Editorial

December 1967 will go down in history as the month of a number of firsts: the first heart transplant operation, the maiden flight of Concorde, the first microwave oven. What will probably not be widely recorded is that it was also the time of the first meeting of The Powys Society, in the Hampstead home of its founder, Barbara Spencer.

Early meetings of the Society tended to be general discussions, often focused on John Cowper Powys and it was not until 25 May 1968 that the first formal paper, a talk on *Wolf Solent* by Glen Cavaliero, was given. In March 1969 the first Committee was elected and it was from this time that a more formal structure of three meetings a year was established and subscriptions (ten shillings a year) were imposed to cover the cost of sending out copies of the talks to all members.

The Society has come a long way since those early days, but what remains undimmed is the passion for the works of the Powys family that led to its founding; a passion which has drawn new members to the Society, and kept some original members with us, for thirty years. What our fourth decade will bring, only the members of the Society can decide, but with our forthcoming publication of *The Dorset Year* we will surely have entered a new and exciting era in the Society's development. Meanwhile, as a small contribution to our thirtieth birthday celebrations, a previously unpublished short story by John Cowper Powys is included in this, our thirtieth issue of the *Newsletter*.

Paul Roberts

ON OTHER PAGES

The Election of Officers and Committee Members

To take effect from 25 August 1997

In accordance with the Society's Constitution (copy enclosed), the Committee has prepared the following slate of nominations of Committee Members and Officers, to take effect from the next Annual General Meeting.

Chairman	Paul Roberts
Vice-Chairman	Griffin Beale
Secretary	Chris Gostick
Treasurer	Stephen Powys Marks
Committee	Bev Craven, John Batten, Christopher Wilkinson, Judith Stinton, Timothy Hyman, John Powys, John Williams

The last four Committee Members listed above are not required under the Constitution to step down and are willing to continue to serve.

The Committee consists of four Officers and seven Committee Members, thus a full slate has been nominated. However, the Constitution invites members to submit further nominations if they so wish, in which case a postal ballot will be held.

In the event of a ballot, brief statements of appropriate information will be required, including details of involvement in the Society and reasons for wishing to take up the position. Initially, any nomination must be made by post, and must specify whether it is for an Officer or a Committee Member. The letter must have the names and signatures of

a) the proposer and

b) the seconder,

and also

c) the nominee's signature and agreement to stand.

In addition, proposers, seconders and nominees must all be paid-up (or honorary) members of the Society; the usual reminder slips are being sent out with this *Newsletter* to those who have not paid subscriptions due for 1997.

Such nominations should be received by the Nominations Secretary, Judith Stinton, 21 The Quarr, Cattistock Road, Maiden Newton, Dorchester, Dorset, no later than 25 June 1997.

Regional list of Powys Society members

As indicated in the last *Newsletter*, we have at last been able to put together a comprehensive regional listing of the names and addresses of all members of the Society. I am pleased to report that in response to the notice in the November

Newsletter no-one indicated that they did not wish to participate, and so with this mailing you will find a full list of all 327 current members as at 1 March 1997.

It is also worth emphasising that this is very much a first attempt, and it is the Committee's intention to produce such a list on an annual basis in future, so any feedback on the present format and any suggestions for improvement or development would be appreciated. It would also be helpful if everyone could check their own entry to ensure that it is correct, and to let me have any amendments – I am particularly interested to ensure that all post codes or box numbers are correct or where they are missing – and it would also be nice to have everyone's forenames in future editions. And any views about including telephone numbers, or other details, would also be welcome.

The whole idea behind the listing was not only to get a better idea of the geographic pattern of membership, but also to encourage more local activities, so I have tried to cluster members around what seemed to me to be particular natural communities or access points, but I have inevitably taken some arbitrary decisions – to include all Somerset addresses west of the M5 in with Devon and Cornwall under the heading of South-West England, rather than in with Wessex, which is all of Dorset and the remainder of Somerset, for example. I had particular difficulties with the large area of central England, and eventually decided to split it between Oxford and the Cotswolds on the one hand and Birmingham and the Midlands on the other, even though this has left the six members in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire in a small cluster of their own. So any suggestions for a more sensible arrangement from those of you who actually live in these areas and know the best communication routes would be most helpful.

Despite these anomalies, it is clear from the listing that we already have some very significant clusters of members, which does suggest the possibility of some local activities. We should be able to organise something in London, for example, which would not only be accessible to the 29 members there, but also to those in the surrounding areas. And some interesting trends begin to emerge from even a cursory analysis. We have members in every part of the United Kingdom, for example, including both the Isle of Man and Isle of Wight (although not in the Channel Islands), but the largest membership block (70% of a total membership of 327) is concentrated in England, with 25% of these in the Wessex area around Dorchester, and 12.5% in London, with the remainder spread rather widely around the rest of the country. A further 12% of members are in Europe, with the distribution strongly concentrated in North-West Europe and Scandinavia, with only a couple of members around the Mediterranean and a further couple in Eastern Europe. 7% are in North America (Canada and the USA), with 11 members in Africa, and 7 in Australia and New Zealand.

It will be interesting to see whether current developments on the Internet begin to effect this pattern, but in the meantime, I think it would be really nice if

everyone looked through the list to see who else was near to them and got in touch just to say 'Hello !', as well as to see whether there might be sufficient members in their localities to suggest the possibility of an evening get-together of some sort. Both I and other members of the Committee would be very happy to participate and to do everything we could to help you organise such an event. And don't forget to let me have your views – and any corrections or amendments. Many thanks !

Chris Gostick

Old School House, George Green Road, George Greenm Wexham, Bucks SL3 6BJ (Telephone: 01753 578632 E-Mail: gostik@premier.co.uk)

Celebrating our First Thirty Years.

The 26th Annual Conference of The Powys Society Kingston Maurward College of Agriculture, Dorchester 23rd–26th August 1997

Legend has it that late in 1967 Barbara Spencer placed an advertisement in the *T.L.S.* (or was it *The News Statesman*?) inviting admirers of the works of John Cowper Powys to meet in a Baptist church in Hampstead. The handful of members who were present at that unlikely beginning could scarcely have imagined that it would lead to the founding of a Society which would still be flourishing thirty years on. After four or five meetings, at which papers were read, a committee was elected and The Powys Society formally established, with C. Benson Roberts as its Chairman and an annual subscription of 10 shillings.

The first conference was held at Churchill College, Cambridge, in September 1972 in celebration of the centenary of John Cowper's birth. In his opening address Dr George Steiner began by deploring the fact that despite his repeated attempts, over several years, to persuade the Master of Corpus to show J.C.P. some recognition, and a similar formal request to the appropriate University authority, neither his college nor his university had seen fit to honour the great man. Much of the talk was devoted to the question which has been discussed endlessly among our members ever since, 'Why has Powys not taken off?' That, of course, remains an important issue, but what Professor Steiner did not know, was that with his introduction the Powys Society Annual Conference *had* taken off. It became the pivot for the activities of the fledgling Society and has continued to do so in an unbroken run of twenty-six years.

This year we are making our biennial return to Kingston Maurward. Situated on the outskirts of Dorchester, the college offers comfortable public rooms, student accommodation and beautiful gardens sweeping down to the lake. As you

will see from the draft programme, this thirtieth anniversary will be marked by the launch of *The Dorset Year*, John Cowper's 1934/35 Diary, edited by Morine Krissdóttir and Roger Peers, with side notes and photographs supplementing the text, published by the Society in hardback and paperback. There will be an opportunity to visit the new Literary Gallery at the Dorset County Museum, the Powys section of which is compiled from material held within the Society's Powys Collection.

Final details of the Conference programme will be published in the July *Newsletter.*

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

Reception at the Dorset County Museum and launch of *The Dorset Year*
John Gray *J. C. Powys, Pyrrhonism, and the Cult of Static Contemplation*
Charles Lock *Sylvia Townsend Warner: Her Politics and Fiction*
Pia Posti, Peter Samuelsson and **Harald Fawkner**
Phenomenological Commentary on the Fiction of John Cowper Powys
The Powys Clowns, a reading by **Oliver** and **Chris Wilkinson**, **Kate** and **P. J. Kavanagh**
Morine Krissdóttir *The Man who Walks*
Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy *Gamel Woolsey, Her Life and Work*
(to be confirmed)
Free afternoon **Judith Stinton** will be available to guide members around the Powys Room of the new Literary Gallery
Annual General Meeting

An evening visit to Chaldon, possibly visiting Beth Car, the church and churchyard, Chydyok and Llewelyn's stone (for those who are energetic), and drinking a belated birthday toast to Llewelyn at The Sailor's Return

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are due on January 1st each year as follows: UK members £13.50, overseas members £16, and student members £6.

Most members have paid for 1997, but quite a lot still have not. If the subscription is not paid you will not receive *The Powys Journal*, nor (under the terms of our revised Constitution) may you propose or second candidates for elections, nor may you vote or be nominated.

If you have a reminder tucked into your *Newsletter*, please pay promptly.

Writers in a Landscape, by Jeremy Hooker.
Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 1996. xvi + 175pp.
Hardback, ISBN 0-7083-1362-0. £30.
Paperback, ISBN 0-7083-1391-4. £12.95.

Throughout his career, in his poetry, his critical writing and in his university teaching, Jeremy Hooker has been intimately concerned with *The Poetry of Place* (the title of a 1982 collection of essays), particularly, though not exclusively, in relation to the south and south-west of England.

In weaker hands, such a concern has often melted into a soft nostalgia, an easy lyricism, but Hooker subjects both his own feelings of significant association with particular places and those of the authors he studies to a rigorous analysis, which is both less comfortable and more revealing and has more to do with truth than with the manufacture of a cosy 'heritage'.

Place, for Hooker, is not the same as landscape. Place is 'where people live', the site of communal interactions, the result not of design but of negotiated growth. *Landscape*, on the other hand, is a 'primarily visual' phenomenon and, since the English landscape with which he is concerned is almost entirely the result of human intervention, it functions as an expression of the power of the wealthy and influential, its design almost always requiring the dispossession of those, both human and non-human, who had previously inhabited it. Landscape, therefore, tends to exclude human interactions, whilst these are the central features of place. Landscape suggests completion, place suggests potential.

Poets have frequently become intensely associated with particular places, not primarily as a response to their physical (or landscape) qualities, but because they provide the site and context of a community which includes both the human and the non-human, the community into which the poet has been born. And yet, as Hooker tells us, poets have 'identified themselves with places with an intensity born of loss' and poetry of place is more likely to be elegiac than celebratory. Why should this be? If it is place that matters to poets, and if it matters because it encapsulates the notion of community (and of the poet's self as part of that community because born into it), then why, unless the community has been displaced, is there any need for mourning? Hooker identifies the cause in the case of Ivor Gurney, who longed to become a voice of place and to provide 'A saying-out of what the hill leaves unexprest', whereas, 'What Gurney actually voices in his songs ... is not the spirit of a land imbued with the expression of a people, but real isolation.'

The poet mourns what he has never had for, except at rare moments, he is not part of the community for which he would speak, and poetry of place is therefore always the art of the dispossessed, either literally or because they 'exist in the

uneasy but creative state of tension between a sense of communal belonging, and separation from the place and the people.' And yet, again, this very distance gives the poet the chance to see what is often not seen by the inhabitants of a place, simply because it is too close. This is why John Cowper Powys, for example, could only write successfully of Somerset when he was settled in America.

The poets of place, the dispossessed, whom Hooker examines in this enthralling and intellectually exciting study are Richard Jefferies, Edward Thomas, Thomas Hardy, John Cowper Powys, V. S. Naipaul and William Golding. What distinguishes these authors, and also what unites them, is not only that they have become associated with particular places but that, being 'dispossessed' of those places, they are able to see them with intense clarity. This being the case, they are able to separate the provisional, living potential of place, 'godless and without design', from the somewhat more sterile and fixed nature of the landscape, and it is this which leads them, each in his own way, to celebrate the uniqueness of things, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, in a cosmos which, as Powys says, 'runs to personality'.

Clearly, Jeremy Hooker is dealing with deeply complex matters here, for he sees the 'poetry of place' as an entry point for the consideration of literature in relation to all aspects of personal and public experience. What is marvellous is that he deals with these issues without feeling the need to torture language into new shapes or to bind existing words to alien meanings.

Jeremy Hooker has been a prominent figure in the world of Powys studies since he first lectured to the Society in 1972, and the two essays devoted specifically to Powys in this collection (though he is referred to throughout) have appeared in earlier versions in *The Powys Review* and at one of our annual conferences. Their appearance in the present book is, therefore, much to be welcomed, for we still, after twenty-five years, have much to learn from Jeremy Hooker. Part of the problem in establishing the reputation of John Cowper Powys lies in the difficulty of seeing him as part of a tradition, whilst recognising his individual genius. This, Hooker does once again in this splendid book.

Paul Roberts

Phoenix Rising by Neil D. Lee.
Paperback, 35pp. ISBN 0 9522108 5 1. £2.25.
Derbyshire Born and Bred by Neil D. Lee.
Paperback, 29pp. ISBN 0 9522108 1 9. £2.25.
Matlock: New Age Poetry Press, 1997. Available directly from the publisher at: Chapel Croft, Elton, Matlock, Derbyshire DE4 2DB.

Since leaving the Unitarian ministry Neil D. Lee, a former miner and country music singer, has devoted himself to writing and to championing the cause of Llewelyn Powys, whose writings and philosophy he so deeply admires.

Those who enjoyed his first collection, *Rumblings in the Dust* (1993), will find much here in the same vein, most strikingly a genuinely innocent wonder at, and reverence for, the natural world.

They will also find three poems from the earlier collection in *Derbyshire Born and Bred*, and here, I feel, some readers will feel slightly cheated. In compiling his two new collections, Neil Lee has, however, aimed them at different audiences: *Phoenix Rising* continues the sequence of work begun in *Rumblings in the Dust*, while *Derbyshire Born and Bred* is aimed at a more specifically local audience. One result of this is that twelve of the eighteen poems published in this collection also appear in the other two.

Nevertheless, we must admire Neil Lee's courage and tenacity in striking out so boldly on a path of his own.

Paul Roberts

1, Waterloo 'Modernised'

I looked with horror at the photograph,
destroyed my cockleshell and pilgrim staff.

For once I thanked my cruel advancing age.
I need not make another pilgrimage

to contemplate this ornamented clone
that mocks the good simplicity of stone.

The poor man's house alas brought 'up to date'
could not escape a trivialising fate.

The poor man's life could well be left alone,
not torn by vultures till they reach the bone

or redeveloped, seen with alien eyes
through keyholes with the prurience of spies.

The sightseer who merely pries and looks
would be much wiser if he read the books.

Patricia Dawson

Romantic Glastonbury

Happy Haunts for Summer Holidays

The following piece by E. M. Delafield, author of The Diary of a Provincial Lady, *first appeared in* Time and Tide *magazine on 8 July 1933 to mark the publication of* A Glastonbury Romance *in Delafield's usual hilarious style. We re-publish it in this issue of the* Newsletter *as part of our attempt to bring back into print some of the more obscure but interesting pieces of Powysiana, and would be extremely grateful to any members of the Society who can bring similar pieces to our attention.*

P.R.

From the Director of a British Travel Agency to the Author of *Southampton Fox and no Other Stories.*

Dear Sir,

In view of the great success of our recent advertising campaign for Holidays in Britain, as illustrated by the leading artists of the day, we are proposing to issue a series of attractively-bound booklets, written by well-known authors, setting forth in simple story-form the charms of rural England. Would you be prepared to undertake the first of these, featuring sunny Somerset?

Yours etc.

From the Author of *Southampton Fox* **to the Directors of the Travel Agency**

Dear Sirs,

I am quite prepared to undertake the work suggested. I enclose you a synopsis of the proposed booklet, which should run into some three thousand and eighty-one pages; also a list of the characters, of which there are at present sixty-nine, not including the illegitimate infant-in-arms. I propose to concentrate on Glastonbury, steeped as it is in romantic and historical and mystical and magical associations, and to people it with a wealth of living creatures, amongst whom will be a mayor, a procuress, a marquis, a bastard, an elderly lady with Lesbian tendencies, a cancer-patient, a murderer and an old mad woman.

In order to chain the reader's attention from the start, I propose to begin with the following significant statement:

'At the striking of noon on a certain fifth of March, there occurred within a causal radius of Brandon railway-station, and yet beyond the deepest pools of emptiness between the uttermost stellar systems, one of those infinitesimal ripples in the creative silence of the First Cause which always occur when an exceptional stir of heightened consciousness agitates any living organism in this astronomical universe. Something passed at that moment, a wave, a motion, a vibration, too tenuous to be called magnetic, too subliminal to be called spiritual, between the soul of a particular human being who was emerging from a third-class carriage of the twelve-nineteen train from London and the divine-diabolic soul of the First Cause of all life.'

From this it will be easy to pass lightly on to the complicated super-human vibrations connected with the feelings of certain primitive tribes of men in the heart of Africa, leading the reader on, by pleasant and easy steps, to the roaring, cresting, heaving, gathering, mounting, advancing, receding, enormous fire-thoughts of the great blazing sun, evoking a turbulent aura of psychic activity, corresponding to the physical energy of its colossal chemical body, but affecting a microscopic biped's nerves less than the wind against his face.

At the same time, sirs

(Remaining two hundred pages omitted.)

From the Directors to the Author

Dear Sir,

Whilst appreciating the stupendous nature of the work that you are doing for us, we feel it may be as well to remind you that the holidays are now close at hand, and that we shall be glad to receive any further notes concerning your tale of Romantic Glastonbury, which is, no doubt, destined to attract many visitors to that delightful and fun-loving district.

Yours, etc.

From the Author to the Directors.

Dear sirs,

All that I can tell you at present is that I am well over the first two hundred thousand words of my Somersetshire idyll. I have represented the inhabitants of dear old Glastonbury in every characteristic light likely to appeal to the summer tourist. Take, for instance, the fierce contest between the hard-headed, but sensual, industrialist, Philip Crow, and the superstitious, but sensual, mystic, Johnny Geard; or the half-dozen seductions of the country maidens by their rustic, but sensual, lovers. Later on, I am introducing a pageant in which a religious maniac will be accidentally tortured and half-killed, and a murder with an iron crowbar; and also a flood on a colossal scale to dispose of those characters who have as yet not met with violence.

Yours, etc.

From the Director to the Author.

Dear Sir,

Glastonbury will indeed have reason to feel grateful to you for your careful picture of life as it is lived today by the Glastonbury-ites.

At the same time, we venture to point out that it would be inadvisable for our Agency to become too closely associated with any character — however boldly, superbly, enormously, significantly, notably and nobly and timelessly depicted — named Bloody Johnny. May we, therefore, ask you to substitute another adjective?

Yours, etc.

From the Author to the Directors.

Dear Sirs,

If it seems to you less invidious, I can preface the names of all my characters with the word Bloody. It would apply to them all, and also add realism to my four thousand and fifty-nine pages.

It has occurred to me that a certain amount of dialect, peculiar to Glastonbury, may be required. Would not the inhabitants wish to have advertised, and incidentally immortalised, their quaint and pleasing expletive: 'B— me black' ?

Yours, etc.

From the Directors to the Author.

Dear Sir,

We are a little uneasy as to the general trend of your effort to popularize the beauties of Somersetshire and the holiday spirit as met with in Glastonbury. We doubt whether the hiking parties that we are so frequently called upon to organize will feel happy and at ease in the atmosphere of murder, rape, violence, perversion, idiocy and religious mania so powerfully described by you. Might we suggest that you should add a word or two in lighter vein, giving some idea of your own personal reactions to the locality?

Yours, etc.

From the Author to the Directors.

Dear Sirs,

It is quite impossible for me to do as you suggest, as I have never been to Glastonbury. I propose to put an Author's Note in the book to say so, adding at the same time that everything I have written about Glastonbury is pure — or, if you prefer, impure — invention, and that I have never known of any living Glastonbury-ite, and never wish to. Moreover, nothing whatever in my whole book — now numbering six thousand and ninety-nine pages — has anything whatever to do with real life.

Yours, etc.

Telegram from Directors to Author.

Suggest you visit Glastonbury and study conditions there before writing further.

Telegram from Author to Directors.

Cannot agree your suggestion am much disliked by inhabitants Glastonbury cannot imagine why.

E. M. Delafield

To John Cowper Powys, on His 'Confessions'

The following poem by John Cowper Powys's friend Arthur Davison Ficke, was published in the April 1916 issue of the Chicago-based magazine, *The Little Review*. We are grateful to Joan Stevens for providing a copy of the text.

I

Old salamander basking in the fire,
Winking your lean tongue at a coal or two,
Lolling amid the maelstroms of desire,
And envying the lot of none or few —
Old serpent alien to the human race,
Immune to poison, apples and the rest,
Examining like a microbe each new face
And pawing, passionless, each novel breast —
Admirer of God and of the Devil,
Hater of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell,
Skeptic of good, more skeptic yet of evil —
Knowing the sick soul sounder than the well —
We mortals send you greetings from afar —
How very like a human being you are!

II

Impenetrably isolate you stand,
Tickling the world with a long-jointed straw.
Lazy as Behemoth, your thoughts demand
No cosmic plan to satisfy your maw;
But as the little shining gnats buzz by
You eat the brightest and spit out the rest,
Then streak your front with ochre carefully
And dance, a Malay with a tattooed breast.
There are no sins, no virtues left for you,
No strength, no weakness, no apostasy.
You know the world, now old, was never new,
And that its wisdom is a shameless lie.
So in the dusk you sit you down to plan
Some fresh confusion for the heart of man.

III

Lover of Chaos and the Sacred Seven!
Scorner of Midas and St. Francis, too!
Wearied of earth, yet dubious of Heaven,

Fain of old follies and of pastures new —
Why should the great, whose spirits haunt the void
Between Orion and the Northern Wain,
Make you their mouthpiece? Why have they employed
So brassed a trumpet for so high a strain?
Perhaps, like you, they count it little worth
To pipe save for the piping; so they take
You weak, infirm, uncertain as the earth,
And down your tubes the thrill of music wake.
Well, God preserve you! — and the Devil damn! —
And nettles strew the bosom of Abraham!

Arthur Davison Ficke

Discovering the Powyses

Two members of the Society responded to our invitation in *Newsletter* 29 to describe their first 'meeting' with the Powys family and we are delighted to publish their contributions. Perhaps their experiences may encourage other members to write to us. Does something in the recollections of Christiane Poussier or Stephen Carroll strike a chord with you? Was your first Powysian encounter quite different? Why not put pen to paper and share your experiences with other members of the Society?

P.R.

How I Discovered John Cowper Powys

A few years ago, one chilly winter dawn, by yellowish light in a gloomy French railway station, I met John Cowper Powys. I do not like train journeys at all; but that one, with John, was too short ...

It was *Weymouth Sands – Les sables de la mer*, in French – and since that day I have spent a large part of my life in a wild quest for J.C.P.'s works. How lucky you are, you Englishmen, who can, without any difficulty, I suppose, find everything you want about him! But, for me, it has been – and it still is – a perpetual struggle. I was unemployed then and had too much 'leisure'. I was bored to death and, therefore, I made up my mind to write a thesis about J.C.P. A hard task, it was! I could not read or speak English very well, I did not know anybody likely to help me, I had to wind my way through the maze of rules of the French university. But nothing could prevent me from finishing my thesis: *Women and Womanhood in J.C.P.'s Works*.

Some time later, my situation changed, but not my passion. It was evident that if I wanted to keep working on J.C.P. I would have to read his books in English. So I took the bull by the horns ... without knowing where it would lead me.

Of course, you all know J.C.P.'s style in his letters and diaries: endless illogical sentences, full of allusions, without any respect for classical English grammar. And here I was, in front of the wonderful chaos of the man, thrilled once again but, sometimes, hopeless. But Psyche (that great goddess, as John always says!) had mercy on me and I was able to translate *Confessions of Two Brothers*, published by F. X. Jaujard, and the *Diary* of 1930, which is, as yet, unpublished.

And then, carried away by my enthusiasm, I started strolling. That is why the translations of *Welsh Ambassadors*, *Black Laughter*, *Ebony and Ivory*, *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, and so on, are 'asleep' in my computer, waiting for somebody to be interested in them.

But John remains my favourite and I have also finished the translation of *Petrushka and the Dancer*. Of course, the pursuit of a publisher still continues. French publishers do not dare to take risks and I spend a great deal of my energy trying to persuade them that the book is worth reading.

And even if my work seems pointless at times, I am glad to do it – it's my way of sharing John's world.

Christiane Poussier

How I Was Discovered By John Cowper Powys

My first literary love was Thomas Hardy and for my eighteenth birthday in 1967 I was given a leather-bound volume of his poems. Shortly thereafter, I wrote the following words on the flyleaf: 'There was much of the falcon about his aquiline nose and his hovering and pouncing eye-glances, an intensity of regard that was accentuated by the slightness of his figure, by the curiously elfin tilt of his eyebrows, and by his trick of holding his head to one side, as though the frailty of his form were constantly deprecating the terrible and august passion of his thought. J. C. Powys.'

I must have found this quotation in one of the many books about Hardy I was reading at the time. That description of him remains the most vivid I have come across, although I forgot all about J. C. Powys.

In 1982 or 1983, I slipped out of the dreary solicitors' office in Epsom where I was working, to buy a Christmas present for the old schoolmaster who had given me the Hardy so many years before. In the local bookshop I found, by chance, the paperback of J.C.P.'s *Autobiography*. I thought the name meant nothing to me, and yet I picked up this volume with its striking portrait on the cover and began to read. Naturally, I made a purchase and hurried back to the office with it through the dark. Outside, the rain fell on the busy High Street. I read on until it was time to go home. My old schoolmaster, true to his nature, bluntly told me he had not

bothered to read it, and on a subsequent visit I was glad to retrieve it. I have read *Autobiography* many times since then, but whenever I come to the passage about Powys senior's boots with enormously *thick soles* being lined up in the Shirley vicarage, the sense of greedy pleasure that I had on first discovering that masterpiece returns to me and with it the recognition, within myself, of the universal sense of what J.C.P. calls 'inscrutable ecstasy'.

J. C. Powys led me to T.F. and to Llewelyn, Gerald Brenan and others. I discovered I had a friend whose grandfather had been Rector of East Chaldon and who had been a pall bearer at Theodore's funeral. I explored the downs above Chaldon and found Llewelyn's stone. Weymouth became a place of mythical significance to me. Dorchester ceased to be the exclusive domain of the Mayor and of Hardy, and became that of Dud and J.C.P. as well. I managed to spend a night in The Antelope, unchanged since Lulu had been carried across the Dorset Downs 'like some buggerly Buddha' and now part of a shopping precinct, and to enjoy many pints of good beer at The Sailor's Return, before it too was changed utterly. I turn to J.C.P. for consolation: 'all solid entities have to dissolve, if they are to outlast their momentary appearance, into atmosphere.'

Heretical as it may seem to members of the Society, I believe that much of J.C.P.'s work is bad or even very bad. Nonetheless, he has had, from beyond the grave, a very personal influence on me as a human being and has become, by a long way, my greatest literary love. Is that not strange?

Stephen Carroll

Developments in the Oil Exploration at West Chaldon
A Personal Impression

As soon as I turned off the Wareham–Dorchester road to follow that steep winding lane to West Chaldon, the oil rig and its surrounding embankment came into view – as did the traffic lights and notices warning me to engage crawler gear and check my load. The lights proved more decorative than useful, because whatever their colour, the road remained completely blocked, ironically enough, by lorries and machinery making the passing places the project requires.

Having turned round, made my way to East Chaldon and The Sailor's Return, I set off on foot past Beth Car and down into West Chaldon, which is now dominated by a huge metal obelisk approached by a newly laid asphalt road, with barrier and security guard, which has replaced the old track that led to Down Barn.

Guided by a finger post saying White Nothe I climbed the hill within a couple of hundred yards of the Amoco compound. There was no sound of drilling and no

obvious sign of activity. although there were at least a dozen cars parked beside the barn. It was all a bit of an eerie anticlimax.

Having made my way across to Llewelyn's stone I looked back at the derrick, which stood out like a sore thumb above the down and its two mellow stone counterparts. When I reached the track that leads up to Chydyok only the nail of that thumb was visible and looking across toward Lulworth I confess that I found the white sprawl of the caravan site a much more intrusive blot on the landscape.

From conversations with local people I gathered that the drilling is about four days behind schedule and it will be May before the outcome of the exploration is known. It became clear from what I heard, that Amoco is conducting a very successful public relations campaign in the area. Leaflets are circulated keeping people up to date with developments at the site and visits to the compound are on offer. Our waitress at The Sailor's Return had been on one of these with sixteen other villagers. She was very impressed with the project, welcomed the road widening that I encountered and expressed the view that the majority of local people were supportive of Amoco and that most of the objections came from 'away'.

Although I am aware of the minimal success of earlier trial oil wells in Dorset I found it hard to believe that Amoco would be going to such lengths in preparation for an abortive exploration

We shall see.

John Batten

THE DORSET YEAR — HAVE YOU ORDERED YOURS ?

The Dorset Essays *problem*

The second edition of Alan Howe's excellent booklet *Powys Checklist* (the original short cover title; it is now called for all purposes *Powys Checklist & Readers' Guide*) offers notable improvements as detailed in Paul Roberts' review in *The Powys Society Newsletter* 29.

But there is one entry in the original *Checklist* which remains unchanged and which seems to me to offer the possibility of misleading the unwary.

Dorset Essays
London: The Bodley Head, 1935; Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1985. [Auto-biographical and topographical essays.]

There is a small mistake in this, in that the Redcliffe Press edition was published in 1983, not 1985. But, more importantly, who would deduce from this that the 1935 and 1983 books are quite considerably different from each other? Though there are various selections of Llewelyn Powys's essays which combine material from different sources (I refer of course to books, since most of these essays appeared in newspapers and elsewhere first), the 1983 edition called *Dorset Essays* must be the only one which does so whilst appearing to be one of the original source books. To be precise, the 1983 *Dorset Essays* is in fact a selection of essays from the 1935 *Dorset Essays* and from the 1937 *Somerset Essays*. This *may* have been well enough known at the time (though I remember being annoyed by the anomaly even then) but is obscured from the view of the newcomer to whom Alan Howe's booklet is addressed.

There are three other books which combine essays from these 1935 and 1937 volumes, and it may be helpful if the various combinations are tabulated. It will be seen that there are considerable similarities between the selections in *Somerset and Dorset Essays* of 1957 and the misnamed *Dorset Essays* of 1983. Then there is *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood* of 1986 which combines 6 essays from *Somerset Essays* with 7 from *A Baker's Dozen* of 1939 and one, 'Weymouth in the Three Eights', from *Dorset Essays* (1935): this Weymouth essay is, incidentally, the only one to appear in all three of these selections. Finally, though first chronologically, there is Kenneth Hopkins' edition *Llewelyn Powys: A Selection from His Writings* which first appeared in 1952. (There was an American edition in 1961.) This includes much other material not detailed here, but also 4 essays from the three sources under consideration: 1 each from *Dorset Essays* and *A Baker's Dozen* and 2 from *Somerset Essays*. Of these, two are each in two of the other later collections, and only one essay, 'Thomas Shoel', appears in none of the subsequent books.

Because of the similarity between the titles of some of the essays, and also in order to facilitate a search for the whereabouts of a particular essay, it may be most useful to have an alphabetical list of the essays involved *(on next pages)*.

Note that 'Albert Reginald Powys', originally in *Somerset Essays*, and reprinted in the Hopkins *Selection* and in *Somerset and Dorset Essays*, was renamed 'Memory Stirred' when it appeared in *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood*. Similarly, 'Tintinhull Memories' from *A Baker's Dozen* was renamed 'Tintinhull' in *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood*.

It is appropriate that I should mention here that the information in this article is available in Peter J. Foss's *A Study of Llewelyn Powys: his Literary Achievement and Personal Philosophy* (1991) which contains the most comprehensive bibliography of Llewelyn Powys currently available. However, readers may find it more accessible in the form in which I have provided it.

Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe

SOME ESSAYS BY LLEWELYN POWYS

Original Collections: DE = *Dorset Essays* (1935); SE = *Somerset Essays* (1937); BD = *A Baker's Dozen* (1939)

Subsequent Collections: LSW = *Ll. Powys: A Selection from His Writings* (1952); S&D = *Somerset and Dorset Essays* (1957); DE2 = *Dorset Essays* (1983); SSC = *Scenes from a Somerset Childhood* (1986)

Essay Titles (alphabetical) *Collected in Books*	DE	SE	BD	LSW	S&D	DE2	SSC
Albert Reginald Powys		x		x	x		#
Armistice Day, 1934	x				x		
Athelney		x					
Bats Head	x				x	x	
Book of Common Prayer, The		x			x		
Bronze Age Valley, A		x				x	
Buffalo Intruders			x				
Burton Pynsent		x					
Cadbury Camp		x					
Castle Park of East Lulworth, The		x					
Cerne Abbas	x				x	x	
Childhood Memories			x				x
Christmas Story, A		x					
Christmas Tale, A	x					x	
Corfe Castle		x				x	
Dartmoor		x					
Death By Violence		x			x	x	
Dorchester Characters	x					x	
Dorset Cliff Foxes	x				x	x	
Duke of Monmouth, The		x			x		
Durdle Door, The		x			x	x	
Easter in Dorset	x				x	x	
Exmoor		x			x		x
Famous Wreck, A		x			x	x	
Fossil Forest, The	x				x	x	
Gay Leopards	x				x	x	
Gipsies	x				x	x	
Grave of William Barnes, The	x				x	x	
Ham Hill		x			x		x
Hardy's Monument		x					
Harvest, The			x				
Haymaking Months, The			x				
Herbert Parker		x				x	
Heroes Out of the Past	x				x	x	
Herring Gulls			x				
High Chaldon		x				x	
Ilchester		x					
Ilchester Gaol		x			x		

	DE	SE	BD	LSW	S&D	DE2	SSC
John Locke		x					
Jordan Hill	x					x	
Joseph Arch	x				x		
Lyme Regis	x				x	x	
Memory of One Day, The			x				x
Montacute Field, A			x				x
Montacute Hill			x				x
Montacute House		x			x		x
Montacute Vicar, A		x					
Nancy Cooper		x			x		x
New Year, 1934	x						
New Year, The			x				
Old Clock Weight, An		x			x		
Old Weymouth Curiosity Shop, An	x					x	
Pitt Pond		x			x		x
Portland	x				x	x	
Poxwell Stone-Circle	x				x	x	
Rector of Durweston, A	x				x		
Reverend Henry Hardin, The		x					
River Parrett, The		x					
River Yeo, The		x			x	x	
Rosamund Clifford		x			x		
Sea! The Sea! The Sea!, The	x					x	
Shakespeare's Fairies	x						
Sir John Harrington		x					
Somerset Christmas, A			x	x			x
St Aldhelm's Head	x					x	
St Ealdhelm		x			x		
Stalbridge Rectory	x			x	x	x	
Stinsford Churchyard	x				x	x	
Studland	x				x	x	
Thomas Shoel		x		x			
Tintinhull Memories			x				†
Tolpuddle Martyrs, The	x				x	x	
Village Shop, The			x				x
West Bottom	x					x	
Weymouth Bay and the Lake of Galilee	x						
Weymouth Harbour			x				
Weymouth in the Three Eights	x				x	x	x
White Horse, The		x			x		
White Nose, The	x				x	x	
Witcombe Bottoms		x			x		
Wookey Hole		x			x		
TOTALS	31	37	13	4*	40	33	14

as 'Memory Stirred'
† as 'Tintinhull'

* includes many additional items

Murdock's Cottage, by John Cowper Powys

The following manuscript is found in Box 2 of the Powys Collection of Syracuse University, where it is described as an incomplete text. This misapprehension arises, however, from the fact that the order in which the pages of the manuscript notebooks have been used is not consecutive. Once re-ordered, it is seen to be a complete short story.

The manuscript bears a note in the hand of Phyllis Playter, which states that this is the 'Beginning of a story written when he first moved to Burpham from Court House 1903–1905?' and covers some one hundred pages in two notebooks.

The title I have given the story – *Murdock's Cottage* – is taken from words written at the top of the eighth page of the manuscript and clearly intended for this purpose.

Murdock's Cottage is Powys's earliest complete story set in a fictional version of Montacute and foreshadows the Nevilton of that much under-rated novel *Wood and Stone*. In this story, Sebastian Laud is originally called Peter Laud and Lydia Rancey first appears as Lacrima (later Lilith) Hornsey.

Although *Murdock's Cottage* is clearly an unsophisticated and early piece, owing much to the 'sensation novels' popular in the nineteenth century and even to the earlier gothic fiction, there are traces here, in ideas, situations and images, of the kind of fiction Powys was later to write. For that reason alone, it deserves publication.

Powys had clearly re-worked and revised the story, and in preparing it for publication I have added only such punctuation as seems necessary for ease of reading, silently added two or three words where it is clear that they have been omitted, and deleted a phrase or two where it is obvious that Powys himself had supplied a second and preferred phrase but had forgotten to delete the first.

Paul Roberts

Murdock's Cottage

The village of Cluniton in Somersetshire has, like so many other English villages remote from the great thoroughfares, a character exclusively and intimately its own.

Its main external features are not indeed difficult of description, but its inner qualities, its recondite attributes, grow so steadily upon the mind that has once got upon their track that there might seem to a sympathetic lover of such places almost no end to their rich content. The houses that make up the bulk of this village stand compact and warmly sheltering between two hills, or rather between a strangely-moulded conical eminence topped by a singular tower — like a spear pricking the sky — and an elevated ridge covered with sombre brushwood and

melancholy looking fir trees, like the dorsal fin of some extinct sea-monster whom prehistoric tides had left stranded there, at this particular spot in the cosmic ebb of their compelled retirements. The sides of the cone-shaped hill that stood south of Cluniton showed themselves on nearer view to be deeply furrowed and indented by some outworn artificers, whether Celtic or Roman it would have been hard to say, and at the foot of it the Cluniac Priory from which the place took its name leant, as it were, upon the support of this terrestrial pyramid, seeking shelter for spiritual aspirations under earthly securities and basing its pieties literally on the roots of the hills. A little distance from the priory, now used as a farm house, stands the parish church whose high and graceful tower, constructed and ornamented in the earlier Tudor style, seems to rise with a kind of gentle and fastidious protest in favour of more simple and more individual forms of faith than that implicit in the architecture of the other building so firmly embedded among the bones of a yet remoter past.

Beyond the church lay the Village — built in a solid square round what once had been a green. The houses about this miniature Borough were all ancient and all of stone. Further afield, even, where the last straggling outposts of the place faded into the surrounding lanes and meadows, all was of stone. There were stone gables, stone cornices, stone lintels, stone arches and stone steps. Nothing of any other material was used. Brick, wood, flint, cement, slate, all these were held, as you might say, cheaper than dirt in the most homely purlieus and most rural environs of the Somersetshire Cluny.

Behind the village, leading up through meadows where the very cattle seemed larger, calmer, more placid than in common pastures, through lichen-swathed orchards enclosed by mossy walls one within another in ever deepening perspective of shadowy greenness, up the ascent of the ridge, was a narrow road hollowed out of crumbling yellow sandstone, a road which reached the summit just where the oldest house of the neighbourhood (older even, some antiquaries had thought, than the priory itself) looked down from under its frowning eaves over the surrounding valley.

This was Murdock's Farm; a melancholy place! And the cottages that lay under its shelter were even more dilapidated and gloomy than the house itself.

Murdock's Farm possessed no garden, and Murdock's cottages possessed no garden, but all about them, even up to the very door, were dark untrimmed bushes of cypress, hazel and laurel of abnormal dimensions and growing so close up to the windows as to almost exclude the light and air.

But Murdock's Farm, even though thus situated and overshadowed further by a group of enormous Scotch fir-trees, was not the final end, the Ultima Thule, of the romantical traveller to Cluniton. Having got as far as this it would be necessary to go further — and further he would be able to go, if, when passing the last of Murdock's cottages, pushing his way through under-wood, grass and nettles, he were to plunge boldly through the densest entanglement of elder

bushes over the ridge of the hill and down the sides of a precipitous fir plantation. Here he would find himself by the edge of what at first sight and without hesitation he would be ready to call the most terrifying piece of water he had ever seen in his life. Surrounded on all sides by heavy undergrowth and funereal foliage, Murdock's Pond, the watery depth of which, according to local tradition, no plummet had ever yet sounded, was indeed one of the few places that more than satisfy the requisitions of the romantic spirit. Here then, by the edge of this Lacus Diaboli — this veritable descent to Avernus — it might be said that the sentimental traveller who, a little before, had alighted at Cluniton Railway Station anticipating naught but the amenities of rustic antiquity, found himself brought to bay by a very different spirit, clutched, as it were, incontinently in the very throat by a Power altogether out of the ordinary expectations: a Power malign, incalculable, demonic.

The leaves were beginning to grow loose upon their stems, the seeds of the grass to be blown backwards and forwards, the water-flags to be forgetting their lustre and to be growing faded and dim, when the Reverend Sebastian Laud, curate in charge of Cluniton, strolled wearily one late afternoon along its margin.

Tall, nervous, emaciated, his pale face set off in ghastly emphasis by the blackness of his clothes, this poor cleric moved with jerky and abrupt gestures, clasping and unclasping his twitching fingers, digging his heels with unnecessary violence into the soft ground and every now and then bending his head low and muttering — whether what he muttered were prayers or curses it would have been hard to say. His look was not that of a man at peace with the world or god. It was a strange thing to see this man walking up and down in this lonely place, every now and then looking anxiously towards the little path that led down to the water's edge from among the fir trees, and then, anon, kicking impatiently with his foot the burdock stalks and entangling dock leaves that impeded his way. To any unoccupied observer it would have seemed plain that this poor man was waiting for someone, was the first present, in fact, at some rendezvous: and though the actual nature of this expected meeting might have admitted 'a wide solution' it was at least clear enough that this poor man's anticipations were causing him more distress than pleasure.

With a start, with a gesture of anguish, with a convulsive shudder of his whole body, Laud heard footsteps approaching down the path. Nearer, nearer they came. The fir branches were flung aside and a young girl stepped out into the open. It would be as difficult to describe Lydia Rancey in ordinary English as to put into words the peculiar effect produced in an observer by the glance of Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Fair she was and tall, but not fair with the fairness of the ordinary English type and not tall with the tallness of the ordinary English type. Willowy and voluptuous, full of amorous solicitations, her movements, even when she was far away, made it clear that she was likely to be a dangerous

debutante in any game of love. Her eyes had that peculiar power of darkening and growing moist with feeling at the least provocation, which is such a perilous and irresistible weapon.

Laud walked rapidly towards her, his face paler than ever and trembling from head to foot. Their hands met and she leant slightly towards him, her white neck bending with the grace of a serpent, her rounded chin thrown back and her mouth a little open. Laud stepped back, almost throwing her from him, and began speaking rapidly.

'Oh, don't tempt me, don't tempt me, don't tempt me! I cannot bear it, you know I cannot bear it !'

The girl tossed her head. 'I wish I hadn't come here,' she said. 'You didn't speak like that when you asked me to meet you yesterday.'

' I was mad. You know I was mad.'

'You asked me to meet you here. You, you, you know what you did ... ' Sebastian Laud looked her up and down. The girl did not falter. Then he said 'We will proceed no further in this business.'

'No further!' she cried and arched her neck as proudly as any proud creature of the woods. 'No further! After all you have said to me and all that has passed between us?'

'It has been all wrong!' he cried helplessly.

'Why wrong, when you are going to marry me?'

'I have sworn not to marry. I think a priest ought not to marry,' he muttered.

'Nonsense,' she said. 'That is the wicked Roman Catholic idea. Look here, how I have scratched my arm.' Saying this, she very rapidly unbuttoned her wrist bands and turned up one of her sleeves.

'Look, it has only just stopped bleeding. I had to suck it.' Then, in order to explain more definitely the nature of what had happened, she sucked the little red mark again and left, when she removed her lips, a little moisture, like the delicatest dew, upon the injured place.

Laud trembled from head to foot. His anguish was so great that any moderately sympathetic onlooker would have felt an immense pity for him. Lydia Rancey only smiled and lay down upon the grass, collecting her thin cotton skirt beneath her in such a way as to do justice to the beauty of her figure.

'Sit down,' she said.

Laud obeyed and hung over her, spellbound.

'Now you have me in your power. Is it not strange to think how helpless I should be if you were to ... if you were to use your advantage ...'

The look with which she accompanied these words would have endangered the purity of a saint. But the poor man only cried out in the anguish of his struggle, 'O child, don't tempt me! Don't tempt, don't tempt me. O child, have mercy upon me! How can you be so cruel?'

And then, as he swayed to and fro above her, he again stammered out

interjections and gasping ejaculations. 'I can't resist you ! I can't resist you ! You'll kill me with your beauty. What devil made you so beautiful?'

In answer she only pulled up her sleeves and flung her arms wide back upon the ground. 'It is so nice,' she said, ' to feel the cool grass against your skin.'

The two figures thus grouped, the girl lying on the ground and the man on his knees above her, swaying backwards and forwards in the distress of his immense conflict, would have made a subject for a great painter. Neither of the protagonists in this tragic-comic drama could be expected to be aware of its aesthetic value, but their attitudes and their emotions were, for that world-spirit in things that we must suppose garners up all these things, pathetically full of suggestions, pathetically symbolic. There might have seemed to hover around the girl all the evasive, dangerous, potent, magnetic, occult powers of unregenerate Nature and there might have seemed to emanate from the twitching lips and tightly clasped fingers and pleading eyes of the man that desperate protest that through the innumerable centuries has been flung in the face of that lowly world by a Humanity born to transcend it.

It might have been thought that the poor boy's resistance would have given way and the climax would have been reached when she shut her eyes and, as a last allurement, became a lovely and motionless image of Sleep. But whether it was that the closing of her eyes removed the only irresistibly dangerous weapons of her inducements, or that some spiritual ministry of that world so passionately invoked by its poor votary did really intervene on his behalf, certain it is that with a sudden and convulsive gesture, like that of a man wounded to death who wrenches the spearhead from his side, he rose to his feet and, crying out 'God have mercy! God have mercy upon us both!' waved his hand rapidly over her, rushed to the edge of the wood and disappeared among the fir branches.

The girl slowly rose up from the ground and pulled down her sleeves. If there is any moment when human countenances assume those expressions of invincible malice that medieval artists have attributed to devils and with which popular imagination peoples churchyards, cross-roads, cemeteries and haunted houses and has embodied as terrors to wayfarers and children, it is the moment when a girl of this kind has received this sort of rebuff. Lydia stood perfectly still, her hands fallen limp by her side, gazing at the water. One of her feet rested upon a discoloured burdock leaf and with a movement of her heel she buried it in the mould. Her eyes seemed in their fixed stare and their gradually dilating pupils to be watching some object lying in the very depths of the pond.

Whether it was the effect of the flickering shadows thrown upon her by the trees on the further side, or whether it was it was some reflective potency of the water itself, it was hard to say, but her face seemed to lose its bloom and youthful beauty and to show both in its contours and its colours ghastly suggestions of lineaments that have for a long while belonged to the dead.

The twilight was already pouring out what dregs of the day it yet contained into

the bottomless cup of night when Sebastian Laud let himself into Cluniton churchyard.

Since his last interview with Lydia on the preceding day he had plunged defiantly into his parochial work: had visited every person in the place who could possibly have been supposed to want to see him and a great many who did not want to see him at all and had, on returning to his lodgings, buried himself in the most difficult Divinity. In his way he had at least reduced his trouble for a few hours to a sort of phantom terror in the background of his mind. Unfortunately, he had hardly got himself into this state before he overheard a conversation under his very window between two old women which made it quite clear that the whole village was accurately and exactly informed of his relations with Lydia, when he met her, and even indeed how far this 'friendship' had gone.

The overhearing of the coarse gossip of these rustic hags had, in his nervous and wrought state, precisely the opposite effect one might have imagined. Their quiet assumption of the very worst, their cool acceptance of it as, after all, not a very astounding event, almost put it into his mind to wish that his conscience had been of the easy sort that they considered it.

The mere grossness of their imagination worked upon him its evil will and, in a moment, all the devils that with such difficulty he had exorcised came crowding around him once more, ten times more powerful for their temporary exile.

He put on his hat and walked out into the dusk. He could see the church tower outlined against the sky and behind the town the wooded ridge where stood Murdock's Farm. He thought he could see from where he stood the very light in her room. Why was it that at this moment he should remember her having told him that on this particular evening her mother was going out for the night to stay, in fact, with relatives in Weymouth? He could not help connecting this with the illumined window at Murdock's Cottages, which kept winking like a monster eye across the valley.

In desperation, he rushed into the churchyard. The sight of the graves on previous occasions had a soothing influence upon him, but now they seemed to drag his spirit downwards. The influence of the place was altogether earthy. The countless tombstones, all of the same lichen-covered yellow sandstone, got upon his nerves. 'What a lot of stone wasted!' he felt inclined to cry. As a matter of fact this yellow sandstone of which everything was made took a peculiarly deathly hue at night, the sort of yellow hue which dead people's faces come to bear. And its universal prevalence, whether in walls, houses, paving stones, pigsties, church or gravestones began gradually to oppress him . The very clay of the heavy, muddy soil under his feet seemed to have the same quality, an earthiness that positively dragged downward everything connected with it. Its yellow colour became more and more synonymous with the colour of mortality.

To and fro, along the little path between the graves, paced the poor priest, struggling desperately in what seemed a losing struggle with this earth-generated

monster that filled his veins and clouded his spirit. Once he approached one of the church windows and looked in, but he could see nothing except darkness there and heavy stone hands seemed to drag him back and draw him towards what he feared. Once more he glanced towards the swaying row of dark Scotch firs, behind which a whitish glimmer now indicated the ascent of the moon. There, like the lighted candle upon some altar, he saw the illuminated window of Murdock's Cottage. It seemed to him that the singular ridge drew him as though a force that had an actual potency; as though beneath the drooping ferns and the moss, beneath the damp grass and the heavy clay, all that weight of yellow sandstone had really the power of drawing him towards it as a magnet draws its metallic slave.

Had Sebastian Laud been an ordinary gross kind of average youth, his obvious inclination would have been to consecrate at the altar this unhallowed passion, but Laud was far too finely strung, too skilled also in the analysis of his own feelings, to tolerate the usual compromise, the social equivocation.

Possessed though he was by his mad desire, he could not conceal from himself the knowledge that a desire so absorbing was in itself wrong — and that no marriage ceremony could really make it right.

Throughout the struggle, as is often the case with temperaments of this sensuous-ascetic type, he considered the matter solely from his own point of view and even when, led by an overpowering instinct, he began to tremble beneath the thought that he was destined to yield — it was his own fall from virtue, and not any ulterior unhappiness that might come to the woman, that was the lever to his anticipated remorse. Trembling from head to foot with a wild excess of desperate pleasure, he flung open the churchyard gate and emerged into the grassy expanse in front of the Priory. The moon had now risen: shaking herself clear of the clouds that impeded her course, she sailed clear into the open sky. How many reckless actions leading to how many catastrophes had that pale globe looked down upon ever since the beginning of the world? Under the moonlight Nero's mother must have fled from her son. Under the moonlight Beatrice Cenci must have advanced to avenge herself upon her father. The unearthly calm of moonlight throws round every separate entity a sort of dissolving spell that reduces The Many into the One and this is what constitutes its fatal attraction. Not only the moonlight which now flooded it, but the very Priory itself seemed, as he passed it by, to encourage his dark purpose and to beckon him on. While, on earth, the kindred spirits whose gentle piety had been frustrated by those grim battlements seemed to have passed altogether away from the scene of their earthly struggles, those tragic 'others' that every history betrays seemed to haunt still the place that had witnessed their preference of earthly over heavenly joys.

To the imagination of this poor priest all the damned troops of both churchyard and Priory flocked now about him and goaded him on towards his fate. Hastily, and like a man walking in his sleep, he ascended the hill. As he neared the

summit a large owl like an immense moth flung itself hooting from one tree to another and a cortège of wild bats burst into a fantastic dance and wheeled round his head.

On the top, just under the mossy wall of Murdock Farm, he paused and looked round. Against the dark eastern sky Cluniton Hill lifted its arrow-like tower to Heaven in a sort of inarticulate appeal, as the breast of a wounded Amazon might show the dart that had hurt her still sticking there. Above his head he could hear the wind racing like a wild hunter through the branches of the Scotch firs upon whose red trunks the moon fell so strangely. It was, for Sebastian, one of those moments in which diverging destinies, alternative fates, exclusive eternities, evidence how much of reality lies in the popular notion of Heaven and Hell.

Almost paralysed by the struggle within him, he found himself watching himself as with the eyes of a detached observer and anticipating vaguely, aloofly the result of this great psychic battle in which one of the two opposing squadrons was already fleeing with broken chariot wheels and shattered spears.

Grotesque images, too, rose out of the borderland of his consciousness and established themselves, leering and mocking. He could not help observing the peculiar gestures of a white cow that in a paddock just below him was rubbing its muddy back persistently against a post. Sebastian Laud found himself counting — one — two — three — four — five — as the white cow's tail switched backwards and forwards across her flank. The cry of a rabbit, a cry like a frightened child's, roused him from this state of equilibrium. 'It's caught in a gin,' he muttered aloud and, plunging through the wet elder-bushes and entangling dock, nettles and burrs, he made his way as well as he could in the direction of the sound. Hardly conscious of it himself, he had (in reality) apprehended the chance of liberating some imprisoned creature as a sort of penance done in anticipation of the crime he was resolved to commit — for the crime that was yet in the future. The elder-bushes sprinkled his face with drops of rain and clutched at his throat, while the nettles stung his hands. His boots got covered with the sodden petals of dead flowers and with the pollen of trailing grasses. Moths, all dilapidated and draggled, fluttered into a moment or two of twilight recognition and then sank again into leafy oblivion. On he pressed, led by the weaker and weaker cries of the hurt creature; this single one among the innumerable victims of the merciless Mother that was able, at that moment, to make itself heard.

At length he came upon a little declivity of trampled earth where were the mouths of several rabbit holes tunnelling the soft yellow mould. Here the cries died away into terrified whimperings and in the mouth of the first hole he looked into he half saw and half felt (for the moonlight was growing every moment more misty and obscure) the poor furry thing caught by one of its hind legs.

Laud knelt down and pressed the iron spring; the little tuft of grey fur whimpered more and made a convulsive movement, but it could do no more — both its hind legs were broken. The clergyman was not skilled in putting an end to

wounded rabbits, but two or three severe knocks of its head against the root of a tree sent this poor weakling with kindly swiftness to its last account. It was now, at any rate, with Kings and Emperors. Then he tugged at the gin with a vague idea of preventing further cruelties, but the thing was too firmly fastened and he was compelled to desist, his hands covered with yellow mould. Whether the effort of pulling at the chain had warmed his blood, or contact with the earth had materialised his feeling, or whether the killing of the rabbit had in a manner drawn out the concealed and aboriginal savage latent in the man, it were not easy to say, but after this event the last shreds of conscience and remorse fell away from his mind.

With a more assured, less nervous step than he had ever used in his life before, with the step, in fact, not any longer of a monk, of a recluse, of an ascetic, but of some successful and potent conqueror, Laud made his way rapidly and directly towards Murdock's Cottage.

He soon emerged out of the semi-darkness of the bushes into the little enclosed garden illuminated by the lamp set in Lydia Rancey's window. Rapidly, yet cautiously, he climbed over the low wall, strode across the potato bed and peered (almost dazzled) into the lighted room. A heavy mass of the wild clematis and goat's beard brushed against his face as he held it back with one hand as he looked into the room, and the lamp on the window ledge made it difficult at first to see what was there, but by degrees he became conscious that the room was empty. The white bird whose nest he had come to violate was already flown.

Disappointment may be the nurse of patience, but she is also the feeder of lust. All kinds of wild imaginings rushed through his brain. His blood was on fire. At that moment he looked up to the room above, the girl's sleeping room, and suddenly became aware that there was a light there too, but that the blind was drawn down. He stepped back, making a little gasping noise in his throat, trampling as he did so upon a bed of mignonette which straightway emitted a double portion of perfume. He stepped back and for the second time made a gasping noise in his throat, for he saw a shadow move across the blind and he saw by the outlines of the shadow that it was a woman in a loose gown.

A moment more and this poor mad priest had picked up a little clod of mould from the garden and had thrown it against the window. Then, for the third time, he gasped in his throat, but with a different sound, for he saw crossing the illuminated blind two shadows, and he knew that one of the shadows was the shadow of a man. None of the things animate or inanimate that Sebastian passed by in his headlong flight as he rushed from the house of his faithless mistress, could, we must think, have been quite indifferent to the turmoil of feelings that swept this poor priest along, as through meadows, bushes and fir trees (mocked ever as he ran by the cold impassive Moon) he made his way towards Murdock's Pond. He felt as he fled that the earth was drawing him by a magnetic power to mix himself with her and forget his misery.

Poor wretch! His misery was indeed overwhelming. He had thrown away his religion for his love and now his love had thrown him away for a lighter love than his. He burst through the fir-trees, flinging their branches aside, and ran rapidly to the edge of the water.

At the water's edge he paused. It will not easily be believed, but it is none the less true, that at this moment, with the gulfs of death waiting to swallow him up, he began to experience a sense of rest, almost of happiness. The sort of feeling that comes over a person on the point of going to sleep began to draw over him and, with the sense that he was going to leave all the tragic complications of existence, there arose in him a spontaneous and pardonable clinging to the thousand and one trifles, not tragic or complicated at all, that make up so large a part of life. Having once stared into those depths and anticipated the terror of that final end, he felt himself in the situation of one condemned to die and, feeling this, all remorse being atoned for and consigned to oblivion, he was free to enjoy those thousand and one little devices that make existence endurable.

It is only those who have really 'been to Hell' that are able to live gaily in the so-called trifles of life and be, as it is said the Greeks were, superficial through profundity. This may have been the secret of Cowper's whimsical wit. In this mood, regarding himself as isolated by his crime and emancipated from any further mortal ties, he sat down on the bank of the pond and began with quaint assiduity plaiting reeds together. It gave him an odd sort of satisfaction to his mind to find himself able to plait with damp grasses a few little green mats at the moment when he was going to vanish into Eternity.

One mat after another he plaited in this way, every now and then looking at the water and saying to himself 'When I have made one more mat I will do it.'

Still he went on plaiting mats until he had made a considerable gap in the reeds that surrounded the water's edge; there had not been such a gap in the reeds of Murdock's Pond since Lydia Rancey's uncle, for whom she used to keep house, died under extraordinary circumstances by drowning himself here. They had searched many days for his body, but had never found it. As he plaited his reed-mats in the moonlight, hearing and yet not hearing the lap lap lap of the water among the roots of the rushes, the story of old Rancey's death came into his mind and with it came a hideous suggestion as to the cause of his despair and what sort of sin it was that lay so heavy on his mind and might not be removed except by death. Sebastian Laud quite dropped his reeds and, with his hands fallen on each side of him, sat watching with a curious sort of melancholy smile the depths of the water. What was that palpable obscurity, that indescribable image, that seemed to rise out of the depths to greet his look?

The violent emotions of Sebastian Laud were not the only emotions experienced that night. To the fatal bedroom where he found her, Lydia Rancey, made demon-like with pride, had drawn by her wiles and her devices, her innocent and guileless cousin Bob Runter, the fool of the village, 'a primordial and notorious

fool, a nodding and wagging fool' with the definite and fixed intention of maddening to a point of reckless despair the fastidious lover who had thrown her aside.

She knew well enough that the lamp in the parlour window would draw its moth: she knew her power. And when she heard the little lump of mould strike against the pane it gave her exquisite pleasure to drag across the window her clumsy and astonished relative, who had sat, poor boy, for the last quarter of an hour staring and muttering on the edge of the bed, far too frightened to disregard her commands when she told him to look the other way while she undid her skirt and loosened her hair. Only a woman of a super-subtle brain, a real provincial Giaconda, would have devised in so short a time so cunning and convincing a manner of being revenged. Through a crack in the blind she saw Sebastian rush away stunned and overpowered and in a moment she turned haughtily to her companion.

'You can go now,' she said.

'Ain't 'ee goin to give me sumat afore partin?' growled the disappointed Bob.

'What do you think I can give you?' asked she, turning her back upon him and with a proud sweep of her hand putting up her hair.

'All right Miss Lydy. Them as isn't wanted are best at 'ome. I'll jest wish 'ee good night.'

Saying this, the honest fellow hastily and awkwardly made his way down the steep stairs, knocking his forehead a sharp crack as he did so upon the lintel of the parlour door.

'Leave the lamp where it is,' she shouted down to him. 'And, I say, Bob, you can have those apples on the chimney piece if you like.'

He possessed himself of two large red apples, glanced once round with a sort of dog-like pleading as though vaguely hoping that after all he might be allowed some little favour, and let himself out into the garden. When he was over the wall he looked back at the girl's window. The blind was drawn and she was leaning out looking fixedly into the darkness, but not looking at him.

With a sudden swing of his arm he flung the apples she had given him fiercely against the wall of the cottage. As he did this, the intensity of his feeling and the vigour of his action gave to the Cluniton fool a dignity equal to that of Alexander the Great, but it did not last long and the slouching figure that made its way back to the village and was afterwards discovered dead-drunk in the gutter outside the Cluniac's Arms, appeared as ridiculous as any Solomon, of the wisdom that does not love folly, could have wished it to appear.

But Lydia continued to look fixedly out of her window. She was able from her point of observation to discern between the trees, the pale glint of the moonlight upon the little winding path that Laud had followed in his descent to Murdock's Pond. Long did she stare upon this path, revolving many things in her memories.

The image of an old man with bowed head following the same way recurred so

insistently upon her that she could not dismiss it. She was not unacquainted with the sinister rumours that had circulated through the village at the time of her uncle's death. She was not unacquainted with the thoughts of many of her fellow villagers about her. She alone knew whether they were true or false.

She withdrew from the window and, slipping off her night-gown, rapidly began dressing herself again. A large white ghost-moth attracted by the glare of the lamp fell singed and fluttering at her feet. She picked it up, put it out of its pain and held it for a moment in her hand. As she looked at the thing, the delicate bloom brushed off its wings and its body crushed, an obscure wave of pity for all the hurt creatures of the earth, whether of the race of Adam or not, rose in the depths of her being a moment and died away. She ran downstairs, removed the lamp from the window ledge, turned the light low and went out.

In the space of a few minutes the night had changed its character. The moon was hidden behind a bank of clouds, gusts of wind were shaking the fir trees and rustling through the grasses and nettles. She found her way — with some difficulty for the darkness was beginning now to be very dense — to the path through the woods which led down to Murdock's Pond. Every step she made, the wind rose higher, the fir-branches swayed, creaked and groaned and from their ghostly foliage came a murmur like the sound of an angry sea.

It might perhaps seem fantastic speculation to think that the elemental powers of the earth experience some kind of conscious sympathy with those other reckless and impassioned children of hers that themselves, in their turn, seem so sensitive to her wilder moods. It might indeed seem possible that the popular judgment as to where the path really lies in situations such as this would by no means be the judgment of these elemental cousins of ours, these spirits of wind and air, if they could find a voice. Lydia Rancey hastened on in the increasing dark, every now and then stooping down to disentangle her skirt from some briar that clung about her, more than once stumbling and nearly falling over the moss-covered roots that made the ground uneven. Once she struck her forehead so severely against an overhanging branch that the blow drew blood. At length big drops of rain began to fall and the darkness grew so dense that in spite of all her efforts she lost the path and found herself trying to force her way through almost impenetrable masses of bramble and nettles. She let her hands fall to her sides, her lips trembled and her chin sank upon her breast. The situation had almost reached the limit of her endurance. While such events were being transacted among the other characters on our pastoral stage, Sebastian Laud still remained, plaiting reed mats and collecting the forces of his soul on the brink of the last catastrophe.

The moon wavered, fluctuated, obscured itself, dimly reappeared, made itself far off and vaporous, and at last closed finally upon itself all the watery doors of a long accumulated and persistent rain.

The rain aroused the self-condemned one from his reverie. He turned up the

collar of his long clerical coat, buttoning it from top to bottom and settling it about his knees. The shish shish shish of the rain on the surface of the pond made him give a slight shiver. If only one could simply sink slowly in deep water, just fall asleep — how easy that would be. It is all the unpleasant accompaniments of dying that make it so difficult. If it were only to cease to exist, to be no more a breathing, moving, thinking person, that were easy to welcome. If it were only fear of future retributions — but this rain levelled everything to a dull plane of fleshly self-preservation — it dropped from his hat upon his face, it ran down his neck, it made his trousers cling to his legs. The mere animal desire for warmth came so forcibly upon him as a contrast to all this that, although his mind still held wavering to the fixed idea of self-destruction, his flesh, up to now simply quiescent to the spirit's dictates, gave visible signs of rebellion against this autocratic fiat of will.

Called back by this weakness to earthly considerations, Sebastian was surprised to find himself wondering whether perhaps in the continuing service of the altar he had, after all, only just begun to serve, there was not scope for a life's devotion, even though the one immense desire of his mortal flesh went unsatisfied. It must also be confessed for the sake of exactness that in this sudden outrush of his imagination in the paths of life the reviving image of an actual earthly fire made of coals and wood and glowing in a mortal grate, played no inconsiderable or unimportant part.

A few hours exposure to earth and air and mist and rain has worked more difficult miracles than that of saving a poor passion-racked priest from destruction. Very slowly, he rose to his feet and stretched himself. The little hollow he had made in the mud by sitting so long in the same place quickly filled itself with water. His limbs felt stiff and cramped and dull, aguish pains shot up and down his body as he turned his back on Murdock's Pond and limped mechanically towards the shelter of the trees.

He had hardly reached them when it seemed to him that he heard in the distance a faint sobbing cry. For a moment it made him think of the rabbit he had rescued from the gin, but suddenly he shook the rain from his hat, flung it among the wet ferns and listened, breathless, leaning against the trunk of a little spruce tree, his forehead against its bark. The cry was repeated, a low sobbing wail as of one in hopeless wretchedness both of body and mind. Sebastian Laud raised his head, straightened himself like an Indian scout then, forgetting cramp, rain, suicide, everything except the voice of the girl he loved, he plunged into the thick of the wood, forcing the wet boughs from before him and crashing through the brambles like a madman.

'All right! All right! Wait where you are!' he shouted.

Relieved of his pressure, the little spruce tree straightened itself out, just as it would have done if the object whose weight it had borne had been a horse or a cow. His black clerical hat lay where it had fallen and the lady ferns that it had

prostrated were not consoled by the sacredness of their burden.

Meanwhile, Sebastian Laud, with a wild laugh of joy that expressed in one strange note all the whirling feelings of the last twenty hours, rushed into the middle of the bramble patch into which the poor exhausted girl had sunk and, heedless of the scratches, lifted her high in his arms and carried her triumphantly, her thin calico clothes, soaked by the rain, clinging around her, up the hill that led to Murdock's Cottage.

All this while Lydia hardly spoke a word. While she lay in his arms her subtle-changing face wore the expression of a wounded animal, frightened, defensive, clinging.

The wedding of Sebastian Laud and Lydia Rancey was long a story of inexhaustible pith and sap to the gossips of Cluniton. It was followed a week after by the death of Bob Runter — the village fool succumbed to a fever, the result of wilful exposure after excessive drinking. The people affirmed that the poor wretch did not allow himself a single lucid interval after his cousin was led to the altar but, having pawned every article he possessed, poured pint after pint of brandy down his throat until, recognising no-one and babbling strange nonsense about yellow apples and rotten bones, he did as we have said. He was buried before the married pair returned from their honeymoon. The Rev. Laud, when he did come back, put up at his own cost over the fool's grave a fine marble tombstone upon which he caused to be written a long text from Holy Scripture invoking upon Bob Runter in the spirit all those blessings, felicities and enjoyments that had been so carefully withheld from him while in the flesh. But the ghost of the rustic Harlequin was soon avenged. It was not long before rumours, so derogatory to the incumbent of Cluniton's moral character that they could not pass unnoticed, began to reach the Bishop of Wessex.

Episcopal enquiry, if it did not elicit any actual evidence of pre-nuptial guilt, sufficiently satisfied itself that the Rev. Sebastian Laud had married 'below his position'.

Cluniton itself, where the ritualistic zeal of the young priest had roused the most merciless antipathy, where superstition and scandal, puritanism and pruriency, had embraced over his wife's reputation, joined with the ecclesiastical authorities in making his longer stay in the place impossible.

Laud imagined that he would have no difficulty in obtaining another curacy, even though he had to submit to an inferior position, but he soon found, when it came to the point, that the cloud which hung over him in Cluniton followed elsewhere and that, at any rate in the part of the church he belonged to, a curate with the sort of wife which Lydia Laud was more and more coming to represent, was not in any kind of request.

The Bishop of Wessex did indeed invite the late incumbent to appear before him at his palace at Aqua Lucida in order that things might be discussed and some sort of arrangement come to, but Sebastian's spirit was gone and a mixture

of pride and hopelessness prevented him from answering this episcopal condescension.

Outside his pastoral work Laud was penniless, so that it was an easy transition along the lines of least resistance to find himself established at Murdock's Cottage in a sort of indefinite visit to his wife's mother who, in reality, poor woman, ever since his enforced retirement, had by washing, charring and doing all sorts of cleaning at the neighbouring farm house, supported son-in-law and daughter as well as herself.

Sebastian's relations to his wife varied now between moods of amorous servility when he was simply her slave, and moods of bitter renunciation, when he heaped upon her cruel and pitiless words as the sole cause of his ruin.

His religion had never been a thing of mystical or spiritual necessity to him, it had always been associated in his mind with certain definite acts of worship and a sort of self-pleasing reverence for his own position as parish priest — and now all that was gone and ambition gone with it. There was little left in the man except the innate animal instincts and a kind of blind rage against the Power that had permitted him to fall so low.

One day, after a morning spent in trying to teach the farmer's youngest boy, a child too sickly for school, the rudiments of English, Sebastian wandered down through the fir-tree path towards Murdock's Pond.

A week's heavy rain had altered the whole appearance of the woods. The ferns hung trailing among dead leaves; the tall French willow flower carried on their heads tufts of gossamery seed; even the callamint and marjoram, still lifting their purplish clusters above the wet clay, looked wannish and faded. The moss alone, with an almost ghoulish glee, seemed greener and fresher than before, as though it actually battened upon death and drew its sustenance from dissolution.

When he arrived at the edge of the pond, Sebastian paused and looked at the reeds. There was the gap still and there was the trampled mud and the trodden grass. He began looking about and then stooped and picked something up. It was one of the little reed-mats that, in his misery six weeks before, he had so strangely occupied himself with plaiting. It was not disappointed passion filling him with a wild desire for non-existence that possessed him now. It was a dull, dumb sense of distaste, a distaste not only of this life but of all possible lives, a sense of having had his opportunity and failed, failed without any hope of recovery — failed without any wish for recovery.

He looked at the fir trees on the other side of the pond, their tall stems outlined in the water and both they and their shadows swaying sorrowfully from side to side. Then, slowly, it began to be borne in upon him that these also, these things of mere vegetable fibre, these things whose common, slow, uneventful existence had commenced long before he was born and would survive long after he was dead, shared also in the common trouble. And his sad dream carried him still further until he thought of the very clay beneath his feet, the melancholy depths

of dark water stretched before him, having their part too, even they, in the travail of this strange world. Was it not, after all, he thought, a rash and inconsiderate blunder, a sheer misreading of the whole system of things, to pursue his happiness in the blind desperate manner he had done, first in the ritual of the Church and then in the ritual of passion?

For the moment, a vision of a completely different kind of existence passed before him, an existence that should realise the commonality of the burden to be borne and, in realising this, lift half its load. Such were his thoughts when, whether in his fancy, as most would think, or in fact, whether (as he afterwards himself held in the light of subsequent events) in actual fact and reality, he saw, slowly approaching the pond from the opposite side, the figure of an old man leaning on a stick. He was dressed in a greenish-coloured coat and moved with difficulty, for he was almost bent double with age. Laud recognised him in a moment as the old man he had seen in the garden of Lydia's cottage digging up potatoes. The old man moved towards the pond until he came to a yew-tree which grew about half-way between the wood and the water. Here he was lost to sight. Laud waited, expecting every moment to see him emerge, but he still remained invisible. It was within the bounds of possibility that, having reached this point, he had by some freak of old age returned as suddenly as he had appeared and, by retreating in a direct line with the yew-tree, had managed to reach the shadow of the trees unnoticed. Not, however, quite satisfied with this explanation, and a little afraid that some harm might have come to the old man, Laud hastened round the south side of the pond and advanced to the yew-tree. There was nothing behind it. The old man had entirely disappeared. Standing here absorbed in thought, Sebastian did not notice a light step approaching him.

'I guessed where I should find you,' said Lydia, laying her hand upon his arm. Sebastian drew away.

'I wish you would not follow me about like this,' he said.

''Twas the other way once,' answered the girl, letting her hand fall to her side. 'But it is always like this. I am not the first.'

For several moments he pondered, looking fixedly at the shadows in the water while a rising gust of wind went shivering through the reeds.

'Come, let us go home,' he said at last, and took his wife's hand.

They both of them sighed and moved on slowly with tired steps till they were lost among the trees: but when they emerged into the open at Murdock's Cottage they had not dropped one another's hands.

Murdock's Pond, thus left alone in the increasing shadows, alone would bear witness if, when all was hushed except the murmur of the wind in the branches, an old man had come from behind the yew-tree and, rushing from thence with a wild gesture of his hands towards Heaven, had plunged into the water where it lay deepest and let it close over him for the last time.

John Cowper Powys

Book News

In addition to Jeremy Hooker's new book of essays, the University of Wales Press still has two other titles of Powys interest in print, *John Cowper Powys's* Wolf Solent*: Critical Studies*, edited by Belinda Humfrey at £25, and *Maiden Castle* by John Cowper Powys, edited by Ian Hughes at £35.95.

*****

The 'Commentary' section of the *Times Literary Supplement* of 3 January 1997 carried a substantial article by P. J. Kavanagh on the greatness of *A Glastonbury Romance*.

*****

Steven Ferdinando of The Old Vicarage, Queen Camel, near Yeovil, Somerset (Tel: 01935 850210) has recently published his 'Powys Short List Number 23', featuring a wide range of books by the Powys family and their circle.

*****

C. J. Martin's Catalogue 14 of Modern First Editions features the postcard jointly written by John Cowper Powys and Henry Miller which has recently appeared in another catalogue. It is here priced at £85. A copy of Miller's *Quiet Days in Clichy* inscribed by J.C.P. is also listed at £295.

*****

Adrian Leigh of 17a Clifton Terrace, Brighton BN1 3HA (tel. 01273 326515) had recently acquired a copy of *Ultima Verba*, one of the two collections of poetry by Alfred de Kantzow which was revised by John Cowper Powys, and has offered to re-sell it to a member of the Society at the cost price of £35, plus postage and packing. The book, published in the Cameo series in 1902 by T. Fisher Unwin, is described as follows: 'Boards, top edge gilt. Some slight foxing of covers, lower cover little rubbed, few small splits to yapp edges, else very good.' It also contains a photograph of de Kantzow (with parrot) and is signed, with a presentation inscription by the author. It also contains a poem dedicated to Dorothy Powys.

Sic !

Two 'interesting' and 'previously unknown' novels by John Cowper Powys have recently appeared in the catalogues of booksellers who had better remain anonymous. They are the remarkable *Skobber Wald* and the fascinating *Wolf Solvent*. Has anyone else come across such gems as these?

Paul Roberts

Finally, our very own The Dorset Year

See the enclosed leaflet and order your own copies now.