all arts — the art of successfully sharing bed & board with a woman! No, its clear, my friend, that you are not a sadist! We all have, especially in youth, bursts of that tendency, but to be a sadist by nature — I mean for your deepest erotic thrill to be a sadistic one — the thing has to be more in one's head & in one's nerves than in your case.

But I was simply thrilled by your letter wh only confirmed my primary impression of you. I recognized your genius & wd hold to that impression were you never to write a line! So we are a fair pair as they say!

yrs most faithfully & sincerely

John C Powys

Letter Two

Private & Confidential.

Nov 10 1934

Dear Heron Ward

Here am I and Miss Playter established snugly & cosily over a little Grocer's Shop — like Mr Pollard's at Southwick! — in "Durnovaria". Yes it will be lovely to

see you when you've done your new book — a good sale to the present current one! — and the New Year comes.

We've no spare room; but it would be nice for you at the Antelope near by or if you were in a cottage at East Chaldon you could come over twice a week by the Carrier. But the Antelope wd please you I know & Miss Playter wd love to give you breakfast & tea with us I know too. So no doubt it'll work out — but it would do you ever so much good physically to spend a few weeks on those East Chaldon Downs — possibly "Down Barn" itself might be put at your disposal — but we'll see later.

I enclose a letter of introduction to you as a new author for Mr Schuster wh you might send with your MSS [probably *The Sun Shall Rise*]. The address is Simon & Schuster, Publishers, 386 Fourth Ave, New York City but they publish very little fiction you know & I tell you frankly its a question whether your so intensely sensitized & passionately serious work will suit the modern American taste which just now is hard cynical metallic and Hemingwayed and Faulknered ("raped" & "buggered" you might almost say! —) to a veritable technique of cut-thrust-hit & run! But you never know! Its all a gamble. Good luck to your new book & fine sale to the current one.

yrs most cordially

John C. Powys

Letter Three

Dec 5 1934

My dear Heron Ward

I confess I'm a bit scared at the suggestion you make of having Dorchester as your base of operations.

I've found it very difficult to get started in my work again after returning to England and now I'm just beginning to get into the swing of a new book for S&S entitled the "Art of Happiness" wh I'm longing to get off my hands so as to begin a Romance with Dorchester as a background. They want this little book by the Spring & my only hope is to take advantage of this present impulse to work hard & just do nothing else till I've got the thing done.

In any case I do feel it wd be a mistake to associate myself at all closely with your work since it includes my brothers as well as myself and I feel it wd be wrong to associate myself & my own views with what you say about them. Better I think let your own inspiration be free to play about us all in your own independent manner, using our books rather than any details from our individual life.

At any rate I wd myself just because my brothers are involved be reluctant to follow what you write at all closely though I would be ready to offer for what it may be worth my most serious critical judgment with regard to your general method if I could get a line on that as no doubt I could from the first two chapters. I'd be

glad to see you like I did last summer, in some week-end after you've finished your novel but I'm afraid I really must harden my heart and dig myself in now if I'm to get on with my work; and its becoming a terribly serious necessity with me, as I am sure no one could understand better than you, who are a writer yourself, and know what it feels like when you are overpowered by correspondence & other temptations & distractions.

I was so particularly pleased & delighted to receive your most exciting news about you & your lady's plans for the future. I am sure, my dear Heron Ward, I wish you both from my heart the deepest happiness in that "sinister" place you've both set your affections upon! I am sorry about this other matter but you do know, don't you, that it isn't churlishness on my part but really desperate necessity. Besides I do feel rather strongly that it isn't information from any of our lips that you want but a free & independent critical survey of our actual published writings, wh in Llewelyn's and my case have already included a good deal of semi-biographical matter! And it is not for me & would not be for me, to say anything to you about Theodore beyond what he has chosen to express indirectly in his art.

Well, I'll be relieved to hear from you that my really ferociously necessary "Self-Denying Ordinance" as Cromwell wd say doesn't strike you as too savage or selfish!

Wishing you all good luck with your present work

yrs as heretofore, with Miss Playter's cordial remembrances too,

John Cowper Powys

Letter Four

Dec 12 1934

My dear Heron Ward

What a kind & reassuring letter this is from you! You are good to take me with all my weakness & hypochondriacal protective-colourings as you do.

Miss Playter & I both hope & trust you'll be able to put up for a night here in Dorchester after the New Year & that you'll let us give you your lunch & tea on that occasion & then you & I can have a walk together & some real conversation over the fire in our flat.

With such direct-minded people as you & I a lot can be gained of understanding & exchange of ideas in a very brief time.

So let us have a day with you here & then we can discuss your general critical plans. Well! So much for our meetings; but now I have to deliver to you & to your betrothed a very particular message from Phyllis Playter (who is a highly-strung Psychical person in such matters) and it is to beg you two not to start (and she says this most strongly) your life together in a place where a thing like that has happened. She says that two people just married are in a defenceless state owing to the collision of two worlds in Space because of the shattering effect on the

separate crystal-spheres of both the two identities. When the two come together their former separate worlds crack & normal barriers are broken down — so that two people who've just come together for the 1st time ought to have a favourable psychic background — For the main purpose of your rapport is not the neurotic altruistic one of exorcizing sinister psychic "auras" or of purifying sinister places of their air-imprints left by tragic events! It was chance that put this attractive Sinister spot in your way, but it is also chance that this old Paral-cesus & his psychic "daughter" should hear of it & register their occult protest!

Good luck anyway!

yrs as heretofore

J.C.P.

Letter Five

Jan 28 1935

Dear Heron Ward

I haven't had a line from you since I last wrote and sent you — & I trust you did not regard it as presumptuous — Miss Playter's message imploring you (as a psychic person, tho' no occult authority) not to risk your Vita Nuova in a sinister "aura"! Now this morning I have had two letters wh concern you & the contents of wh I must hasten to communicate. One from Mr Fadiman of S&S praising your work but rejecting the book. This one I enclose & you can tear it up — as I began to do myself as you see! — But one too from our old friend Louis Wilkinson (or Marlow) author of "Swan's Milk" saying that his publishers (Mr Rushton in fact of Chapman & Hall) want him to write a study literary and biographical of the Powys family — "especially", Mr Rushton writes, "if it is written by one of your reputation and knowledge of the family." And Louis writes now to me that he has replied that the idea does appeal to him & he is writing to us three to learn how it appeals to us.

I am answering him that at Lane's request you have already undertaken this kind of book and as far as I know may have already gone some distance with it & that I feel as far as I am personally concerned you would "do" me admirably in such a work. The matter is altogether rather a delicate one as Louis is a much closer friend of Llewelyn than he is of me — though we are very friendly and he has been highly delighted with my Autobiography, of which he thinks a lot, more I fancy than of anything else I've written.

Theodore was at School with his Father in Suffolk and to Theodore he has had a lifelong devotion.

The matter is a difficult & touchy one because of the three of us being included. I am fairly certain — tho' I have not of course had time to hear — that both Theodore and Llewelyn will jump at the idea of their old friend writing about them. I am personally associated with yourself and with Lane but they are

intimately associated from their boyhood with Louis. On the other hand Mr Boswell, of Lane & Co, thought of this book before Mr Rushton of Chapman & Hall.

So there we are! Of course as far as I am concerned I'd say — as anyone naturally would — let us have both books and if you were tempted to do more than justice to me in it in comparison with the others, Louis (certainly before my "Autobiography", though he has liked this book awfully!) might be supposed to be likely to favour, to some degree, the others! It is therefore my own view that it would be excellent to have both books! But of course the Publishers may take a different line & feel that one family one book wd be enough! Well its not for me to interfere any way, since I am in the minority among three!

With best wishes from Miss P. & myself as ever —

yrs sincerely

I. C. Powys

Letter Six

Feb 8 1935

Dear Heron Ward

1000 thanks for your pleasant letter.

Yes, it wd be a capital plan if both books could be brought out as you say, you concentrating on the Elder & Louis on the Younger Brothers & both naturally bringing the other ones in as background & contrast! But again as you quickly observe we must let these Lords & Masters these Hard-Boiled Capitalists decide!

I am sending you at once (only its Phyllis Playter who has to tie these things up; for my wretched hands are in worse state than usual being terribly bothered with vicious Excema - wh makes it necessary to wear gloves to light the fires!) a copy of that Bibliography. The chap's name & address is Lloyd Emerson Siberell Box 83 Cincinnati Ohio U.S.A If you do bother to start a correspondence with this admirable young man you'll find him a character. He is a shrewd business man, in a Railway office, with an earnest passion for supporting LITERATURE — a shrewd intense idealistic person, but as guileless & as innocently "once-born", and as un-European, as you could make him! But I question whether, in essentials, you will be able to make use of him for your purposes. However! He's a decent chap & an honest one, though not as complicated as you & me!

Miss Playter and you and I will talk about the "Sinister" Cottage of the Yew Trees when we meet!

Listen R.H.W. Do try & come down to Dorchester this immediate next week — any day that suits you — you could get bed & breakfast at the Antelope & Miss P. will take you out to lunch at the Wessex Cafe where she does go daily herself & you and I will have a walk, together with "the Extremely Old" & come back here to tea at 5 o'clock. If you stayed there two nights, bed & breakfast — its eight

shillings per day I think so 'twould cost you 16/- without tips & we'll deal, as I say, with your lunch & tea on your full day in our town; & you won't want late dinner that day for we'll give you a good latish tea after our walk. Any day that suits you.

Good luck to you both & respects from us both

yrs as before

I.C.P.

Letter Seven

March 20 1935

Dear Heron Ward

Pardon my delay! but I've been led astray by the spring weather to go out to see Llewelyn in Weymouth where he is staying & Theodore at East Chaldon. Today its even more lovely outside but I must not leave my room today for any excuse! I'm so sorry this book is proving rather burdensome to you. I fancy every born novelist finds it a bit against the grain to turn to critical work. To "Visions & Revisions" I think "Suspended Judgements" should be added as it is a good deal more solid & mature. I would cut out the "Religion of a Sceptic" & put instead of it "The Complex Vision" a much more ambitious & interesting work. I'd be tempted to cut out "Rodmoor" since it is a "tour-de-force" dealing with East Anglia, a part of England much less familiar to me than Wessex. The three little volumes of poetry are "Wolf's Bane" published 1915 I think "Mandragora" published 1917 I'm pretty sure; & finally "Samphire" published somewhere about 1920 I fancy.

Of these I believe "Samphire" is a good deal the best; a smaller selection of poems & chosen more drastically. All of these were published in America & all are out of print! "The Art of Happiness" will be soon out in America, published by Simon & Schuster & later its to appear here published by Lane.

It will be nice to see you & your wife after you are married. I am sure this brings you from us both & to you both every sort of White Magic!

yrs, as heretofore — J.C.Powys.

Letter Eight

Aug 13th 1935

Dear Heron Ward

I am sure very few "novelists" of our time have such a gift for eloquent and penetrating criticism and interpretation as you display here!

Knowing you, as I do, personally, I knew that you were, mentally speaking, a DARK HORSE from whom endless surprises might always be expected but I confess I never expected such grand torrents of "dithyrambic analysis" as this work

contains. I do congratulate you on its rush of amazing power, so vibrant, so nervous, so plangent, & yet so subtle!

And I say this, & have to say it, quite apart from my concrete and detailed reactions to the various portions of the book.

I can detach myself sufficiently from the whole of its subject-matter, to be able to enjoy its eloquence & subtlety quite independently not only of your own "message", but of those, seen through yours, of us three!

In your article on myself I find plenty to blush over — anti-narcissist as I am! — but a great deal, too, to be very grateful for — and absolutely nothing to quarrel with.

Your strictures seem to me weighty, measured and formidable, and though of course I cannot at a breath accept them in the difficult & laborious sense of conscious reformation, such is the respect I have for your character & insight that I can assure you not the faintest spasm of obstinate or wilful closing of my mind to the possibility of such a development rises up within me! I would certainly hate to feel that I had ceased all mental growth and still more to feel that I had no longer the malleability of nature to be affected by sound and sympathetic criticism.

With regard to my brothers, Llewelyn of course is fully aware — sometimes more so even than I am! — of my difference of outlook — the moon against the sun! — from his, and we shall all have to wait for some Barrister of this Divergence less temperamentally biased on my side than you are (perhaps biased on the other side!) to sway the jury's verdict round!

On such a fundamental difference, old as human consciousness itself, the final "Summing Up" wd have, I fear to be uttered by some out-of-the-world Judge as much beyond his Physics as my Metaphysics!

But with regard to Theodore I feel differently. Here I must confess I cannot quite follow you, though Theodore is such a difficult writer to cope with, even for anyone who knows him as I do, that it is hard for me to make clear where I differ from you.

I think it lies though in the most imponderable of all things, in emphasis.

I think for instance you over-emphasize his remark about Freud.

So many intangible psychic airs blowing criss-cross between the wind's quarter of that day and the particular curve or hollow in the convoluted shell of Theodore's nature could account for it — and on the other different occasion too! — What I think I feel about this is — that with a character as involved & simple-subtle as Theodore's you have to be on the look out for various sensitive-tremors at any contact and for various levels of irony at every contact that make it necessary to suspend each particular impression over a longish space of time.

I do think in many respects your analysis of Theodore's attitude to God is very remarkable — very much so indeed — and I think you go far into very deep waters — like a fish at the bottom of the sea with a phosphorus-lantern in his head

or tail — Theodore wd say in his tail! — in fact I think this analysis is a unique piece of criticism — & I wouldn't be totally surprised if it didn't rather please Theodore than the reverse.

But my dear Heron Ward, though we may prefer the more explicit and (as far as I am concerned) the more simple & direct forms of message-bearing, I cannot help thinking that we ought to "stop, look & listen" as the notices on American Railways say, very carefully, ere we decide what the "messages" of "these artists" definitely are!

You & I may prefer prophets to artists — but what if God himself turned out, after all, to be more of an artist than a prophet?

In Theodore's case what I feel is that you have taken up all your space in discussing his "Freudian" message about God-the-Father and Sex and Death — whereas I would say that the real essence of Theodore's genius does not lie here at all.

What went ye out into the Wilderness to see? — a reed shaken by the wind? A Prophet — and "more than a Prophet".

What I would "submit", as the lawyers say, is this — that when we decry this "fuss about art" we are only thinking of self-conscious "Flaubertian" or "Oscar Wildish" art — not the art of Keats or of Shakespeare. Now I'm not going to try and make out that Theodore is Shakespeare any more than that I'm Dostoevsky or Llewelyn Lucretius-and-Montaigne Combined. But I do strongly feel that by extracting from the texts where they appear all Theodore's sayings about God — & interpreting them in terms of that casually-dropped (or even deliberately and wilfully dropped) remark about Freud — you tend to eliminate what I might call the beyond-reason reason and the beyond-message message and the beyond-prophecy prophecy of the true Artist ...

"Yea I say under [unto] you and more than a Prophet — for this is he" etc etc etc

Couldn't you say that in and out of Theodore's tragic & humorous tales (& quite apart from God) there flows like a lovely cool water-colour air an imponderable feeling of the country & feeling for country life that is unique in Literature? A feeling as much beyond description, however eloquent and magical, as an impulse from the below-reason or the above-reason in our soul is beyond all logic? And then — couldn't you say that he is an ultimate Sceptic like Shakespeare himself down at the very bottom? Couldn't you say that he plays with God and Death and Religion (these human traditions) because they are all we have at bottom to play with? Isn't your instance [insistence] — or rather your emphasis on Freud in Theodore like some critic's talk about Christ in Shakespeare or Mercy in Shakespeare or Gratitude in Shakespeare or the House of Tudor in Shakespeare? Mind you I'm not comparing T.F.P. with Shakespeare in any sense at all except in ultimate scepticism. But if he is only playing with God & Death & Religion and Sex because — poor old Devil — those are all that he's got to play

with — then isn't the important part of his work, the essence of his work, not God and "immortality" (of any kind) but his art? In other words oughtn't we to extract this same essence of his genius from the concrete details of his work — its humours & oddities its Hans Andersen fairy-goblin elements and all the inanimates therein, and the strange little daily objects to which he gives such curious relief — homely, mystical, unctuous, holy, porous to the unknown. You see what I have always felt most conscious of in Theodore is his uncanny & unique Genius, a Genius that is absolutely unlike any other that has ever been — in other words an original genius — As you say his style shows no influence but the Bible — Well! isn't that wonderful? And what emanates from his personality for me is the originality of his genius not art at all.

I do think he has the gifts of clever craftsmen — & it has always been weird to me that he should have these for they don't seem "like him" but I don't agree with you that its these in themselves that make "Mr Weston" & "Unclay" different books than "Mr Tasker": I think this is due to the fact that this "art & craft" of his has helped to release a lot of his originality that couldn't appear in "Mr Tasker" at all! Theodore is so original and so entirely unlike everybody else that I think the essence of his genius is not to be found in any particular opinion whether about Freud or God. I think these "opinions" depend often on wandering airs that are not germane to the main tides of his genius.

I think his genius breathes forth most completely from the "minute particular" in his work rather than from his general views on Freud or God & Religion all of which opinions I regard as "Shakespearean" in the shameless Shakespearean sense that below them all that he seriously feels and thinks and believes — is that he and everybody else is wrong and that nobody knows or ever will know! By reading Bunyan, Wesley, etc he has come to speak their speech but at the bottom of his mind it is all the Rabelaisian PERHAPS. And if nobody knows or ever can know the Truth, then (unless we feel as Llewelyn does) we must be pessimistical players & this means that we tend to use all the Traditional human Words — God Immortality & so on in some odd sense of our own — making play with them — for it does not matter!

Now I feel that humours and fantasies and homely interpretations of country life can be free from the seriousness of a "message" in my sense as a writer or your sense, my dear Heron Ward, as a writer, and yet not be that "detestable fuss" of the Flaubertian — that we both dislike so much!

Well I must stop. I recognize in Theodore with joy the old quietism of the Chinese Tao.

I do wish it were possible to omit that passage referring to Theodore in the 1st page of the part about me, the passage containing the sentence "progressing rather than regressing in his creative life" — Doesn't the universal critical view (even among those who are not his chief devotees) hold that "Mr Weston" & "Unclay" (wh are practically his last books) are far his best? Surely to regard "Mr

Weston" & "Unclay" as mile-stones of regression from "Mr Tasker" is an opinion as eccentric and startling as to regard "The Gold Bowl" as a regression from "The Portrait of a Lady"? [Ward deleted this passage from the published text.]

But there it is! If I refuse to take exception to Theodore's eccentricities I mustn't begin grumbling at yours! And, as you say, all of us three are now characters in your book! but it is only at the beginning of your noble & penetrating eloquence about me that it does jar a lot on me to have Theodore brought in as regressing as he gets older! O I do not agree at all — I think he grows gentler and mellow as he grows older!

O yes! and one other thing! — about the Introduction — you see you have brought in all the whole living family now except two. Now if you had only mentioned the four of us who write fiction, or the five of us who've written books, this wouldn't be so noticeable, but the charming introduction of Littleton & Bertie & Gertrude & William when added to Theodore & Llewelyn and Philippa and John, leave only two out of the whole lot alive and I do greatly fear that their feelings might be hurt! Besides the method seems to demand it! You've mentioned both our parents and all the rest and to leave out two without any reason for so doing would give people the idea that they were Dead! Now let me make this suggestion — It is after the first paragraph of the Introduction that what I beg & implore you to insert might be inserted — after the words "is a poet and a novelist".

Now of course our publishers may not see their way to insert this in the big print of the text though that is what I should like better — but surely there could be no technical objection to an asterix and a note at the bottom of the page? A note containing something like to this effect:

* The other living members of the family are Marian Powys Grey who for years has run the "Devonshire Lace Shop" in New York and Lucy Amelia Penny who lives in Hampshire and to whom her eldest brother dedicated his "Glastonbury Romance" [Ward added these words to the body of his text, including the dedication of *A Glastonbury Romance*].

And now there are two little points — for the Printer to change. 1. Page 4 of the Galley Proof substitute — "educated at Sherborne and Cambridge" for "in Somerset & Cambridge" — for Sherborne School is in Dorset. 2. Page 23 of the Galley Proof — (and this is a much more important point than the above!) Substitute for Matt Delker (a misprint for Dekker) and for Matt Dekker too (who is Sam's father []) — Sam Dekker who is the person referred to in these passages.

But now my dear Heron Ward I must beg you to pardon all this "dithyrambic" argument of mine!

The truth is I am simply thrilled by your penetrating insight & by your astonishing eloquence of critical interpretation. You have certainly proved yourself a DARK HORSE for I never suspected, except now & again (& then more from your expression of countenance than from any words from your lips!) that

you were such an adept in my own "dithyrambic" style! "Winding yourself like a serpent" into the subject & keeping up the crescendo of long wave-sounds!

As to what you say about myself I'd be a smug hypocrite not to be thrilled & made proud by your eloquent words & your bold oil-painting of "The Man with the Dog" — that I blush now & then in my anti-Narcissistic mood is really nothing — after all I needn't go into the Portrait Gallery of Heron Serjeant-Whistler Ward when I'm "acquiring merit" in humility! AND I am sure the knowledge that its there ought to put me on my METTLE to prove worthy of it in my future writings. My own favourite of all portraits is Serjeant's "Henry James" in the National Portrait Gallery — I wonder how that old Dodger & Arch-Equivocator & Master-Sensuoist felt — when he looked at himself on that great Easel? — & this portrait of your humble servant (with a background of Wessex) is really a telling picture in words.

I could wish you'd been an invisible Watcher for a longer period upon Theodore's actual life and ways & words for I do think then you'd have taken rather a different attitude — but after all I hope one day to point out to Theodore that the intense seriousness with which you've taken his Philosophy & his attitude to God etc is really a far higher compliment to him than the tone of many of his best admirers who certainly do forget his serious thought in his pleasant humours & whimsies! And no one can say that you haven't gone to the depths with him though in your picture of his tragic soul I miss many of the engaging wrinkles & creases upon his strange & convoluted physiognomy!

This long letter anyway brings my affte & continued respect to you & to your wife!

yrs most cordially (as heretofore) John C Powys

P.S I am delighted with these pages on Philippa

(Twenty Four Pages!!)]

P.P.S Page 25 After all dear Heron Ward when we consider the world, how it wags I must confess that it does not seem we need a Father-God with his cruel ways or a warm dark womb-death to hide in of a Freudian fathoming to make us fall in with Theodore's sad view of the Success of Evil. What about Captain Ill of the pessimistic Shakespearean Sonnet? [Sonnet 66]

Tired with all these for respectful [restful] death I cry

As [,] to behold desert a beggar born

And needy nothing trimmed with [in] jollity

And purest faith unhappily forsworn

And gilded honour shamefully misplaced

And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted

And right perfection wrongfully disgraced

And strength by limping sway disabled

And art made tongue-tied by authority

And folly doctor-like controlling skill

And simple truth miscalled simplicity
And Captive Good attending Captain Ill
Tired with all these [,] from these I would be gone
Save that to die [,] I leave my love alone.
W. Shakespeare.

Letter Nine

Aug 16 1935

Dear Heron Ward

Pardon my hurling at your devoted head yet further Post-Scripts! But I think there is one more little kind of Printer's error that ought to be changed though you yourself very likely made it inadvertently & that is: don't you mean that it was John Crow (& not Philip Crow the Capitalist) who resembled Wolf Solent? Just glance at that passage! I've sent on the Proofs to East Chaldon or I'd give you the page & line. But I am pretty sure you meant John Crow, not his cousin Philip the antagonist of the story!

Aye! but I do think that the part about Llewelyn is very good — like a true fluid-minded novelist you fling yourself into his character until your very style takes on many of his own peculiarities. 'Tis a wonderful achievement of psychic metamorphosis & the part about his struggle with death is profoundly moving & I am sure will touch him deeply and your picture of the sun-burnt nakedness of the Downs is simply wonderful. How much you got — you are a real writer! — in those brief moments.

But do you know I am inclined to feel now in colder blood that my blush over what you said of my "tenderness" to the very Old etc, etc, etc, & to Beggars was more than just my anti-narcissism. I am now inclined in calmer thought to reach the conclusion that it is a certain weakness that you & I share that is tapped just here & in the praise too that you give to Sam & the "Enema" scene. I think that my struggle to escape from this vein in Geard was what you — with me — found hard to undertake. It is all obscure to me — for I am in the difficult process of growth in these subtle moral atmospheres & attitudes & tempers & tones just as you are. You have developed very fast & I very slow but in these things we are rather fatally alike & I scent Danger — And I tell you in what direction — in a direction of a curious kind of priggishness of Boy-Scout self-conscious goodness. I know that we both feel strongly the root of the matter — a certain simple rock-based kindness & goodness as the aim & one too that has not only the more spiritual Christian feeling in it but something sturdily & strongly developed out of the old homely rock-bound reasonable stoicism of the old Romans such as Scott felt when dying he said to Lockhart "be good, my lad, for that alone matters at the last!" But when you compare our Sam (with his simple nature which is not quite yet the indefinable simple-subtlety of that Childhood that enters Heaven

but has something still of the element of youth as opposed to the child-like in it — something of the pharasaic quality of youth) with Alyosha I begin to feel doubt. There is something else I feel in Alyosha beyond the reach of our good Sam — a certain mystical fluidity, strange & irrational, and beyond the vein of being sympathetic to dog & beggars — I am fumbling here in deep waters just as you are — for it is all of the nature of a mysterious Quest — the great Faustian struggle after the secret implicit in Good and Evil & their difference —

And tho' I do feel so very strongly that you & I are right (& indeed I feel whether "right" or not we can none other given our nature as it is!) when we hold obstinately to a perfectly clear & simple stoic-christian virtue as the strongest rock we can build on and hold obstinately that in the long run 'tis a simple direct sympathetic goodness that alone matters — yet I now also feel — that this blush with wh I read the passages about my Old & Sam & the Beggars & the Enema has an intellectual & even a spiritual implication — indicating that our Sam-virtue is not yet spiritual or spontaneous or magical or mysterious enough nor to speak plain deep & subtle enough nor (to speak plainer) humble enough, with the terrible & passionate humility of the real saint, nor yet intellectual enough with the mystic fluidity & humility of the Tao. When we oppose our Sam-virtue with its youthful boy-scout simplicity to the verdicts of these clever cynical people of the World — I know we are in the right on't, and they are in the wrong — I know we're nearer the real spiritual Quest than they are — But, as you know, there come moments when both you & I feel that this simple goodness that looks stupid and priggish to Worldly Clever Ones also looks inadequate and maybe stupid, naive, and even superficial & pharasaic and "Confucian", when brought into the presence of a real deep formidable sanctity that is more fluid & less fussy & pretentious and sentimental than our poor "Sam goodness"! I don't know! Your book is so good that I use it you see as a sort of Confessional or Purgatorial Test to my real development — And under all these fumbblings to express my meaning I think the point is that you and I (& our good Sam too) must not forget to keep a weather-eye open & a weather-ear open to what may turn out to be not only intellectual but even spiritual limitations to our simple Code.

Well, here's luck!

yr grateful J.C.Powys

Warmest regards from Miss P & me to your dear lady

P.S a long contemplation of the unique personality of Theodore has made me recognize that there is a certain stupidity & dullness on the side of the good as well as much conceit — has also made me see that ordinary human goodness is not as good as I thought — has also made me see that in going a long way mentally on the side of evil & recognizing & always assuming evil matters in self & in others you enter a subterranean passage of evil where all of a sudden you find yourself near goodness at the very spring-head It is a mvstery —

Letter Ten

Aug 22 1935

Dear Herod [sic] Ward

What a lovely letter from you this is — O no! I quite clearly realize of course that you cannot meddle now with the T.F.P. part. But I am so glad that you will delete as you so kindly say that particular passage at the beginning of the part about me. And I am also most grateful to you for including a mention of Mrs Marian Powys Grey and Mrs Lucy Amelia Penny. The former of these ladies with her 13 year old son is staying with Phyllis & me at this moment. But I have not of course referred to the book at all! Llewelyn at any rate wrote in cheery style about your book & seemed touched (as I felt he would be) by your handling of his life & appearance & surroundings. Of course, my dear Richard Ward, it was involved in the whole thing these ripples over this book.

Such books, as a rule, unless of a very servile & shallow sort, are postponed until after a person's death — when of course there can arise a regular mêlée of subjective visions of the person in question and out of these immediate clashes as time goes on the verdict of posterity shapes itself. But even then my dear Ward as we know too well there are reversions and topplings-down & recoveries & startling exposure. No we cannot escape these clashes of aesthetic & imaginative tempers — The whole thing about your book that complicated it is that mixing of personal relations with pure critical & intellectual judgments that Publishers are always so keen to bring about knowing too well the General Public's preference for Personalities over Intellectualities!

Had you said — "I'll write this book — but nothing that you can say will induce me to see any of these Powyses and I must [be] free to express my sternest reactions" you would not have had a chance of their letting you do it — not a chance! You see it's this fatal business of mixing business with literature and literature and business with our affection for people we've met that is so fatal! Suppose you had adored Theodore — whose works are published by Chatto & Windus & hated John & Llewelyn whose works are published by Lane — wd Lane have allowed you to write such a book for them — not on your life! So you see there is a complicated psychic & business situation! Louis's book on us will be published by Chapman & Hall who have never published any of our works so if he set out, as of course he won't, to merrily lambast us all — Chapman & Hall might be only pleased — if the work had the rêclame of Mischief to sell it!

But my dear friend I think is very nice of you — from my private & secretest Star Chamber of Values to take what I wrote with such a large magnanimity! It shows —

Good luck ever!

yrs as heretofore

J.C.P.

Letter Eleven

Nov 3 1935

Dear Heron Ward

I am so impressed by your book on us 3 now I'm reading it in the final Format & I think it is so good. You are extraordinarily eloquent at my own game of "dithyrambic analysis". I confess to you I am really impressed.

Aye! what things you're destined to do — if only you live to my advanced years! To think now I had to wait till I was over forty to get into my stride & here are you with Seven League Boots going over hill & dale like a young Giant (a young Cerne Giant) refreshed by wine. I never suspected that you have just the particular gift that this book reveals — though I always do think you're a "Dark Horse" of mysterious potentialities.

I do trust the book will SELL decently for all our sakes!

More & more imaginative vistas are opening up to P. & me in this extraordinary country of the most Introverted of all Races!

The weather has been the worst we have ever known in any land but our new little house — just because its not built of Stone — keeps us ever so much warmer than we could have been between the death-chilly stone walls of "Rat's Barn" or even those of our old flat in High East St.

Slowly slowly — a verse or two each day — I'm reading the New Testament in Welsh a task that initiates me into what might be called a Pre-Gothick type of Christianity, like those weird so-called Celtic Crosses — of wh there's a specimen in the Corwen churchyard.

Please give our most sincere & united love to your lady. Well do we remember her visit!

I do hope you are both in good health & spirit, & fairly free from Worry.
yrs as ever

I.C.P.

Publications for sale

The publications list (opposite) has been revised to include this year's new books. *Morwyn* is now sold out as is *Fables*, of which we had only a few copies. The new publications are *The Powys Journal* volume V, issued to all paid-up members, an *Index* to volumes I-V, and an *Index*, compiled by Glen Cavaliero, to the two volumes of *Letters of John Cowper Powys to his Brother Llewelyn* (Village Press, 1975). An order form is enclosed.

We also have a few copies of *The Mystic Leeway* by Frances Gregg, reviewed on page 26; please see the note on page 27 about purchasing a copy.