Editorial

Domestic themes seem to have emerged in this issue: JCP among the flowers – TFP dunking bread and butter in his tea – Littleton's new spectacles ... In contrast there is JCP's 1949 diatribe against the Unconscious, an Empire-building Powys uncle, and a view of the mine of Powys archive material in Austin, Texas.

KK

Honorary Life Membership

At the meeting of the Committee on 12th January 2002 it was unanimously agreed to confer Honorary Life Membership of the Society upon the publisher Cecil Woolf, and he has happily agreed to accept this. Cecil Woolf will be known to many members and Powys enthusiasts as a champion of the work of John Cowper Powys through his important series of Collected Letters of this most prolific and wonderful of letter-writers. But Mr Woolf has for years been a refreshingly idiosyncratic scholarly publisher with excellent books on many writers, as well as being himself a figure of long standing in the literary world. We wish him well, and hope for further additions to the Powys canon.

PJF

ON OTHER PAGES

Committee News

There have been committee meetings on 12th January 2002 (in Cheltenham) and 8th April (in London). Chief subjects discussed in January were the amendments to the constitution (with general agreement for the Chairman's suggested formulations for the ballot, apart from the proposal for possibly holding the AGM separately from the Conference, pending more general discussion with members); the various possibilities and prices for admission to the Conference (whether to admit non-members, or with day-membership, etc); and the revising of the Website.

At the April meeting the results of the ballot on the Constitution (see below) were welcomed by the committee as a confident result. The Chairman demonstrated the basic Website to be relaunched, hoping for suggestions from all members as it is developed. It was agreed to allocate funds to copy the index made by Morine Krissdóttir to the Collection at Dorchester, and to fill gaps there with more recent Powys publications. Peter Foss described the facilities at Millfield. We gladly accepted Louise de Bruin's offer to be the practical manager for the Conference. The Conference programme was discussed with suggestions for presenters. Jeff Kwintner put forward the name of an economical video photographer to record at the Conference, and this was agreed to. (For details of the Conference see below.)

KK

Report on the Constitution Ballot, 2002

There was a substantial response from members (about 36%) to our request to vote upon amendments to the constitution. The results were as follows:

YES	**123**
NO	**4**

There was one spoilt ballot, in that no box was ticked. The committee is very grateful to the membership for their involvement in this constitutional process, and for the kind letters and notes that were sent with the ballot papers. The constitutional amendments come into effect immediately; a revised text is in preparation. The byelaw attached to the constitution has been rescinded.

Peter J Foss, Hon. Sec., 3rd April 2002

The Powys Society – Nominations and Elections under the new Constitution

The amendments to the Constitution of The Powys Society having been passed

in a Postal Ballot by 123 votes to 4, the amended Constitution is now in force.

Nominations are required for the all Honorary Officers and for two members of the committee, as set out below.

All paid-up and honorary members may submit nominations; each such nomination shall be made by a Proposer and a Seconder in writing, accompanied by the Nominee's agreement in writing.

Nominations are to reach the Hon. Sec., Peter J. Foss at 82 Linden Road, Gloucester GL1 5HD **not later than 18 June 2002.**

Honorary Officers

The present Honorary Officers are as follows:

Chairman	Richard Perceval Graves
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway
Hon. Treasurer	Stephen Powys Marks
Hon. Secretary	Peter J. Foss

The one-year term of office of all these Officers expires at the AGM on 18 August 2002, and therefore nominations are sought for all four Officers. Richard Perceval Graves, David Goodway and Peter J. Foss are willing to serve for a further year, but Stephen Powys Marks is not willing to stand for re-election.

Members of the Committee

Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner, Sonia Lewis, David Gervais and Timothy Hyman each have one or two years of their three-year term of office to run. John Powys's three years will expire at the AGM on 18 August 2002; he is willing to serve for a further three years. In addition, there is one vacancy on the committee. Accordingly, nominations are sought for two members of the committee.

All nominations for Honorary Officers and Committee should be submitted to the Hon. Sec. by 18 June 2002.

RPG

The Powys Society Conference 2002

'In View of Glastonbury'

Millfield School, Street, Somerset,
Friday 16 August – Sunday 18 August 2002

The Powys Society 2002 Conference is to be held at Millfield, Street, near Glastonbury, and we hope to secure **early bookings** for what promises to be a rewarding and happy occasion for the society. Final details of the programme will be provided in the July *Newsletter*, but the present *Newsletter* contains an outline. We will be welcoming in our midst the distinguished authors Margaret Drabble,

Colin Wilson and Iain Sinclair among others.

Millfield itself is a splendid modern co-educational boarding school set in 120 acres of rolling parkland within sight of Glastonbury Tor. The facilities are exceptional, with new purpose-built residential halls housing rooms for single or double occupancy, a spacious dining room providing all variety of cafeteria-style meals, and we will have for our use a special lecturing facility with other subsidiary rooms.

A note about accommodation. The rooms are provided on two floors in two separate halls of residence called Martins and Acacia. All rooms have single beds and hand wash-basins, and bed-linen is provided. But guests must bring their own towels and soap. Shower and toilet facilities are nearby, and each house is provided with a tea and coffee-making area and a comfortable common room with TV etc. There is a strictly NO SMOKING policy in all buildings on the campus.

We will hope to provide more details of public transport in the next *Newsletter*. There is a railway station at Castle Cary with coordinating bus services to Street and Millfield.

Outline programme

Friday 16 August 2002

Afternoon: arrival. Informal **Welcome Reception.** Dinner. Welcoming speech by Chairman. **Talk 1: Larry Mitchell : *'And Death Shall Have No Dominion': Theodore Powys and John Death.***

Saturday 17 August

Breakfast. **Talk 2: Colin Wilson.** Coffee. **Talk 3: Iain Sinclair.** Lunch. **Visit to Glastonbury with Readings on the Tor.** Tea. **Talk 4** – to be announced. Dinner. Platform Discussion : *'A Glastonbury Romance' – its place in literature.* With **Margaret Drabble, Glen Cavaliero, P. J. Kavanagh, Timothy Hyman.**

Sunday 18 August

Breakfast. **Talk 5: Chris Woodhead: *'Wolf Solent', The Enduring Appeal.***

Coffee. **AGM** followed by **Members' Discussion: *'Which Powys book should one read first?'*** Lunch. End of Conference 2.30 pm.

PJF

Other News

Neil Lee has sent an **obituary** of the sculptor **Jack Whitehead,** a one-time member of the Society and admirer of Llewelyn of whom he made a portrait. (More of this in the next *Newsletter*.)

The **Powys Society of North America**'s latest *Notes* (in larger format)

contains essays on Gamel Woolsey's unpublished novel (Barbara Ozieblo); 'Epistemology and the Aesthetic of Personality in *A Glastonbury Romance*' (Brian Glavey); 'JCP's Phenomenology of Agape' (Patrick Couch); and 'Tackling the Furka' (Peter Foss); together with speculations by its retiring present secretary and editor on the future of the PSNA (including possible links with the UK Powys Society ...) The main essay in No 3 (2001) of the **Swedish** J. C. Powys Society is an essay on *Autobiography* (Ingemar Algulin). The second ***Lettre Powysienne*** was chiefly devoted to *Wood and Stone*; the third (expected shortly) has the theme of 'the elemental', with a specially written essay by Elmar Schenkel on JCP and Goethe. Most of the *Lettre* is now bilingual. We hear that since January 2000 there have been over 6000 'hits' on the French and English versions of the Peltier Powys site and its last page of *Weymouth Sands*. This sounds encouraging for all.

Wolf Solent has appeared in **Japanese**: in September 2001, translated by Akira Suzuki of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, in two hardback volumes. (Anthony Head reports, and hopes to comment on its Introduction soon.)

Elaine Mencher has reported that an important **essay on T. F. Powys** by Professor Philip Hobsbaum will appear in the US in November 2002, in supplement 8 of *British Writers*. This authoritative American reference work comes out annually in volume form, with studies and bibliographies by various hands (general editor Prof. Jay Parini, poet and biographer of Steinbeck and Frost).

However, reviewing ***The Dictionary of Welsh Biography, 1941–1970*** (TLS, 12 April), Joan Abse comments on the variety of colourful characters included among the sedater Welsh ones: 'Dylan Thomas, a notorious 'roaring boy' is here, of course; and that fascinating writer and character John Cowper Powys, of Welsh descent, but the only one of a distinguished family in the *Dictionary*, because in the latter part of his life he lived in and identified himself with Wales'.

The republication of ***Owen Glendower*** has been widely welcomed, Rob Stepney reports. 'Sales started promisingly before Christmas. Fifty members of the Powys Society bought copies through the *Newsletter*, and a similar number responded to mailing to members of the Owain Glyndwr Society. The Welsh Books Council had distributed all of its first order of 100 books by early January, and then bought another 100 copies. The Council chose *Owen Glendower* as one of the titles to be promoted this year in its Outreach scheme "Good Reading from Wales"'. Several hundred more sales followed Margaret Drabble's enthusiastic review in the *Guardian* (2 March) ('handsome edition ... introduction excellent'); the Walcot typesetting should form the basis of next year's US republication by Overlook Press; and a German publisher has shown interest.

An Ordinary Light and other poems by **Donald Ward**, a retired Society member still writing in his 90s, can be obtained from Peglet Press, 50 Arthur Street, Ampthill, Beds. MK45 2QQ.

What They Have Said: A Conference preview

'Reading a novel by John Cowper Powys is like climbing a mountain: it requires stamina but offers great rewards ... J. C. Powys is like no other writer. He can write very badly, but he can rise to strange and astonishing heights. He is bold, uninhibited, unedited and shameless. He has no pity for himself or the reader. He rears up, challenging, like a great crag in a wild landscape. He is well worth the effort he demands ... Nobody else writes like this, and some would not wish to, but the sheer boldness of it must be admired.' *Margaret Drabble (on* Owen Glendower, *2002)*

'It may sound an impossible notion – to write a novel about human passions against this background of the whole of nature; but it works triumphantly. ... The ordinary mechanics of a novel have never seemed less important than in *A Glastonbury Romance*. To become absorbed in its serene forward-flow is like drifting down a broad, peaceful river; time ceases to matter, and the reader is likely to spend half an hour lingering over some detailed description of dead leaves or the moss on an old tree-trunk... Powys has mastered the secret of inducing wide-angle consciousness ...

'Most of the world's novels ... are little more than a series of snapshots taken with a narrow-angle lens. The novelist's task is a spiritual one: to free himself from this narrowness, to achieve 'wide-angle' vision, and to convey this to his readers.

'The novelist's aim is to be ... a wide-angle lens ... not simply to show the world more truthfully, but *to make the reader more aware of his freedom* ... Freedom is the same for all human beings, but the maze inside each of us is different. The novelist's aim is to reach the freedom at the end of his own maze. The novel ...is esentially a thought-experiment ... an aid to the digestion of experience ... Ultimately, it would probably be true to say that the novel is about education ... of the writer as well as the reader.' *Colin Wilson (*The Craft of the Novel, *1975/86).*

'The point is I attached great importance to Powys on sexuality. It sees to me that he is one of the few modern novelists who really understands it. A kind of intense sexuality runs through all his novels, even when it doesn't come to the surface... I should explain that I've always attached enormous importance to sexuality as a kind of supra-normal experience ... I lectured to an utterly and totally hostile audience ...' *Colin Wilson (on his memorable appearance at the 1972 conference in Cambridge, in* Letter to Margaret Drabble *(about Angus Wilson) in* Abraxas *14 – no date, c.1990?)*

'After I began to read him [JCP] ... *Glastonbury Romance* haunted me ever since ... It was like a long mad Russian book with huge themes, an enormous cast, tremendous sense of place ... I planned a retelling of it in other forms ... I'd identified it with the English visionary tradition that was very important in my

life. ... Powys for me was an example of someone who could be totally independent and peculiar and create without financial reward ... like DHLawence and Dostoievski, making large-scale novels packed with energy and patheistic themes ... one of the great spirits. It's important to have someone ahead of you ... *Iain Sinclair* (in a video interview)

Celandines

More of JCP's Celandines (and other flowers of the spring).

His earlier, more anguished, poem is from Kenneth Hopkins's selection, Horned Poppies*:*

The Celandine

Somewhere far off — not here! not here!
A hedge of blackthorn grows
And under it a mossy ditch
Gathers and holds the water which
From a nearby pond outflows.

On some Spring evening — I forget
Whence I was journeying
Or whither was my purpose set —
I came upon this thing.

My thoughts just then were black as slime
On the edge of the nether pit;
And to every thought the devil beat time
And hummed as he drummed at it!

The Spring was with me — doubt it not!
For that land was the West Country;
And over coppice and garden-plot
Rolled a wave of greenery!

Till I stood by that ditch; and then it came
The relief for which I pined ...
A yellow star — a star of flame!
And there burst upon my mind

A far-off place — not here! not here!
Not even in the West Country ...
Where a hand that may not reappear
Plucked a celandine for me!

From After My Fashion*: Celandines as markers of the season:*

The remaining three miles of his road were taken more leisurely. He stopped frequently to listen to the birds. He lingered over the fast fading hedge plants of the earlier spring, such as celandines and cuckoo-flowers. He clambered down a steep bank to the margin of a slimy pond to touch with his fingers the cold wet roots of the water ranunculus .... (*chapter 1, p. 13*)

It was early February. In the ditches on both sides of the narrow lane ... the yellow celandines among their great cool leaves shone like stars seen through watery darkness. In the smaller oak and hazel woods there were already a few early primroses out, throwing upon the moss-scented air of those shadowy places that

faint, half-bitter sweetness which seems like the very body of the spring ... (*chapter 22, p.273*)

In a letter to Llewelyn, 11th June 1936 – Celandines as non-comformists?

I walked before breakfast today ... round that field I call "The Rough Field" up the lane, and then on across a few other fields — or rather most scrupulously following gingerly along by the walls, for fear of hurting the hay, which at present seems to consist only of buttercups, cuckoo-flowers and clover. All the way shrieked at by the angry plover, who must have a space of eight acres wherein it can nest. But there I visit the bank of the last of this year's primroses and say to myself "orphans of the flowery prime" — not a very magical or inspired line, but still by him who is by far the most English and most realistic of all our poets — and the last fading wood-anenomes. Yesterday I saw there too under a great rock, and a little further on, the last celandines — those most spirited of all — the first to appear and the last to go when the year's primal bloom is o'er before the roses and the longest day ...

Diary entries from the same week in Corwen:

Tuesday 9th June 1936. A Beautiful Day. The weather is perfect from any point of view, tho' not warm enough yet for some people. Sun — Clouds — Sun. Lovely air from the South-West ... I have never seen such wonderful veronica or speedwell as grows everywhere here. Stichwort and Veronica! There are still a few Celendines left. They come first and last longest of all the Spring flowers. All is white with Hawthorn & the blossom of Mountain Ash ...

Thursday 11th June. A beautiful Day! This weather is amazingly lovely. Warm and cool. Clouds & sun — mist and soft air ... Set out without any overcoat this morning and found the Brambles removed from my gate. So I went through the Rough Field and then thro' long grass with cuckoo-flowers under the cross farmer's wall & up to the hill ... The Genista (broom) is yellow beyond compare taking the place of the now faded gorze. And I've never seen such hawthorn or such fields of Buttercups and as for the Air here these days it is simply incredible. Scented with every sort of scent and yet so fresh and lovely — It is Mountain air and meadow air combined! Fresh and yet honey-fragrant. The Bracken is growing quite tall & unfolding its curled fronds. I saw no less than four Moon-Daisies or marguerite Daisies out ....

Friday 12th June. ... Rain in Night — Thin wetting Rain ... Took Old round Rough Field ... I wore my high Sears Roebuck boots today re-soled and by God! They kept the water out as well as my Welsh Working-man's boots recommended by Mr Edmunds which must now be re-soled. And it was a test of boots for the grass was soaked with rain. On every blade was a string of large diamonds of

water. I took two bundles of dead flowers to throw in the stream descending the mountain. That Plover is very teasing wheeling over the Old and me all the time. Why the devil doesn't it point out where its nest is so we could avoid it. One Bird cannot monopolise the whole of the Rough Field ... .

Sunday 14th June. A dark cold day and rain coming ... I set out for Rough Field and greatly did enjoy the cold rainy wind. I saw (on the way up the lane on the left hand all amid that big moss which is characteristic of this place as much as bracken itself) the Last Wood-Sorrel! Now I have seen the last Celandine the last primrose and the last wood-anenome. Eye-bright or Euphrasia is out. Blue Milkwort is out and everywhere I see Red Rattle and that little yellow pimpernel, which looks so reassuring...

Monday 15th June. Rain and wind. "Some tempestuous morn in early June when the year's primal burst of Bloom is o'er, before the Rose and the longest day ... Comes with the volleying rain and Tossing Breeze ... The Bloom is gone — & with the Bloom go I! Too quick Despairer wherefore wilt thou go? Soon shall we ——" Took Old round Rough Field. Both got soaking wet. Dried him and changed my trowsers ...

'Orphans...' and 'when the year's primal bloom' are quoted from Matthew Arnold's 'Thyrsis', a favorite poem of JCP's (and Llewelyn's, and Littleton's. JCP's essay on Arnold is one of the most illuminating in The Pleasures of Literature*). This poem was doubtless as much a part of JCP's mental furniture as were Wordsworth's several poems 'To the Small Celandine' (or Common Pilewort – WW's note) – the first of these ('There is a Flower ...') a favoured recitation-piece given to Victorian children – or as Longfellow's 'I am the god Thor ... This is my hammer ...' (from 'The Saga of King Olaf') which he repeated as a mantra in the last pages of his Diary. Has anyone written on JCP's way with quotations?*

Less comforting, more challenging Celandines in Owen Glendower*:*

Those were without doubt the happiest days in Catharine's life ... Rhisiart's presence was about her, his voice was in her ears, his arms were round her. The one tangible object in her room upon which she would fix her eyes as she knelt to tell her beads was neither her green forest nor her childhood's saint; it was a silver bowl full of celandines. She had come to associate Rhisiart with these hard, bright, metallic flowers. Their glittering, bodiless comet-heads with shining spatulate leaves were more independent and more defiant than other plants. It only pleased Catharine that their stalks should be so chilly and that they had no scent! They resembled young warriors, she told herself, and young chancellors too, with their piercing starry eyes held so straight, and their smooth, cool, dark, queer-shaped foliage — just like Rhisiart's inscrutable and far-reaching thoughts! ... .

Celandines have pride of place in her garden of happiness:

Catharine had so arranged her garden that this stream wandered between her stitchworts and primroses and cuckoo-flowers before it reached her favourite bed of celandines ... . *(But it is the broken primrose that speaks to her.)*

(From chapter xiv, 'Love and Shame' (p.499, old edition; new ed., pp.409–10))

Celandines still abound at Montacute as they must have done when the Powyses were young: in early Spring a yellow carpet for the paths in Pitt Wood, in Horses' Wood, in The Ladies' Walk; disappearing completely by the end of May.

A variant double-flowered Celandine, spotted growing on a bank in the village less than twenty years ago, is now officially named Ranunculus ficaria Montacute.

(With thanks to all contributors, and to JB for the above information. On a personal note, in this part of the country (high Cotswolds), 2002 has been an amazing year for Celandines.)

The Powys Book that Changed My Life

I find it easy to recall the impact of my first John Cowper Powys book; much harder to adduce its life-long effect. Most important, of course, is that it led me to all his other books.

Powys amazed me when I was fifteen, by new revelations and by writing of things which, blithely ignorant, I'd believed only I knew or suspected.

The girls' school I went to was, to me, something of a prison house and it was after three long years there that I happened to read the book which was to change my life for the next few years simply by keeping my spirits up.

I'd been familiar with the title – *In Defence of Sensuality* – one of three Powys books on my mother's shelves, since I was about eight. I knew the titles rather as children know the names on the gates of houses in the place where they live.

There were people at school who believed, or pretended to believe, that I was mad. I thank them now, for this went a long way to making me a suitable case for John Cowper Powys. By the time I came to read *In Defence of Sensuality* I'd learned to 'adjust the machinery of (my) mind', as Powys says; if not quite to conjure up the landscape of happiness, at least to lighten the burden of private anxiety and darkness. (These were the early years of the war and daylight-saving had, unaccountably, made it dark all the time.) I'd learned to do what Professor Harald Fawkner* has named 'ecstatic daydreaming' – not fantasy, nor introspection, appearing 'aimless' perhaps but, in fact, full of purpose. I knew that the wet,

fallen lime leaves in Bereweeke Road, on the way to the hockey field, when looked at a certain way, could suspend one 'reality' and unlock another. It was Powys's 'Homeric Secret'. I don't know whether, without Powys, my instinctive childhood elementalism would have survived adolescence. I only know that, with Powys, it did.

Powys defends the sacrosanct loneliness of everyone on this earth quite as passionately as he defends the sensuality of the book's title. His lonely 'I-am-I' is personified in the 'ichthyosaurus ego'. At fifteen, I looked up 'ichthyosaurus' and, finding it to be a fish, came to associate it with the trout who swam in the chalk stream near my home, half hidden in the darkness of water-buttercups, aware that I watched him from the bridge. Even now that I know so well the ichthyosaurus fossil on the wall of the Dorchester County Museum, the old association lasts.

Another presence in *In Defence of Sensuality*, and an unsettling one, was Powys's malign First Cause. A doubter already, I was asked to visualise a guilty First Cause, an 'Ultimate Responsibility' who possessed an 'inmost evil will' and who had made 'a ghastly mistake'. I felt the same thrill of blasphemy that Shelley had given me not long before; but there had been Demogorgon, or Necessity, on the side of Prometheus against the tyrannical Zeus. The only Necessity for Powys appeared to be the eternal conflict between Good and Evil. All this seemed terribly plausible in times when we saw Southampton, twenty miles or so away, bombed and glowing in the night sky. But my reading was as careless and partial as it was eager and I missed whole qualifying paragraphs and pages. Good versus Evil or the Marriage of Heaven and Hell – I had yet to meet Geard of Glastonbury, Powys's St Paul, Powys's Dostoevsky, and to return, many times, to the book that had led me to them.

But, unequivocal and recurring through all of Powys's work lies his conviction that cruelty is evil, evil is cruelty and that power, exploited, to hurt, mock, terrify or control people's lives, is the vehicle of evil. In some respects *In Defence of Sensuality* is a deliberately indulgent book and the image of the ichthyosaurus ego, potent as it is, may seem almost fanciful in the face of real cruelty. Yet the centre at which cruelty aims – from school victim to Steve Biko – is the same inviolable loneliness of its quarry.

If Powys's dreaming fish, defender of loneliness, personifies the I-am-I, his Homeric Secret is, unless I am much mistaken, the practice of I-Thou and it was a lucky fifteen-year-old who came across them both, in this wonderful and sometimes under-rated book.

Cicely Hill

* *The Ecstatic World of John Cowper Powys*, H. W. Fawkner (Associated University Presses Inc., 1986). In the introduction to this book Fawkner writes of Powys's giving intensity to the act of perception '... by suggesting that particular state in which we all, at one time or another, have glimpsed the divineness of Being in the mysterious factualness of ordinary things'.

John Cowper Powys: The Unconscious

Published in The Occult Observer, *A Quarterly Journal, Vol 1 no 1, May 1949.*

Dub: (origin so far unknown): "A complete failure" (Slang Down the Ages, *Kyle Cathie 1993, p.134); "An awkward person ... a clumsy player"* (Dictionary of Informal, Colloquial, Slang and Idiomatic English) *(and see notes below)*

There is among us a curious and fascinating as well as a most dangerous and deadly phenomenon, of which the destructiveness of the atomic bomb is a mere by-product, a phenomenon that might be called the power of the sham superior.

Now although we are all so different from each other there really is such a thing as the 'common man'. The phrase has been ridiculed and mocked. It also has been exploited. Chesterton exploited it against protestants and free-thinkers, Dickens against the rich, the aristocratic and the official. But it exists all the same.

There are proletarian 'common men'; there are lower-middle-class common men. There are upper-middle-class common men; and there are a lot of aristocratic ones! What then is a common man?

Well! He or she is a person who by luck or by temperament or by natural wisdom has escaped the perils of education. Whether a he-dub or she-dub in the opinion of the sham-superior person, the ordinary person is a dub.

Now quite apart from Catholic or Communist Apologists who try to prove that the species homo-dub is either 'naturaliter' Catholic, that is to say a Totalitarian of the next world, or 'naturaliter' Communist, that is to say a Totalitarian of this world, it seems to me that there are two modern philosophers who have deserted the ranks of the pseudo-superior and have descended like gods from a machine to champion the instinctive 'credo', or 'catechism' or 'Confession of Faith' or 'Handbook of Doubt' of the inarticulate masses of us dubs. Now I am not saying that we dubs can clearly follow these two clever ones' defence of our mental position, or if you prefer, of this congenital 'dubbery' of ours, that no education, no culture, no mystical awe can quite obliterate, but we have the mother-wit to divine, letting their subtleties pass us by, that both Professor Ayer's logical positivism and dramatist Sartre's existentialism are on our side against the Brain-Trust[1] Superiors who are at present running the world.

Now you don't have to be an extra dumb dub to know that human consciousness is still an unsolved mystery; and that the latest theory about it is, if you wait long enough, certain to be refuted by another theory, and that this other, if you give it enough rope, is, in its turn, equally sure of complete refutation.

There is a real irony in the fact that our professional prophets are most pitifully unconscious of what we may presume to name the 'Dubs' Credo', or in other words the secret certainties that have come to shape themselves at the bottom of the minds of ordinary men and women based on their practical experience of contact with life and with superior rulers, directors, and false prophets interpret-

ing life for the last twenty thousand years.

I must of course, where we of these Islands are concerned, translate this Credo from palaeolithic speech into neolithic speech and from that into 'runes and ogams', and from them into Iberian Brythonic, Roman, Saxon, Norman-French and so on and so on, till we come to the politicians, prophets, moralists, thinkers and scientists whose superiority we enjoy to-day.

Thus translated into modern speech our 'Dub Credo' would run roughly rather like this; only it must be understood that its conclusions, though proceeding from no imaginary mental tank full of baby dragons, are crudely and simply expressed.

One. The recurrent dub-questions which we all naturally and sometimes rather irritably, keep asking ourselves, such as: 'Why is everything everything?' and, 'Why am I ?' will never, as long as we live, receive an intelligible answer.

Two. When you hear from superior persons such words as 'cowardly', 'dirty', 'blasphemous', 'lazy', 'ignorant, 'melodramatic', 'sentimental', 'deceitful', 'stupid', 'wasteful', move with your wife and children as hurriedly as possible to another factory or another farm; but when you hear such words as 'ought, 'must', 'very soon', combined with such sentences as 'for the country', 'for the party', 'for the nation', 'for the family', 'for their own good', take the train without a word to anyone, to another county.

Three. All that we Dubs want is to be left in peace, there to pursue our harmless avocations and to beg and borrow what we cannot earn. We do not want War. We do not want Culture. We do not want to Save our Souls. We want to enjoy ourselves in the way we want to enjoy ourselves; and we want to give our children more comforts, amusements and pleasures, than we have been able to obtain for ourselves.

Four. We do not want any intellectual basis to religion. When we feel in a religious mood we want to enjoy the natural 'Religion of Dubs', which as everybody knows, is a friendly, irrational, sentimental, superstitious, poetical polytheism, much further removed from the Unconscious Mystery of the all-enfolding Absolute than such tribal deities, as 'Jehovah', 'Unser Gott', 'Le Bon Dieu', or the 'God of Holy Russia', are removed from Mumbo Jumbo.

Five. No rulers, statesmen, or politicians are to be trusted to give you what you want. They only learn what you want when they have become like you; that is, when they have ceased to be rulers, statesmen, politicians.

Six. Disregard the opinions of superior persons, but never allow superior persons to know what you think of their opinions.

Seven. Persons become superior by blood, by taste, by holiness, and by devilish cunning.

Eight. All these superiorities are based on one superiority, the art of exploiting the darkness of the Absolute.

'But why,' a superior person might naturally enquire, 'why do you, a privileged

bourgeois bookworm, join in all this illogical rub-a-dubbery?' Such indeed is the question my ancient crony and most honest of honest cods, Mr. Louis Marlow, is forever asking.

'Why,' says he, 'all this nonsense about us ordinary folk when you yourself are such an extravagantly queer bird?'

My reply is simple. Because it's the upsetting truth. Such celestial intelligences as ST PAUL and RABELAIS and DICKENS and WALT WHITMAN have succeeded in getting it into my superiority-ridden dub-skull that, while a man's a man and a woman's a woman, there's no need to await the common churchyard grin before recognizing that there's in us all a comical-tragical element that occupies 99 per cent of all the space there is, and that responds 'en masse' to what Shakespeare calls the touch that makes the whole world kin.[2]

And it is this 99 percentage of our humanity's common stuff, that these superior persons set pulsating with their Absolute.

Now I do not for a moment, dub as I am, confuse the Absolute with the Unconscious. The Absolute is all there is, including all possibilities of existence, while the Unconscious, at present confined to human minds, is a receptacle for horrid memories, like a psychic kangaroo's pouch, which each of us is doomed to carry about, whether we like it or not, and which a skilled practitioner makes the motion of slitting open like a bird's crop and of shamelessly describing its contents, in spite of the fact that both he and the patient know perfectly well that it is extremely possible that there is no such receptacle at all and no way of emptying it if there were.

No, I do not maintain that the votaries of this imaginary Unconscious who awe us, scare us, excite us, allure us, into believing in this Master Night-mare Gaster,[3] of 'the dim Lake of Auber and the misty mid-region of Weir',[4] in whose dark pools are reflected the Taboos and Totems of twenty thousand years, are engaged in throwing across this twilight-land of their imagination a magic-lantern-shadow of the old metaphysical Kraken of the Deep, the 'Thing-in-Itself'. This were going too far; but I maintain that this whole thaumaturgical performance of conjuring up an unreal metaphysical entity like this 'Unconscious' exploits the human craving to do what commonsense cannot do, that is to get out on to the back of the world, where time and space are left behind.

For what is this Absolute whose *Mysterium Tremendum* is tapped and drawn upon in this *Mysterium Parvulum* of the Unconscious? Well, the Concise Oxford Dictionary defines it as: 'unqualified, unconditioned, self-existent, conceivable without relation to other things.'

Now what has not been sufficiently recognized by us dubs in regard to these superior persons who have ruled us for twenty thousand years by their cunning sorceries is that in the matter of aristocratic blood, or of religious holiness, or of scientific knowledge, or of skill in battle, or of devilish cunning in affairs, or of artistic, literary, or any other kind of taste, what these superior people tap is

nothing less than the awe of the Absolute whether the Absolute exists or not.

Yes, whether it exists or not, in our imagination we feel the aura of its awe. And as it is with blood and taste, so with holiness and knowledge and devilish cunning. I don't care whether such people are 'good' or 'bad'.

It is the Human Totem. It is the awe of the Absolute. Now let us carry our analysis a step further. What, in the name of all the devils, is the predominant characteristic of this great Cosmic Totem before which, in its human forms of blood, taste, sanctity, devilish cunning and miraculous knowledge, we awe-inspired dubs are scared into doing what my evangelical progenitor used to call 'bow and scrape'?

I will answer this important question in one word: THE DARK. Yes, like children, we simple dubs are awed by the obscurity of the Absolute.

About fifty-four years ago when I first went to see Thomas Hardy I found him looking up the word 'dim' in the then newly-appearing Oxford Dictionary to find if he could use it as a Noun and write of the Dim. But it is one thing to describe THE DIM on Egdon Heath and quite another to introduce it into the superiority of our fellows. Wasn't it the seminal Nobodaddy[5] of all the dim serpents that are biting us to-day, spawned by that Thing-in-Itself from which the great Kant tried to protect us, wasn't it Hegel himself, who, pretending to do what Kant had shown couldn't be honestly done — except mathematically, which is a different story — that is to say by scrambling through the skylight, or by climbing up the chimney, or like Mr H. the Medium[6] 'going round by the air', to get on the roof, outside Time and Space?

Wasn't it Hegel who literally collared that slippery sea-lion, the 'thing in itself', and opening his Conjurer's Box showed clearly that It was Us and We were It, and then coolly declared that in the Dark all Cows looked alike?

Yes, and in this phantasmagoric world of 'the Dim', where Being and Not-Being are the same, Angels and Devils grow so alike that none could tell the difference between those entranced cattle the shepherds saw kneeling at the manger and those very different cattle Pharaoh saw coming out of the Nile!

Our dictators and magicians, our prophets and statesmen, have been aeons and aeons trying to set up signboards of superiority in fields of vision where superiority is totally out of place.

The two things that ordinary men and women all over the world dread most are: first, war, where we are openly tortured and killed; and second, a totalitarian Police State, where we are secretly tortured and killed.

And what are our superior artists, scientists, and the cleverest of our poets and novelists doing to exorcise from our minds and hearts and nerves and from the pits of our stomachs the vein of madness in us that these superior people work upon to drive us into war, and into that horror worse than war, the totalitarian Police-State?

They are putting over on us once again that Dreadful Totem of the Dark which

Kant's Critique disposed of but whose sinister eggs the crafty Hegelian Serpent of an Absolute with its dim tail in its black mouth, laid in the heart of Europe.

Why, because we have forgotten all the dreadful things that happened to us as babies, as children, as boys, as girls, and all natural reactions we had to the infuriating peculiarities of our human parents, to the trying femininity of the one and the intolerable maleness of the other, and because in our wrestling-bouts with the world we have been forced to suppress various feline, fishy, monkeyish, dragon-scaled, insect-horned urges, are we to be doomed by conclaves of superior mind-rakers followed by swarms of sub-artists, demi-semi-poets and succubustical fabulators of short stories into believing that we carry about with us an invisible Tartarus of writhing monsters, an interior Sargasso-sea full of twisting and twining devil-fish?

And the teasing thing is that we ordinary people, who hate a despotic police-state even more than we hate war, know perfectly well in our shy, secretive, authority-scared souls that the whole Theory of the Unconscious is as certain to be refuted, cast aside, condemned as old-fashioned; thrown into the historic dust-bin, as is the 'Quantum Theory' or that intrusive bundle of squirted energy called the 'Photon'.

'All passes; nothing abides,' said Heraclitus. And no scientific thinker realises this tragic-comic truth better than the world's dubs with their weary, aeons-old continuity of disillusionment. We may be pleasure-loving and lazy, but we have something in us, a funny kind of natural fellow-feeling perhaps with other low animals, that causes us to know for certain that the political atrocities of this age are closely connected with the monstrous. assumption that for scientific knowledge any torturing of living things is stifiable.

But once more let me ask, why is it we are so scared, awed and reduced to hopeless silence, by these superior theorizers and their fanatical practitioners?

What do they put over on us, knowing for certain as we do, with our world-old disillusionment and our unanswerable questions, 'Why is everything everything and why am I, I?', that when 'a time, and a time and half a time'[7] has passed, a whole new set of ideas will possess the field?

Yes, we dubs are absolutely certain that a day will come when all reference to complexes will cease; all practice of vivisection will be regarded as a revolting barbarism, while the idea of 'the Unconscious' will join the idea of 'Damnation' in the great Limbo of mythological illusions. But how is it that we huge armies of dubs, for putting aside Communists and Politicians and Experts and Scientists and Artists and Specialists and the leading Lights in all the great Professions -- this is what the masses of human beings all over the world obviously are -- how is it that we who only want to be left in peace to earn our own living, cultivate our own gardens, enjoy our little hobbies and pleasures, give our offspring a chance to get a few more of this world's goods than have fallen to us, should be so easily gulled into 'bowing and scraping' before the obscure portals of the Unconscious?

Why are we so perpetually lured into its dim purlieus? Why are we so constantly hypnotized by the jabbering of its Plutonian high-priests? Well, neighbour dub, I will tell you in one little sentence. From fear of the dark. From fear lest the dark should really and truly prove to be everything.

In other words from the blind, sick, awe-struck panic at the thought that there's no escape from a Totalitarian Ultimate. This is the old old old terror — I repeat 'old' three times — that the grey magicians of our race, for in the Absolute, as Hegel reminds us, 'black' and 'white' are the same, have put upon us from paleolithic times even until now!

It is indeed a holy terror. That is to say it is the terror of 'Thing in Itself' that has the unnatural power of being Something while at the same time it is nothing.

One poor gibbering dub in these dim outer courts may whisper to another that nobody has ever seen the Unconscious, and that nobody has ever gone down into that cistern 'for toads to gender in',[8] or, with his wits about him. fished up some of its scaly denizens; may whisper that there was a great philosopher once who denied that the 'Thing-in-Itself' could be reached at all by any rational approach; may whisper that of course mathematics could go anywhere, simply because it only went in paper-boats and under its own steam of algebraical figures, and could never inform us what really existed in those dim regions, but only how any imaginary reality would have to behave if it weren't to contradict the necessity of its own nature; but none of these whisperings can stop our trembling.

The only thing to do is to deny the existence of the Great Totem Itself. The only thing to do is to refuse to pay our 'obols' to the superior Charons who take us on these imaginary health-excursions over the black Acherons of our mythological selves. The only thing to do is to make a commonsense Co-op of this mad world where matters can be rendered less complex and more conscious by a revolt of the dubs.

NOTES

1 Brain-Trust: 'The Brains Trust' radio programme.

2 '... the whole world kin': in Troilus and Cressida, Act IV.

3 Gaster: in Rabelais (Book 4), on one of the 'islands' visited by Pantagruel & Co., Master (Messer) Gaster is Lord of the Belly, hence hunger, and hence first 'Master of Arts' of human inventions, including war.

4 'the dim Lake of Auber ...': in Poe's 'Ulalume'.

5 Nobodaddy: Blake's dictatorial 'God the Father'.

6 Mr H. the Medium: Mr Home, the real-life model for Browning's 'Mr Sludge'.

7 'a time, and a time ...': Revelations (the Apocalypse), ch.12.

8 'for toads to gender in': Othello, IV.2.

More on 'Dub': Roget's *New Thesaurus* (1995) also lists it as 'a clumsy person'. Cassells's *New English Dictionary* of 1919 lists words borrowed from Americans in WW1, converting 'dub' to English 'dud' (significantly perhaps for JCP?). Characters in Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922) use it more as JCP does: 'poor dub'; 'that dub of a cashier ...'

With thanks to Paul Roberts for these references. Has any reader come across 'dub', in JCP's writing or elswhere?

The Occult Observer, of which this was the first number, was edited by 'Michael Juste', a.k.a. Michael Houghton, founder in 1922 of the Atlantis Bookshop by the British Museum. The esteemed *Occult Observer* ran for six issues. Other contributors to this strongly literary first issue were the poets James Kirkup and John Heath-Stubbs. No direct connection has been discovered with the earlier *Occult Review* edited by the Powys cousin Ralph Shirley (1865–1946).

Sidelight: What They Thought of Each Other ...

On 22 January 1930 John Cowper Powys wrote to his brother Littleton, 'I have got a story here by a young Englishman called Henry Williamson but I don't know who publishes it in England. It is called The Pathway and altogether is an arresting book though sickeningly self-conscious and sickeningly sentimental and although it piles up a lot of rare wild birds [such] as I doubt were ever seen in one place. Its 'locale' is somewhere on the North Coast of Devon — not far from Clovelly I think but you will know — and the descriptions are very good — they really are ... extremely good. I find it myself far more interesting to read than this new book of Tomlinson's ...'[1]

Three and a half years before this John Cowper had walked over the downs from Burpham to visit Arnold Bennett, who records in his Journal on 11th June 1926 that John Cowper stayed till after 5.30. 'He was delighted beyond measure', he continues, 'when I spoke very highly of Dreiser's *American Tragedy*. He said Dreiser was very susceptible to praise. He said that Dreiser had sold the film rights of the novel for $50,000. Powys is a very sentimental man in some ways. He was rather in favour of the General Strike but gave in instantly to my argument that it was right to squash it, but I expect he is in favour of it again by this time. He has very fine literary taste except when it is misled by his few prejudices. I asked him about his days (not evenings) in provincial cities in America. He said he did nothing but walk about. He wanted to work i.e. write, but couldn't work in hotel bedrooms at least had not seriously tried to. I told him I had written lots and lots in hotel bedrooms and he said that he should try. An untidy fellow of very great charm.'[2]

Eighteen months later, on 10th November 1928 Bennett records that 'Henry Williamson author of *The Pathway*, came to dinner. I'd never seen him before. Thirty-two, dark. Highly strung. Bit by bit we got on better and better, and he left at 11.15 much touched by the contact. I liked him. Married, two children. Seems to be very fond of his wife, and admires her. She is the orginal of 'Mary' in *The*

Pathway so she must be fine. He told me lots of autobiography.'[3]

Did John Cowper or Williamson ever say what they thought of Arnold Bennett?

Susan Rands

1 Letter to Littleton Powys (22nd Jan.1930) in the Powys Collection, Dorset County Museum.

2 Arnold Bennett: *Journals* (paperback edition, 140)

3 *Ibid.*, 280

T.F.Powys: 'How we remember'

Another early TFP essay. Stephen Powys Marks calculates that the episode must be almost entirely a fantasy, or a conflation of different episodes. A compensatory fantasy, perhaps: JCP in Autobiography *describes the small Theodore agonized (as many children were) by forced 'walks': '... little Theodore, white in the face with great forlorn eyes like an over-driven animal, as he was dragged along some dusty road ...'*

Is it TFP the essayist quoting Milton and Coleridge? or the child TFP (not impossible – they are both anthology pieces such as he might have been made to learn) – or even perhaps the Uncle?

There is such a thing as remembering that you have forgotten. That is how we most of us dip into the past. And here we meet one of the many kind acts of Nature. She helps us to forget, she holds out to us no certainty in things gone by. Nature liberates our soul from the burden of events that are gone, she expects us to live in the present, indeed she compels us to live in the moment, in the 'Now'.

We say we remember such or such an event. But we don't remember, we really invent, we merely paint a modern picture of what we think has happened. The event we pretend to remember becomes, as we remember it, something different from what it was. True, the writing was upon the wall, but it needs the magic of the imagination to interpret its bygone meaning. You were once a babe and you remember the place where you were born. You are wrong, you do nothing of the kind. You simply sit upon a magic carpet and invent, for 'tis the present that creates anew the incident that you wish to call to your mind.

To give one instance. I remember when I was a child visiting a certain famous castle. My rich bearded uncle had returned from India, and wished, I suppose, to test the walking power of my little legs.

We started early, the sweet morning mists shrouded the peaceful lands in a wet cloak. My uncle, a tall figure, strolled on over the soft turf of the Wessex downs. Ah, how gladly I stepped beside him,

'O'er the smooth enamelled green
Where no print of step had been.'

We passed fairy rings, we passed bracken coverts where forest deer might have lain hidden. We passed on and on, every step sacred, as though the ground we trod on were holy.

At last we looked down upon the ruined walls of a splendid castle.

'But O that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!'

How bravely my uncle descended the hill, and how unfalteringly I followed, until we reached the old-world haunted valley that lay about those stern frowning walls. It was still morning, and from the high wall of the castle we saw the sun flooding the land with a rich golden light. The divine conqueror had won. My feelings at that moment were more than joy. I stood a conqueror too upon the castle wall.

My uncle leaned forward and looked into the far distance over the low-lying lands. His beard was still wet with the morning dew. I imagined him to be a great Norman baron, who looked across the wide lands that he had won with his sword. I can see him now, his beard, his noble head graced and reddened by the sun.

Upon our way home we saw blue butterflies, and white flocks of sheep, and a little girl in a red cloak. At the wayside inns, my uncle made me eat everything that was to be had, and then after the good fare we rose to the uplands again with a more than lover's joy, and so to the shepherds. For we met no less than six of these peaceful swains tending their flocks.

The next day my uncle left for India.

But did it really happen thus, or has my imagination leaped afar into the dim clouds of fairy fancy? What were the real facts of this simple journey? Did not other factors help in the wonderful walk? Was the turf really so soft to my feet, and was the valley of the castle so full of romance? Was the sun shining, and were the September Blues feeding upon the late scabious? ...

Perhaps all these past events are the mere invention of the present moment, perhaps there never was any King Henry the Eighth, perhaps there was never any great war. Time forgets itself, and we are but the children of Time. But we are also the children of imagination and can recreate. We can recreate old scenes anew, we can paint our past again, we can give a new colour to our old lost days.

We can go back into the narrow dark corners of our lives with a torch of flame.

Do you remember that Wessex lane, with its Lords and Ladies, and long succulent grass? We can all, who are human, bring back to our minds the soft graciousness of that sheltered path. We even love the nettles, they do not sting us now, they live unhurtful in our remembrance as do the Lords and Ladies.

We can paint the little lanes and corners, we can hide the big roads, or else forget them, and there is comfort in our very forgetfulness.

We forget in order that we may remember the unforgettable.

'My Rich Bearded Uncle from India'

'My rich bearded uncle' who had 'returned from India' was LITTLETON ALBERT POWYS, the elder brother of T. F. Powys's father, Revd C. F. Powys, home on leave. Born on July 27th 1840 in the Rectory of his father, the Revd Littleton Charles Powys, in Stalbridge, Littleton Albert Powys (LAP) entered on a military career when he left school, and spent fifteen of his twenty-one years' service in India. He was an enthusiastic big-game hunter, writing an account of his exploits in 1868, 1869, 1870 and 1872, during periods of leave in Ceylon and India, in a small book published after his death, *Heavy Charges and Big Game*.

In 1858 LAP was appointed Ensign from October 29th in the 83rd Regiment of Foot (designated the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment from the end of 1859). He was promoted to Lieutenant from December 21st 1860; Captain of Company from February 20th 1866; and Major in the 59th Foot from December 30th 1878. He first sailed for India on Whitsunday June 12th 1859, just before his nineteenth birthday, as his mother, Amelia, records in a notebook, returning in 1862 with the Regiment, going out again in 1867. On December 12th 1867 his ship, *Harkaway*, dropped anchor in Colombo roads (Ceylon, now Sri Lanka): 'I felt heartily glad [*he starts his account*] to find myself back again in the East, after five year of home service'. He had transferred from the 83rd Regiment to the 59th in 1866, so he was with the latter Regiment at Curragh Camp, 30 miles from Dublin, when it went out to Ceylon in 1867, transferring to India in 1869. The 'Lilywhite 59th' was

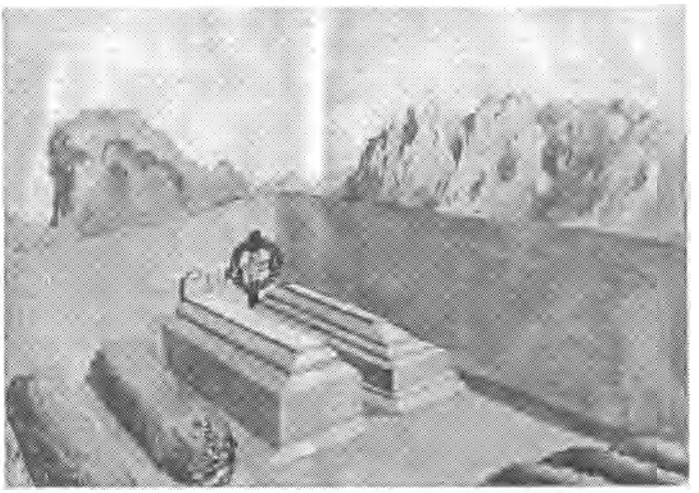
Littleton Albert Powys on Ben, in India.

stationed in a succession of places in northern India, reaching Dagshai in Punjab in 1877; in October 1878 the Regiment was ordered to join the forces assembling on the North-West Frontier against the Amir of Kabul, in the Second Afghan War. After Christmas they crossed into Afghanistan, arriving in Kandahar in January 1879, and then pressed on towards Kabul.

Although, according to his mother, LAP generally wrote home every week, only a very small number of his letters home survives, eight in all and one empty but dated and postmarked envelope; the first was sent some time before 1867 from Galway. They are all without a year in the date, but this can usually be inferred. Five are from Dagshai, and therefore date from 1877–78, while the last is from Kandahar in 1879, dated 20 July, and is worth quoting in full to give the flavour of life on a campaign in that inhospitable region.

My dearest Mother

I have just received your letter of the 18th June, & also one from Pudding faced Mercer. He got kicked on the knee by a horse, but is getting all right again now. I will tell the Mouse about the Cheese. He is out at the Cholera Camp now. We have lost a lot of men & also the 60th & Artillery. However a very strong wind has been blowing all day, which I hope may do some good. I had breakfast with the Lad in the Fort this morning, & then came down for the letters, & we are going to the voluntary service this evening. We got up a cricket match yesterday to try & get the men out, & have another tomorrow. It will be very jolly for the holy man to be down at Dorchester. We are just as likely as not to go to Portland, & the Lad & Mouse & I will pull over to Penn House [*his*



Grave, in corner, *of Littleton Albert Powys, at Kandahar.*

mother's house in Brunswick Terrace, Weymouth] in a boat & see you sometimes. I hope I shall be able to give you a better account of the state of the men next time I write. We leave this place at the end of the month. Love to Charley, Pippa & Mary* & plenty salaam to Mrs Stephenson

your affectionate Son

L. A. Powys

Unfortunately, he did not leave at the end of the month as he had expected, but himself fell a victim of the cholera, while looking after others, on August 6th 1879, at the age of thirty-nine. He was buried in Kandahar; there is a watercolour sketch, dated September 29th 1880, of his grave in a corner of a small dusty enclosure, reproduced on the previous page.

It is perhaps an irony that when he died a peace treaty, the Treaty of Gandamak, had already been signed with the Amir on May 26th that year, and there was a prospect that there would be no more fighting, until in September the British mission to Kabul was brutally massacred, sparking off the resumption of war.

That LAP would favour the life of a soldier could be guessed from the little sketch, *below*, in a letter to his small brother, CFP, whom he addresses as 'My dear Boundy': 'I send you a picture of a battle between the Pies and Tarts. if you don't write to me soon I shall tickle you when I come back.' A sketchbook with LAP's name and the date Dec[r] 1851 contains many more lively scenes of fights between coastguards and smugglers, a series of fisticuffs between boys, and one gruesome scene, 'Shooting the priest at his prayers to the Virgin Mary'.

* His brother, CFP, elder sister Philippa Shirley, and sister-in-law, Mary Cowper Powys.

The 'holy man' is, of course, that same young brother, who, in 1879, was giving up the excellent living at Shirley in Derbyshire to become Curate of St Peter's, Dorchester for seven years in order to be nearer to their mother; she had been widowed in 1872 and was living in Weymouth. LAP would have inherited his mother's fortune on her death in March 1890, but because of LAP's early death, unmarried, CFP in fact inherited the very large sum of £40,000 which in due course enabled him to give significant help to various of his children either with advances before his own death in 1923 or with legacies. One can only speculate on how John Cowper Powys, Theodore, Littleton and others would have fared if they had not had their shares of CFP's unexpected fortune.

Turning to TFP's piece, 'How we Remember', we must note immediately that there is a serious anachronism. LAP died in August 1879, and had clearly been in India or at the front for more than a year since his last leave, while CFP did not move to Dorset till some time late in 1879. We can, in fact, date this visit: his mother records, in her notebooks, two meetings with her son. On August 22nd 1875 she had 'received Holy Communion with my dearest L. A. P. in St John's Church' (in Weymouth); later, when she receives a letter on February 22nd 1879 on his first arriving at Kandahar she recalls that this is the anniversary of her sad parting with him the previous year. This last parting took place, therefore, on February 22nd 1878. TFP was born in December 1875, after the first of these two dates, but he would have been a little over two years old in February 1878; JCP would have been almost five and a half.

We know the 'rich uncle from India' visited his brother in Shirley, because we have JCP's account in *Autobiography* (11):

> Our uncle Littleton, my father's elder brother who was a captain in the army, came to stay with us at Shirley, a dignified, bearded man, with a square forehead. ... I well recollect the vicious pleasure I got when seated on his knee in the evening he permitted me to pound his bearded face with my fists to test the courage of this officer of the Queen.

TFP noted that he was a tall figure; he states that the uncle 'strolled on over the soft turf of the Wessex downs'. This clearly could not have occurred, since the visit was to Shirley. This and other unlikely aspects of the account of the excursion to a 'famous castle' reinforce TFP's speculation about the nature of memory, because he has certainly conflated his memory of walking with this rich, tall uncle with later acquaintance with Wessex, after the move to Dorchester.

I asked Neil Lee, a Derbyshire member of the Society, if he could suggest condidates near Shirley for the famous castle; he kindly gave me a long list of all the places he could think of, but they do seem to be rather remote possibilities, as Neil agreed. It is much more likely that the account is a fairy tale in which he and his uncle are real persons, but the rest is strung together as if in a dream; perhaps there is also the memory of some picture book or children's history.

LAP sometimes signs himself or refers to himself as PUT, Put, or P.U.T. (the

last is the version used on the title-page of *Heavy Charges*). I take this to be his childish attempt to pronounce his second name, Albert; it seems very likely that he would have been known by that name to distinguish him from his father, Revd Littleton Charles Powys, or indeed his grandfather, Revd Littleton Powys. One of LAP's legacies was his middle name given to Albert Reginald Powys, born in 1881, two years after the death of LAP.

Stephen Powys Marks

PRIMARY SOURCES (in collection of Stephen Powys Marks)

Letters of LAP, mainly to Amelia Powys and to C. F. Powys when a small boy.

Army Commissions of LAP dated 29/10/58, 21/12/60, 20/2/66, 21/1/79.

Sketchbook of LAP, dated December 1851, 8 by 5 inches.

Photograph album of LAP, 63 leaves, 11½ by 10 inches; mostly photos of military groups and individuals, with a small number of his family and of Stalbridge acquaintances and scenes. The photograph of LAP mounted on Ben is from this album.

Sketch of part of enclosed burial ground, pencil and watercolour, 7¼ by 9 inches, inscribed 'Kandahar/ 29–9–80/ W [?]'; the second initial is possibly a J. On the rear is a pencil drawing of the wreathed cross and inscription on LAP's grave: 'Sacred/ to the/ Memory/ of/ Major L. A. Powys/ H. M's 59th Regt/ who died at Kandahar/ 6th August 1879/ Aged 39 years/ deeply regretted/ by Officers & Men'.

Notebooks of Amelia Powys, transcribed in 'Recollections of Little Children' in *The Powys Society Newsletter* 25 (1995), 36–43; one of the notebooks includes delicate pen sketches of LAP as a baby and as a small boy.

Cash book for 1888–89 and last address book of Amelia Powys.

'Remembrances of Littleton Albert Powys', written by his cousin Sophie Bent (*née* Moilliet) in 1936 at the age of 93.

OTHER SOURCES

Heavy Charges and Big Game, by P. U. T. [Littleton Albert Powys], London: printed at the Operative Jewish Converts' Institution, Palestine Place, Cambridge Heath, 1886, iv + 56 pp., stiff card covers, dark blue, measuring 7½ by 5 inches. See 'Another Writing Powys' in *Newsletter* 24 (1995), 48, for the opening paragraphs. Amelia Powys's address book contains an entry for the printers, and her cash book entries for this and more than a dozen other charitable bodies to which she appears to have contributed regularly.

My copy of *Heavy Charges* was inherited indirectly from A. R. Powys. I have never seen another copy of this book, nor heard of any Powys collection containing it.

Forty-One Years in India, from Subaltern to Commander-in-Chief, by Field-Marshal Earl Roberts of Kandahar (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905; first published 1897).

Letter to SPM dated April 6th 1995 from the National Army Museum, with extracts from two books: *The Royal Ulster Rifles 1793–1960*, by Lt-Col M. J. P. M. Corbally (Glasgow, 1960); and *The Lilywhite 59th*, by A. S. Lewis (East Lancashire Regimental Museum/ Blackburn Recreation Services, 1985). The first of these includes information on the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment.

Jack Clemo and TFP (1950)

The Cornish poet Jack Clemo (1916–94) read Mr. Weston *when it came out in Penguin in 1937, and TFP's vision became fundamental to his religious quest. He had already been impressed by TFP's account of his 'thirty years of mystic isolation' and his abandonment of writing, in* John o'London's Weekly.

The grandeur of this renunciation of the bustling activity and worldly ambition which usually attend a literary life, made an instant appeal to me. I stuck the article in a scrapbook and read it repeatedly until its tone of sober contentment had helped to relieve any sense of frustration I might have felt at being deprived of the normal literary and social stimulants. No other incident in modern literary history had so gripped my imagination or come so close to my sympathies ... Powys was sufficiently Christian – in the deeper, mystical sense – to inspire a feeling of permanent spiritual kinship. The fact that my behaviour perplexed the good folk of Goonamarris as much as Powys had puzzled the East Chaldon cottagers, showed that I was already firmly set on the same path ...

I ... was more profoundly moved by [*Mr. Weston*] than by any book I had read since I discovered Browning ...

Both these authors, Clemo felt, shared 'a revelation of Calvinism, warped in opposite directions ... a fusion of religious and sensual realism'; Mr. Weston*'s against a background of 'everlasting night' where Browning's was presented against a background of eternal sunshine.*

... In his allegory Mr Weston's good wine was love to the young and death to the weary, but for those who had lost faith through the sin and suffering in human life his wine was the Bible. This idea of the Bible as the gift of God, as elemental and independentof scholastic criticism as love or death, was very close to my own conception of it. My belief in its truth was no longer perverse or unreasoning ... (Confessions of a Rebel *(1949), 137–9*)

In 1950 he and his mother were taken to tea with TFP by Monica Hutchings, the writer and friend of Littleton Powys. This is described in The Marriage of a Rebel *(1980), his second volume of autobiography.*

Jack Clemo had been deaf from the age of eighteen and became totally blind in 1955.

I had never been greatly excited when riding through pretty scenery, but this trip was different. I felt both elated and awed when we entered Dorset. The view beyond the car windows resembled south Cornwall except that there were more sheep and more thatched cottages here: it was the literary spell that made it all so unique and pregnant. Tess's Blackmore Vale ... Mr Weston's Folly Down ... The car zigzagged amid a maze of chalky lanes and at last drew up close to the window of a small, bare, single-story building – the Rectory lodge at Mappowder. I

recognised the place from a snapshot Monica had sent me; and as we climbed out and I put Spark down on the bumpy ground, T.F. Powys himself appeared in the doorway and stepped across to greet us, his ruddy, clean-shaven face beaming with a true countryman's welcome. Although seventy-five, he was erect and robust, like a farmer, dressed with casual tidiness in a dark suit. His curly white hair grew thick but not abnormally long on his massive skull. There was something warm and rounded about him: my mother said afterwards that he was "like a child lost in happiness, not thinking of what he was doing." He kissed her hand, and I felt his own hand trembling with emotion as he took mine and led me towards the door. I picked up Spark, and when we got inside the house Powys's adopted daughter Susan came forward smiling and began to pat and stroke Spark's head. She loved animals and worked on a farm, though she had also read a great deal and wore glasses. I then shook hands with Mrs Powys – a homely, practical village woman.

Sitting on the settee with my mother, I realised how appropriate it was that my first personal contact with literary eminence should come in this unpolished "foreign" outpost instead of among the Cornish dons. I had no prejudice against the academic world, for my work had been honoured in that world for two years past, but I felt more at home in this little lodge where the main room served as lounge, study and dining-room, just as in my cottage at Goonamarris. Powys had not acquired a large library; there were no more books in the room than in the homes of many intelligent village tradesmen. I sat relaxed, absorbing the atmosphere of contentment. We showed Theodore some photographs of me on the clay-tips and outside my garden wall, and he seemed thrilled by their stark simplicity. I wished I could hear the talk, though it was obvious that most of it was gossip between Monica and Mrs Powys. The latter was soon bustling around, laying a plain meal, during which Theodore soaked bread-and-butter in his tea, excusing himself (as I recorded in my poem "Wessex and Lyonesse") with a whimsical comment about Jesus' action at the Last Supper. There was some discussion of our work, and Powys remarked to my mother: "Jack's books have had a lot of praise – mine were burned by the librarian at Dorchester " (in the 1920s). Mother admitted that many Cornish people disliked my realism, and he observed emphatically that such criticism should be ignored, since it only came from those who didn't understand. He was probably amused when Mother added that she couldn't understand *Mr Weston's Good Wine* at first, "but when Jack explained it to me an' brought out the sermon in it I liked it better". She told him how often I had turned to his books – especially *Soliloquies of a Hermit* – in times of spiritual darkness, and he said quietly: "He turned to my books because he found himself there."

The visit lasted only a couple of hours and we were reluctant to leave the lodge, but Monica's plan had certainly produced one of the most memorable experiences of my life. I knew that I had not merely paid a call on a writer whom I

admired; the poet in me was aware of symbolism and pattern, of fitting gestures at a spiritual and emotional frontier where the horizon somehow pulsed with destiny. Powys stood talking with my mother for several minutes outside the house before Monica joined us. He enquired about Mother's religious upbringing and spoke of his own pious mother, saying he always thought of her when he prayed. It was a deep, sober close to our contact. I called a heartfelt "Thank you" as the car moved off in the evening sunshine. My faith, including my confidence about my marriage, was strangely quickened, fused with the warm mellow peace of the Dorset countryside. (*60–62*)

The dinner at Littleton Powys' elegant Quarry House was not an anti-climax. The glow of release still flooded me and irradiated everything else – Littleton himself, taller that Theodore but frail and half-crippled with arthritis, and his mother-in-law, Mrs Myers, a cheerful, sensitive woman who had borne much suffering. Littleton proundly showed us his sister Gertrude's portrait of Elizabeth Myers, who had died three years before in her early thirties. He was profoundly grateful that in his old age he had married this remarkable girl – a Roman Catholic nature mystic whose novel *A Well Full of Leaves* had been condemned as pantheistic by her priest. I tried to feel her wayward spirit there in the house with her mother and husband, and wished she were still alive: the day would have had a startlingly vivid end if Elizabeth Myers had been able to hand me her scribbled thoughts in a conversation. But she could have added nothing to what Eileen had taught me, and the persistence of the key themes – nature, the Church, exceptional marriage – was obvious enough even in her absence. (*62–3*)

(with thanks to Ruth Clemo for permission, and to Graham Carey for suggesting this material)

Jack Clemo: 'A Kindred Battlefield'

(to T. F. Powys)

Thunder of swinish gods
  And the noontide heat too fierce
Upon the Chaldon clods:
  Yet calmly your eyes pierce

The gross, dank earth and cloud,
  The moody God's disguise,
Wherein His Cross has bowed
  The festering pagan skies.

Wounds in both God and swine!
  The strife of healing breaks
The passive hills that pine,
  The sullen sea that wakes.

White cliffs and goring hail!
  You watch the mystic tide
Lash where no prayers avail
  While soul and sense divide:

Soul seeking the Fatherland
  Beyond the heaven that frowns;
Sense brooding where it scanned
  Dead bones on Chaldon Downs.

This is the battlefield,
  Fluid and undefined:
Land, sea, life, death, revealed,
  Confused within the mind.

A labyrinth, a maze,
  Each chalky Dorset lane:
No landmark steadfast stays
  To guide the questing brain.

The baffling hedge of thorns,
  The swirling mist and sea,
The goblin world that scorns,
  Fret you continually.

Till noontide thunders cease
  And you behold the sign:
Buds potent with release,
  Promise of God's good wine.

Strength for the weary feet:
  Vision of inland heights.
The striving gods retreat;
  You find new paths, new lights.

The homely Stour may tame
  Terrors of Madder Hill,
The new earth name the Name –
  My clay-world feel the thrill.

Chalk heart and clay heart share
  A wilful strategy:
The strife you learned to bear
  Breaks westward over me.

'A Kindred Battlefield' was included in Penguin Modern Poets *6 (1964). Another poem by Jack Clemo, 'Mappowder Revisited' (on visiting TFP's grave), with a photograph of Clemo with TFP taken in 1950, was printed in* The Powys Review *6 (1979/80).*

Subscriptions and Standing Orders

A high proportion of UK members pay by **standing order** which is extremely helpful to us; in the recent change of the Constitution it is a requirement for new applicants for membership who can to pay by this method to do so. We do ask existing members without standing orders to ask for forms and complete them.

Quite a lot of members have still not paid their subscription for 2002: if you are one of them, please let the Hon. Treasurer have it now: the annual subscription to The Powys Society, due on January 1st, has remained unchanged for many years, so the rates are still as follows:

UK £13.50 overseas £16 student £6.

The **Thomas Hardy Society** is holding an appeal to fund a Hardy memorial window engraved by Simon Whistler in St Juliot Church, Boscastle, Cornwall, hoping that this will be installed later this year. Anyone interested should contact Furze Swann c/o POBox 1438, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1YH.

Littleton to Lucy (1953)

Stronghold on March 9th 1953

You get ahead of me with your birds, dear Lucy, for 2 reasons (1) Your ears are 10 times as good as mine, and (2) you have a window open[1] which although it makes you shiver does give you a better chance of hearing & I fancy you have made the most of your opportunity. I envy you with your Cooy Coo, Coco, Cc, Coo, Coo, Coy Cook! and the happy little song of the Chaffinch — Never mind. I went a short drive yesterday morning & had my service with Wm Holmes on the top of Pennard Ridge. He kept saying 'What a glorious morning!' That's adoration, isn't it? The highest form of prayer. My special birds were Fieldfares. I couldn't get away from them yesterday; upon 3 different occasions there came in a flock of them.

I have found Richard Thomas Powys (b. 1798 [?]) in Lodge's Peerage he is the great grandson of Philip Powys — Sir Thomas's son by a second marriage: I've written it all out for you to send to your Theophilus friend! He died 3 years after I was born.

I had a happy hour yesterday afternoon with Geoffrey Sale Headmaster of Bruton School brought over to see me by Jim Pearce who was there to (1) preach a sermon (2) talk to the Field Society about Beetles — He (Jim) seemed very well, all rigged up in his Prior's kit and we kissed each other on his arrival & departure. Just as his old father the Bishop of Derby and I used to do — nor did he ever miss giving Mabel a kiss too. She used to look forward to it!!!

He talked most affectionately of Littleton Alfred who is off to see another specialist on Wednesday next, but without much hope. Give him a prayer especially on that day.

Yesterday morning (Sunday which I always keep free for some long letter, because I am undisturbed by the post) I wrote a long one to Louis Wilkinson about his new book called 'Seven Friends' — the Friends were 3 notorious characters — Oscar Wilde Frank Harris Aleister Crowley — from all of whom I should have kept well clear. Then came into that crowd John, Theodore & Llewelyn & finally another well-known to every one but me, Somerset Maugham. As usual he brought in father and mother to call father a Sadist and mother a Morbid Masochist.

Why can't he leave them alone instead of putting his beastly mind into theirs?

He was very good on Theodore: Not bad on Llewelyn — better than he has been before especially on Llewelyn writing about Nature. As usual he is remarkably poor on John but it is not surprising in that Nature means nothing to him, nor any philosophy which it is hoped will be of some use to mankind. So there is no mention of John's Philosophical Books, and he says he finds it difficult to read his novels: 'they are so long and he gets weary'. That's just what that dreadful fellow

Frank Swinnerton [?] said of John's 'Owen' — Neither he nor Louis can understand the importance of a background, a background of Nature to real fiction — such as you have in Thomas Hardy's novels. And further there is with John not only the reference to the phenomena of Nature but also constant reference to the philosophy of life & they don't like that as they like a book about people and not very nice people either!

Well I decided, as I was nearly 80, I ought not to lose my temper & show any bitterness, because he went off the rails into his idolating of Oscar early in life and has not had a proper chance & as Elizabeth[2] said after he stayed with us, (1) he is a kind man (2) he has a real knowledge of English Letters and (3) He is loyal to his friends.

I wish to God Llewelyn had kept clear of him; his influence was exactly the opposite of mine & yet perhaps it helped Lulu in his literary aspirations —

I did say — I wished he would leave my father & mother out of it, when what he says of them is absolutely untrue.

Did you ever see a sign of cruelty in father?

The definition of Morbid in my Oxford Dictionary is Unwholesome, Sickly. Can you imagine mother who lifted us up by reading to us the best literature this Country produced being either Unwholesome or Sickly in her mind?

I put these questions to him (see at end of letter), but when he thinks by his Wonderful knowledge of Psychology he has solved the problem of where Theodore got a mind that could invent those cruel scenes which periodically come in his books & where John got the idea of Sadism which he frequently mentions in his Autobiography; he invents them as weaknesses of father and mother.

As with him it has become an idée fixe and he can't let it go.

But he was good on his first three remarkable characters — I wasn't interested in Somerset Maugham. There was a long & good review of the book — in John o' London — just quoting entertaining passages.

I heard from my dear Myra[3] on Saturday, quite a long letter — she is a good woman, always full of doing things to help. She has a class of small boys & girls to whom she teaches elocution & reads books to them and then they learn it by heart. She is very pleased because her bit of writing called 'Admittance One Shilling' is to come out in John o' London. It is about Elizabeth being turned away from the Manchester Town Hall when she went to hear Walter de la Mare, who I fear is ill for his secretary wrote to say he wanted to write to me but could not do it at present.

Get well quick, my dear, for I want you to be sitting in the little chair by my side. It will be in place for you on that happy day —

yr loving Littleton

PS I read my comment on The Welsh Ambassadors in the 'Joy of It' and I thought I had done well — not one word should I alter. Nor apparently does Louis intend

to though when he told me about this new book which HE gave to ME he said he had left out some of the things I did not approve of. Such as saying that 'Mother did not love her second son because he was successful'; & some other reference to me — But enough, I am sorry I have been so naughty! O, I have been enjoying in the early mornings reading the Medieval Lyrics — there is such poetry in thought & verse, and I am finding myself quite at home with the Latin. Myra said she thought she had found a book that would please me, not only Helen's translations but the Latin would appeal to my classical mind!

[*Subject changed*]

I did say to him — "You, Louis, ought to have borne 11 children, & such children and carefully tended them as they grew up, watching them in sickness and health, seen one of your dearest die, another for a time lose her mental powers, another be attacked by TB. I think you would tend to become a fatalist & just bear things as they came as bravely as possible and lose something of the joy of life. There is nothing Morbid in that." But he will say "CFP is a sadist and MCP is a morbid masochist", so that's that.

Well — he must say it.

John of course takes it all for granted and calls himself his "Eldest devoted friend".

March 12th 1953

My dearest Lucy

My intermediate glasses[4] have come and I am able again to write like a gentleman! It is such a joy. I am so glad that my notes on the family were what you consulted & will help your friend Mr Theophilus. When I gave my library away to Lord Digby's School for Girls and Foster's School, I thought no one would want my Lodge's Peerage, it was such a bulky & such a dull book. So I tore out from it the Lilford pages & put them into Mr Lybbe Powys's Diary which I have & which itself has the pedigree rather concentrating on the Lybbe Powyses. (Lord Digby's School Headmistress was all for the Peerage!!) And it was Arthur who got the Diary for me and not Christine, it is quite a big book and has been quoted by Monica[5] in writing about that Chapel (really a Hunting Lodge) in the middle of the woods at Stourhead which I wrote to you about. So I was wise in keeping it, but I have lost a table (genealogical) which your Mary wrote out for me — tracing our descent (mostly imaginary I think) from William of Ludlow to Rodric Mawr King of Wales. Lodge's Peerage does not give!! nor does the present Burke (I sent it to that old Caldwell & it may well be among his papers).

I had an instance of the effect of Louis's book given me yesterday by Monica — who was talking on Tuesday afternoon to the Inner Wheel (wives of Rotary Members) on the Countryside. The Schoolmaster whom she saw afterwards had read the 'Seven Friends' and said to her what a strange selection of people are friends of the Powys Family & he asked her questions. 'Now' said Monica 'Here's

a little book that will tell the truth about the Powys Family & all about them. You can keep it if you like.' And she gave him 'The Powys Family' by Littleton C. Powys. She came to tea yesterday & told me all about her Tuesday. She always gets on happily at these functions & never is fussed by them at all — never has a note of any sort — in fact as a lecturer in that way resembles John. We had a very happy 2 hours together, she sits in your little chair.

I heard from Pauline[6] on Tuesday, a long really beautiful letter, written dear! dear! from a hospital. Her attempt to do a whole time job ended disastrously and she has to have a bronchiogram taken which requires certain preparation. Damn it. I'll send you her letter; because there is her idea of 'Towards Fidelity'. She seems to me to be a very cultured young girl (about 25) — and I wish she would give up this going out & working in offices, and stay at home like Eli.zabeth finally did and do some writing until her John can make a home for her, and she must not do housework then. I enclose her letter and the very attractive photo of the two, I like the look of John very much. You remember she was the author of the Sonnet 'Meeting' which referred to Elizabeth's 'I feel I have only got to make a little push' & I shall be there' (the other world).

The Medieval Lyrics in the Penguin Edition have the Latin on one side Helen Waddell's translation on the other, and give me such pleasure. I read them before 7 o'clock in the mornings & I have got halfway through & have been so happy with them. Some lovely Abelard lyrics!

I am very sorry to hear that the wretched savages[7] have penetrated to a spot so near your Mary's home and Old Willy's farm. I am so glad that Rose & Elizabeth[8] have gone to study the sheep in Australia. The fact that they are out of this danger will be a great relief to Will, who won't worry about it himself. I believe by the time Gilfrid goes out there for the summer holidays things will be better. The Government are now tackling the threat with determination. I hope so anyway —

How I wish dear John would have the film removed from his blind eye. Because if that could be done & he could once again read and write as I can — his other eye could be relied upon for his mountain excursions! If taken in your stride with confidence there is really practically no pain or discomfort about it. But they are his eyes and it is for him to decide himself. I have written more than 1 want to and with Pauline's letter you will have a regular budget. Much love to you my dear Lucy,

Your affectionate brother Littleton.

Last Sunday before my drive I wrote 8 sheets to Louis & told him exactly what 1 thought, at the same time praising him where 1 thought he deserved praise. On Wednesday I had a long letter from him — a kind letter & 1 wrote to him and the matter is finished & he knows exactly what 1 think of him in that connection. Elizabeth who knew the feeling in London always said 'The Powys brothers were not helped, but hindered and harmed by those books'.

NOTES

1 Lucy had been diagnosed with TB and was spending many months in Allington Sanatorium, Bridport.
2 LCP's second wife Elizabeth Myers.
3 Myra Reeves, see Littleton C. Powys, *Still the Joy of It*.
4 LCP was recovering from a cataract operation. (JCP considered it but decided against.)
5 The writer Monica Hutchings, see *Still the Joy of It* (and Theodora Scutt's *Cuckoo in the Powys Nest*).
6 Pauline Clift, *ibid.*
7 These were the years of the Mau-Mau in Kenya.
8 Elizabeth, Rose and Gilfrid, Will Powys's wife and two of his three children.

Louise de Bruin

Louis Marlow's Seven Friends *(reprinted 1992) doesn't (that I've found) use the actual word 'sadist' describing the Powys father, despite his 'kind, gentle voice' and 'look of mild forbearance ... shockingly belied by the wolf-like implications of his face ...' Mrs Powys, however,* 'was a romantic, sensitive and morbid woman ... It was her qualities that made her children's genius, and the qualities of her children's father that gave it power to act, and fused it with the strange cruelty by which it is so often controlled. It needed the mental masochism of the mother, the repressed ferocity of the father, to produce *Wolf Solent* or *A Glastonbury Romance, Mr Tasker's Gods* or *Unclay, Black Laughter* or *Earth Memories...*' *(p.97)*

Louis describes Littleton kindly: '[He] has published an autobiography of much interest, full of valuable commentary upon the other members of his family, a book affirming the values of life as he has experienced them, and of the values of Nature as seen through the loving eyes of a born countryman.' *(p.65)*

JCP to Louis, 7th February 1953:
... I have read 'Seven Friends' through ... and I swear to you I'm not piling it up or 'bowing and scraping', as my Father used to say, when I affirm & maintain across my heart that this is far the best word of criticism or summary or appreciation of us 3 ... By this word of yours, my dear, we all three stand or fall, for you have 'got our number'. O I agree with – yes, heart-whole & without reservation I do – with every paragraph about us three. If I'd tried to describe us three myself I can't think (I couldn't think as I read your words) how I could have found anything to add to what you've said. So let's go down in your well rowed boat & I'll be content .... I like what you say about Father & I like what you say about Mother, & nobody ever will hit us off better than your little daughter with 'The Powys' – as a Prehistoric or almost Mythical Monster ... (*Letters to Louis Wilkinson, p.299)*

JCP to Littleton (10 March 1953)
I am so glad you refrained from having a regular literary fight with Louis over our parenbts. I commend you for your restraint. It's no good all round these rows ...

Discovering the Powyses: Powys Memories

I recently came across an article on Llewelyn Powys by L. C. L. Drew (*Dorset County Magazine* No.73, [1978]), which described how the author went in search of the Powyses in East Chaldon and decided to put up at a small cottage on the village green only to find that this had been the first house of Theodore Powys. His host, it turned out, was Theo's old friend, Walter Miller. The article started me thinking of my Powys memories, because it so nearly paralleled my own experience of coming to East Chaldon in the early 70s.

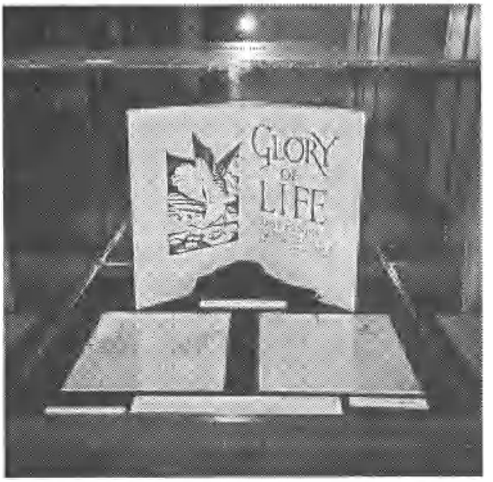
My very earliest recollection of the name 'Powys' was in about 1965, when I was still at school. During the dinner-hour I used to wander into the Midland Educational Company bookshop in Hotel Street, Leicester, and was often intrigued by a substantial volume which seemed to reside permanently on the fiction shelves. Its combination of Celtic lettering and the word 'Castle' on a green spine produced for some reason a rush to the heart; and thinking that the subject matter was historical, I remember being most disappointed that the text turned out to be dense narrative and, what is more, without pictures! But the image – 'Castle' and giant – remained with me.

Some years later I drifted through Oxford in something of a dream – waffling through a thousand years of Eng. Lit. (and Lang.) – but now find it strange that nowhere did I encounter a mention of the name Powys, not even in the bookshops, new and antiquarian, where I spent much of my time. In 1972 I began working as an assistant at Leicester University bookshop, and noticed one day a cream-coloured hardback arrive in the receiving department, with the striking title 'Old Earth Man'. Even more striking was the picture opposite the title page of a man slumped on a dry earthen bank gazing into the dirt ditch of a deserted roadside. I experienced then that same rush of the heart that I had felt seven years before, and wanted, naturally enough, to know why. Who was this author, described in an epigraph as either a 'god' or a 'devil'; who had come to 'full creation' apparently in his sixties and seventies, and who described himself as a tramp? I decided to find out. Walking across to the University library I was surprised to discover (in the light of no sign of him at Oxford) that there was a whole shelf of John Cowper Powys's work. I took down the largest I could find – a book of nearly a thousand pages – and read the first paragraph. Surely no-one who encounters the opening page of *A Glastonbury Romance* – once described, I believe, as the worst in English Literature – is ever going to be quite the same again. Charlatan or genius? It took me an obsessed exhausting five weeks in 1973, to read that book – slowly, one might even say, succulently – carrying it with me everywhere, in cars, bars and buses (not an easy task), and the verdict was clear. There was no looking back.

It so happened that I came across all three Powyses at about the same time. As serendipity determines, one of my colleagues at the bookshop mentioned to me

the name of T. F. Powys. His girlfiend's father was a book collector and spoke highly of this writer. During a visit to Chris and Celia's at their Clarendon Park home I met the gentleman and his wife – Francis and Katherine Feather. And so opened another perspective on the Powys name. In a bookshop in Mansfield Road, Nottingham, where I found my first *Glastonbury* (a first at 75p), I also came across Llewelyn's *Skin for Skin* and Elwin's *Life*. Being rather infatuated by then with the family these were ideal books; but when I read them I realised again that here was yet another remarkable writer, totally different and yet totally absorbing. My feeling about Llewelyn did not produce the gut frisson of reading John Cowper, but instead a kind of release – what he would have described, I suppose, as liberation from cant. A *belles-lettres* writer who was totally subversive!

Two years later I arrived in East Chaldon with a tent and a motorbike. I knocked at the cottage on the green and was invited in by a small woman who called out to her husband, 'Here's a young man who wants to know about Theodore.' I was soon sharing cake and tea with Mr and Mrs Miller, the old man laying full length on a sofa in the low-ceilinged front parlour. There was much conversation of course about Theodore, but also about Katie, and the cross Mr Miller had recently put up on her unmarked grave in the churchyard. We talked too about Llewelyn's stone and how to find it on the downs. I later went in search of it, and remembered it being far more obscured than it is now. A few years on I returned to Chaldon and wandered down to Chydyok from the gate above Tumbledown. I then first met Janet Machen, and through her kindness in later years was able to stay at the cottage. I often went in the winter months, preferring both the solitude it afforded and the drama of wild weather to the hot dry days one gets in downland summers. In those days Chydyok was more isolated than now, without phone or permissive paths, and its simple character was all the more appealing.



Part of the display of Llewelyn Powys by Peter Foss in the Ransom Center, Austin Texas, showing Llewelyn's sketches for the unpublished book The Poetry of God, *to be illustrated by Robert Gibbings (2002).*

It is impossible now to capture quite that first effect of entering into the Powys landscape of south Dorset, discovering for one's self, alone, these secret places. Now having come so far along the road as to have spent five years researching Llewelyn Powys for a doctorate, working on the bibliography and now back again with

Llewelyn's remarkable early diaries, with all their characteristic evocation of those scenes, I feel more than ever both the loss of more pure experiences, but also in a numbing world what joy and consolation there is in the continuing journey. Only recently, for instance, I located the remains of the garden on Jordan Hill where Llewelyn placed his shelter after the Great War; and nearby, a house hidden in a cove of the sea which was witness to another of Llewelyn's early romantic assignations. His 1911 diary records that he stood here with a girl, at the time married to an old colonel, but who some years before he had parted from reluctantly. He recalled for her the very spot in the road where they had last talked and she remembered that he 'liked girls with untidy hair'. 'Afterwards,' he writes, 'we stood alone on a great field, the moon paving the sea with rippling silver.'

Peter J. Foss

The Llewelyn Powys holdings at the HRC, Austin, Texas

Members of the Powys Society and most Powys scholars will possibly only know of the Humanities Research Center holdings at Austin, Texas, through the short list published in the Colgate University *Powys Newsletter* No 2 of 1971. The Ransom Center itself does not have a published schedule of its manuscripts nor a catalogue on line. Indeed without requesting photocopies of their index cards – which in the case of Llewelyn run to over a thousand – one is not likely to have much idea what the holdings comprise.

Recently through the award of an Andrew F. Mellon Research Fellowship I was able to visit Austin and study the Llewelyn Powys holdings, and I hope in due course to be able to print a full résumé of the collection, as well as incorporate the manuscript information in my Bibliography (now approaching saturation point!). For the moment, though, I thought a little overview might be of interest to the society.

The Llewelyn Powys material is certainly comprehensive. What isn't in Bissell (owned by the Society) is likely to be at Austin; other holdings in American or British universities or in private hands are very small in comparison. The holdings came to Austin through several acquisitions in the 1960s and 1970s; chiefly from the collection of the Pennsylvania bibliophile T. E. Hanley. My own study of it shows that nearly all the manuscript material put up for sale by George Sims in the 1950s came to Hanley, and then to Austin. Sims's MS sale, which was handled by him on Alyse Gregory's instruction, was advertised by way of a catalogue published in 1953. As he wrote later, he could not sell the entire collection, but split it up; he wrote that the major portion of it went to California, but this cannot be so. Sims's catalogue has a system of numbering in 6 sections,

section I, for instance, being the MSS of complete books by Llewelyn. The important sections are Section II: 'Miscellaneous MSS Books', and Section IV, which comprises loose MS sheets of essays and articles. The majority of the former is at Austin, whereas the majority of the latter is in Bissell.

Sims's numbering corresponded with numbers that were placed on the notebooks, exercise books and diaries etc. by Llewelyn and sometimes by Alyse; in most cases their different handwriting styles can be easily distinguished, but because Alyse came to the numbering later, there do arise some discrepancies and overlaps – one of the many confusions in this field of work. Further confusion arises by the fact that Sims's catalogue is also slightly out of sequence in its numbering, but this anomaly can be worked out. Furthermore, the catalogue is full of errors (again these can be deduced). To give two simple examples: in Sims II:46 the essay 'Death in Autumn' should read 'Dawn in Autumn', and in Sims II:78 the 'very early manuscript Death's Variations' should read 'Some Meditations Upon Death', which is indeed quoted as the first of the titled manuscripts in the section on the Llewelyn holdings in the 1971 *Powys Newsletter* No.2. I mention these lists (and a full explication, of course, would take up many pages) for two important reasons. First that Sims's list is a published catalogue, and therefore should receive bibliographical respect, and secondly, that the numbers on the books and in the catalogue are the author's own (or his wife's) and in the vast majority of cases still pertain, in that the books still survive in their original state, both at Austin and in Bissell. It is therefore sensible, in my view, to hold to these numberings, a view that was further complicated at Austin by the fact that the books were re-numbered, both in Roman numerals and arabic by the previous collectors (many in the form of plastic Dymo labels nastily sellotaped to the spines), and HRC have tended to keep to these. None of the numberings makes sense with regard to chronology, but the overlay of further numberings merely complicates the issue of cataloguing, a reason perhaps for the Austin holdings remaining substantially unsorted.

Now to come to the holdings themselves. I mentioned the loose manuscript sheets. Of these there are about 42, but only 26 are from Sims's list in Section IV (where there are 83 numbered – in fact 81 since two numbers are missed out). As I said before, most of the others are in Bissell. These MS sheets are mostly prepared texts of articles and essays, copied up from the notebook drafts and written out for a typist. They are of various dates, most on quarto sheets. However, among this group are 8 rough drafts of short sections of *Love and Death*, with titles provided by Llewelyn, which are likely to be preliminary working ideas. These are undistinguished from the essay drafts, and ought to be separately catalogued. At present these are all catalogued together alphabetically at Ransom. Many of these copied-up manuscripts have dedications, all to Alyse, such as (at the end of the essay on Sir John Harrington of all people) 'dedicated to my pretty gardener who is my dear lamb and little willow wren on a cherry tree'.

In addition to the autograph manuscripts, there are several hundred typescripts of articles, essays and stories by Llewelyn, again all arranged (and catalogued on cards) alphabetically (sometimes perversely). These are made up of various sized and dated typescripts, many of them used to submit articles to newspapers and magazines during the 1920s and 30s; they frequently came with carbon copies too, so that duplicate copies of typescripts exist both in Ransom and in other collections. However, a great number of these typescripts were copied up by Alyse Gregory from Llewelyn's notebook drafts in the early 1950s when she went through all Llewelyn's literary remains and transcribed most of them. These typescripts are nearly always conveniently initialled and dated by Alyse (that is, the date of her transcription). She also frequently tried to identify the publication of the work or whether it was ever used. My own bibliography now completes that task. The great body of these typescripts came in a second wave of acquisition by Ransom in the 1970s from the estate of Malcolm Elwin via Rota.

Another convenience provided by Alyse is that she frequently marked on the typescript the number of the notebook from which she typed the draft. This therefore can be used as a link between the typed versions and the original drafts, an important collating device since many of Llewelyn's articles (and we are talking about many hundreds) went under different titles, both in their manuscript form (sometimes no title) and in their published form. To give one example: the HRC manuscript title 'Threnody' (re. ARP) has the alternative title 'My Darling Bertie', written by Llewelyn on the cover of the notebook draft (and in Sims II:19 it is called that). This essay was first published under the title 'Threnody' in *The London Mercury* XXXIV (200) of June 1936, and then appeared in a condensed form under the title 'Lament for a Lost Brother' in *Magazine Digest* XIII, No.2 in August 1936. It was then republished in the collection *Somerset Essays* (1937) under the title 'Albert Reginald Powys', and appeared as such in Hopkins's *Selection* of 1953, and in the *Somerset and Dorset Essays* of 1957. It then appeared under a new title 'Memory Stirred' in *A Somerset Childhood* (1974). This one essay, therefore, went under five different titles, added to which is the further fact that Llewelyn wrote two other quite separate essays with the title 'Threnody' or 'A Threnody', and these also had alternative titles in their various forms. The bibliography should sort this out.

The collection of notebook drafts at the Ransom Center is the most important and substantial among the archive of Llewelyn's works, as it is mainly the material in Sims's catalogue sections II, III, and V. This comprises over a hundred quarto and foolscap notebooks and exercise books into which Llewelyn drafted his articles and stories or made notes for them. The early ones are usually in pencil, with no titles between items, and therefore often things are missed in the indexing at the Center. Some notebooks were obviously carried around in Africa and wear the marks of safari life on them! Others contain bits and pieces by John or Katie; others are diaries used as notebooks or notebooks used as diaries (as in the case of

his delightful 1903 diary, neatly written at school). All the books are numbered except those that have been re-bound by Sangorski or others to make a nice display on someone's shelf (often, strangely, the most insignificant of the notebooks). Alyse frequently added comments to the drafts, or on the covers. Among these there is a lot of unpublished material dating from his early period, when he was not a confident writer, and frequently aborted a draft or story. Among my own favourites were the pencilled third-person autobiography from *c.*1915, which Elwin calls 'Mervyn Howard' (*Life*, p.82), but which Ransom has catalogued as 'Dorchester Childhood. St Austin's Well' [St Austin's Well is the fictional title for Montacute]; early drafts of 'Aliens in Africa', his novel of his African experiences featuring the settler Carew, and with chapter headings such as 'By the Elephant's Skull' and 'Kekenuki Farm'; or the sketches Llewelyn provided for Robert Gibbings to include in their projected collaboration, *The Poetry of God*. These included erotic depictions of Jehovah mating with the Earth-Spirit!

As the Colgate *Newsletter* list shows, Ransom has the manuscripts of six of Llewelyn's books; but the manuscripts (mainly in notebooks, boxed) are not always complete. In a list elsewhere in the collection, made by Alyse Gregory, she does remark that she mislaid the second volume of the MS of *A Pagan's Pilgrimage*, and so Volume I only came through to the HRC; likewise the second notebook of the complete MS of *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* is missing from the boxed collection (Alyse had remarked that 'it might turn up'). With the MS of *Skin for Skin* there came originally an Introduction written by John Cowper Powys; this is now catalogued separately. John also provided a blurb for the dust-jacket that was never used. Llewelyn also wrote his own Preface, but again that was not used. We hope to publish these items in the *Newsletter*.

This overview is already too long, and one could say much more. The Ransom Center is a wonderfully user-friendly institution, and the documents arrive very quickly on request ('this is not the Bodleian,' as one cataloguer said). Because I wanted to see everything of Llewelyn's, I simply ordered 'All'; one was then confronted with a trolley-load of boxes – and that was only the 'Works'. Other trolleys emerged for his 'Letters', and then for 'Letters recip.' and then another for his 'Miscellaneous' (which included Alyse Gregory's material). For John Cowper one would have required a pantechnicon. Beyond the air-conditioned calm of the Ransom Center lies the cosmopolitan campus of the university and the unflustered city of Austin, state capital of Texas, still weird and wonderful despite being dubbed 'silicon mountain'. It is after all one of the '20 best places to live' in the US. I thoroughly recommend the air and culture – and the people. A truly civilized place!

Peter J. Foss

Reviews

Welsh Journal, by Jeremy Hooker

Seren, 2001. 248pp & Index. ISBN 1 85411 301 1. £7.95

Between 1969 and 1980 the poet Jeremy Hooker was a lecturer in the Department of English at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, during which time he wrote, among other things, his study of John Cowper Powys (1975) and the essays gathered in *The Poetry of Place* (1982). *Welsh Journal* records his observations and reflections while living with his first wife and their two children at Brynbeidog, a remote cottage on the slopes of Mynydd Bach in Cardiganshire; and they exhibit a persistent tension between his desire to share in the cultural life of Wales, and his simultaneous awareness that his imaginative roots were in his native Hampshire. This book explores the thoughts and feelings of an introspective and enquiring mind; and in doing so it records the competing urges towards an engagement with the world and towards withdrawal from it, and the resultant transmutation of that struggle into poems of scrupulous verbal simplicity and concentration. This is in the fullest sense of the term the account of man endeavouring to make his way in the world and to understand his poetic function.

It opens by demonstrating the beneficent influence of the writings of John Cowper Powys upon a personality of this kind. Hooker's admiration for him, however, is not unqualified: for example, a reading of *Atlantis* can lead him to dismiss Powys's late romances as 'sticky streamers of coloured candyfloss' (though it should be recorded that he was recovering from influenza at the time); but he acknowledges that it was John Cowper's particular kind of verbal magic that 'made me want to live more fully.' His other literary enthusiasms include Thomas Hardy, David Jones and Edward Thomas, though he has his reservations about the latter's tendency to take refuge in a sentimental romanticism; while as the journal proceeds we find T. F. Powys beginning to join his brother John as an influence on the author's life. Hooker also writes instructively about such contemporary Anglo-Welsh writers as Saunders Lewis and Emyr Humphreys, and, more warily, about R. S. Thomas. A sense of moral urgency pervades these literary judgements: Hooker is influenced by F. R. Leavis – whom he none the less witheringly castigates for the self-indulgent petulance and lack of generosity displayed in his old age. At the same time he is sharply critical of the inhibiting control exercised over contemporary poetic sensibility by the cultivated ironic detachment encouraged by the metropolitan literary power base. For what concerns him is poetry, not 'the poetry scene', though he confesses with disarming ruefulness to his own desire for literary fame and fortune – a desire that was to be moderated by exposure to the unworldly integrity of the Powys brothers' nephew-by-marriage, Gerard Casey. If at times Hooker's literary concerns strike one as too narrowly focused, he can yet appreciate the quality of

the urban poetry of Tony Harrison and engage with what he perceives as an obfuscating allusiveness in the work of Geoffrey Hill.

Jeremy Hooker has a gift for verbal portraiture. He has the seeing eye, attentive, for instance, to people's hands and to the way they move. Phyllis Playter, Lucy Penny, and Gerard and Mary Casey all spring to life exactly as they were in life: he gives an authentic sense of their presence.

He also shows a sensitivity to group experience, witness his account of the 1972 Powys Society inaugural conference; it echoes what a number of other people felt on that occasion, that 'JCP himself had engineered the conference and everything that happened in it.'

At other times the journal entries make for painful reading. Hooker can be disconcertingly frank as to his own psychological and sexual impulses; but he is also intelligent enough to relate them to the contemporary world.

> What we do and what we are accords with what we are part of. I think persistently of 'a world scraped from the top of the brain', which is how I see the terrors of this century and the stultifying features of a civilization – as the outcome of man being cut off from the deep resources of his nature, from his roots in the non-human and creaturely universe.

John Cowper Powys himself could not have put it better.

But *Welsh Journal* is not only of interest for literary or intellectual reasons: it proceeds on an undertow of detailed observations of landscapes and wild life of all kinds, exhibiting the sharply visual imagination which makes Jeremy Hooker so responsive to the writings of Frances Bellerby and Ivor Gurney. While he includes a number of his own poems in the text, they are embedded in passages of prose that resemble the instinctive lyricism of another of Hooker's favourite writers, the diarist Francis Kilvert.

> Ice on a pond by the field gate bore me, pale brown pony droppings were frozen together, hard as stones. I can't remember ever having seen so many icicles in the Beidog, hanging from brambles like teats on an udder, and from trailing willow branches, sometimes almost as smoothly round as blown glass. Electric shocks of brilliant white sunlight pulsed on the water. At night a sharp new moon.

If at times the sustained seriousness of tone verges on the portentous, this *Welsh Journal* none the less is buoyed up by its fascinated acceptance of things both seen and felt: above all it celebrates the power of the external world to heal the torments of the interior one. It reminded me at times of *A Net in Water*, the journal of the author's friend Mary Casey, whose poetry he admired. Altogether *Welsh Journal* may be read as a book that belongs in what might be termed, with due reservations, the Powys tradition. And towards the end the author pays a discerning tribute to the three Powys brothers and to their influence upon him. 'They've been lifegiving for many because, in our society, in this pinched, desperate century, they had more than other writers of the largeness & generosity

of life.' For all the complexities of feeling and distress of mind this book records, it bears persuasive witness to the validity of such an attitude to life and living.

Glen Cavaliero

(*Other recent books by Jeremy Hooker are* Imagining Wales *(p/back, Univ. of Wales Press) and a selection from Richard Jefferies (Seren).*)

An American's *Weymouth Sands*

The Novel in England 1900–1950: History and Theory by Robert L. Caserio

Twayne Publishers and Prentice Hall International, New York, 1999, xii & 441 pp.

Newsletter readers will be interested in the discussion of *Weymouth Sands* in Caserio's book. The approach is very much an American, not to say a New York one. It begins from the idea that the novel is a kind of Powysian critique of the Nausicaa or Gertie MacDowell episode of Ulysses in which Powys, like Bloom, is 'caught up in erotic reveries that are both sentimental-religious and pornographic'. This will serve as shorthand as long as we remember that there is a good deal more to the novel than just the most lurid strand in it. Caserio bases his insight on what he calls the 'doctrine of autoeroticism' that Wilson Knight claimed to have received from a dying John Cowper in 1963, 'urging me to deliver the teaching his letters had formulated'. He does not ask whether at this stage the critic could still be trusted to 'deliver' Powys's full meaning without turning it into a 'doctrine', something I myself would question. But the immediate implications of this doctrine will already be familiar to the reader of the *Autobiography*, with its frank avowals of the author's 'sadism':

> ... the reality – and the fantasy – of pain and aggression in Powys is not mitigated; indeed he worries obsessively about them. But, in the last analysis, in contrast to Freud, Powys lets pain be, so to speak, leaves it at large in experience and in the cosmos ...

This may be so but there is a lot of *Weymouth Sands* it misses out (not least its comedy) and we seem to be expected to settle for something more like a modem American novel instead (Roth, Updike, etc). It is hard to believe that these Freudian preoccupations were the only or the natural result of the novel's roots in Thomas Hardy and Dostoevski. Do original novelists really ground their art in the masters of modern thought? Caserio sees Powys's characters as if they were reclined on the psychiatrist's couch, not pacing the windswept expanse of Chesil Beach. Is it really so easy to pluck the heart out of their mystery? Whether or not the characters retain their more luridly Jacobean aspects despite this is not the point. Alas, we are still stuck with

> ... adolescent Peg Frampton, who is bisexual but more lesbian than otherwise. Peg is a remarkable and charming creation and, like everything in *Weymouth Sands* (especially its blend of realism and surrealism), seems

to belong to a kind of American fiction we associate with the 1960s.

This Peg adopts her sexual orientation as if she had joined a political party. How she can belong both to '60s America and Powys's Dorset is not explained. The anachronism seems yet another instance of an American critic trying to simplify or wish away the English class-system. It ignores where Peg comes from, just as it forgets that John Cowper was a man of his time and place, a son of the rectory and a scion of the gentry. *Weymouth Sands* is about class too, not just a dissection of disembodied Dostoevskian souls. I'm not sure Caserio understands this much better than Woody Allen would have done.

This may seem patronising but it is fortunately only part of the story. Caserio at least recognises that Powys is shamefully neglected, perhaps because he was more original than most of his contemporaries were. An E. M. Forster is neither as rooted in the traditions of the English novel nor as open to the European novel as he was. One is, for instance, grateful for the thought that *Weymouth Sands* offers us something that even *Ulysses* cannot:

> ... we have observed Powys derive a scenic inspiration (as it were) from *Ulysses* [but] Powys also is revising Joyce combatively ... *Weymouth Sands* does not over-reach itself either on the score of imaginative thought or of art in asking readers and critics to pair it with *Ulysses*.

This tallies with John Cowper's own very generous but not uncritical response to Joyce in *Obstinate Cymric*, though one distrusts Caserio's ability to do real justice to his 'imaginative thought'. But it takes a New Yorker to suggest that Powys may have been 'unread and mistaken as an outsider because he instigated, from within modernism, a hostile challenge to Freud'. That, at least, is more than Woody Allen would have managed.

Despite such insights, Caserio's book remains rather a curate's egg. What lets it down is what has let down a great deal of American criticism ever since Lionel Trilling, perhaps the last critic who did not let his Freudianism get in the way of his sense of novels as works of art rather than expositions of doctrine. Moreover, even if Caserio does see Powys through Freudian spectacles, who is to say that Wilson Knight or even the elderly John Cowper were much more disinterested about his art themselves? They all have axes to grind. This is why the hardest task for the Powys critic is to resurrect the idea of him as an artist – the autobiographer keeps getting in the way. Caserio is not the writer to rectify this blind spot and even many committed Powysians share it. His book opens with a confident resolution to connect 'individual fiction' to 'a tradition of fictions' but it merely takes that tradition for granted. A glance at the index yields no mentions at all of Balzac, Stendhal or Flaubert and only one each of Dickens and Tolstoi, yet all these novelists were important to Powys. Rabelais and Cervantes are also disregarded. One wonders how there can be any 'tradition of fictions' with such blanks in it. Presumably Caserio is thinking simply of a 'tradition of English fictions'. Yet *Weymouth Sands* owes a debt to other writers than Hardy. How, then,

could an English tradition explain it or, for that matter, *Ulysses* either? This should be enough to warn the Powysian not to expect too much from American academic criticism, even when it wants to put the record straight. How could it be the right place to look for help when it has so many received ideas of its own?

David Gervais

J. C. Powys: Esprits-Frères

A Selection of Letters translated by Christiane Poussier and Anne Bruneau
Ed. Jose Corti, Paris, 2001

The publishing house Jose Corti, who have already produced several important works by John Cowper Powys in recent years, have made us a royal present with Esprits-Frères. We have here a choice of 175 letters to different correspondents from 1910 to 1940, in an elegant volume of 416 pages, with a sober cover showing a 1929 photograph of John Cowper Powys: in profile, curved nose, high cheek-bones, and eyes looking afar as of a Native American staring at the horizon; in the very year of *Wolf Solent*.

The two translators have achieved a remarkable work. One finds, apart from a detailed presentation of each of the correspondents, apposite footnotes as well as insertions all along relative to some events in John Cowper's life. Deciding to stop at the date of 1940 is a judicious choice, it seems to me, because of the proximity of two terrible dates: December 1939, when Llewelyn dies in Davos, far from his beloved Wessex, and April 1941 when Frances and her daughter die in an air-raid in Plymouth. 1940 is also the year when *Owen Glendower*, that immense historical fresco, was published, marking a turning point in Powys' production. (I will only express one regret, that there is no table of contents listing dates and names – and I will make one criticism: the Introduction, essential for the reader's understanding, is not signed.)

Powys, during all his life, kept up such an immense correspondence that it is impossible to know how many letters he wrote: 'the number is infinite', as one specialist said. He would always answer letters scrupulously, even from people he did not know, and he did this almost to the end of his life, an occupation which took up an enormous part of his time, to the detriment of his work. Quite a number of these letters have been published in English, either by Village Press in the seventies, or by *The Powys Review* (and the Powys Society's *Journal* and *Newsletter*) and, since 1983, by the London publisher Cecil Woolf. The French-speaking reader who has followed the many publications of his translated work during the past years is sure to be charmed, discovering Powys's epistolary style, of which a few examples had been given by F. X. Jaujard in his legendary *Granit*.

Powys, great writer that he is, shows himself to be an epistolar of the first magnitude. He writes in a vivid style full of nuances, 'carried away' as he says, 'by the look of words and the bluff of words and the parade of words', for his pleasure

as much as for the pleasure of his reader. As he remarks (to Llewelyn, 9 September 1914), 'One can't cultivate a "sincere" tone — I can't anyway. I must ramble on in my fantastic charlatan manner or not at all.' His letters have a rare spontaneous quality. He knows how to be amusing without being caustic, his style is varied but devoid of conventional mannerisms, he is as attentive to his moods as he is to his reader's. He writes in a nervous, disorderly manner, punctuated with words in italics or underlined once or twice, laid out with exclamation marks; the orginal letters show his pointed and nervous hand covering the page with an intricate muddle of dancing paragraphs, using all the space available and sometimes adorning it with caricatures of himself. Powys very naturally adapts himself to the personality of the person he converses with, and gives him his whole attention. When you are used to reading his letters, it is almost possible to 'hear' the tone of his voice. We learn a lot too, for without conceit, without prudishness, he willingly confides to his correspondent, even if he does not know him well, facts about his private life, his health, the books he reads, his travels, as well as his reactions to the different events, painful or joyous, which have marked these important years. But he seldom evokes work in progress, or only slightly, *en passant*, with the notable exceptions of *Wolf Solent* and *Autobiography*, for which he explains his intentions in detail to Llewelyn. This correspondence is a mine of information about his life in the States, and the people, well-known or not, whom he met; Theodore Dreiser for instance, who became an intimate friend. Many of these letters are written during his trips across the continent (in trains, in the waiting-rooms of stations) in hotels and on ships, too, during the many voyages he made up to 1934, when he came back to Great Britain for good.

Among these Letters, the most numerous and in my opinion the most exciting are those which are written to Llewelyn, who although so different was without doubt the nearest to John Cowper's heart and remained so to the end of his life. But we also find some of the letters John Cowper wrote to Frances Gregg, for a long time the 'Cathy' of a John Cowper transformed into the Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights* ('O you have got me, Cathy, body and soul' he writes to her then...) We also find letters addressed to other members of the family: the Nietzschean Theodore; Philippa/ Katie affectionately called 'Sea Eagle'; Lucy the youngest sister; Bertie the architect, 'Brother Positive' ... John Cowper also writes to other friends who belong to the 'circle' of intimates, such as Louis Wilkinson 'the Archangel', who was a close friend of the three Powys brothers, or Gerard Casey the disciple, who will scatter Powys's ashes at Chesil Beach in 1963; Huw Menai the Rhondda poet, the Swedish Sven-Erik named Eric the Red, the writer James Hanley, or Nicholas Ross who appears in Powys's life in 1939 and whom John Cowper fondly called 'Rhisiart' after one of Owen Glendower's heroes. There are quite a few who are not present here – but how could it be otherwise? – and one strongly recommends *John Cowper Powys–Henry Miller,*

Correspondance Privée, which has been translated by N. Haddad and published in French by Editions Criterion in 1994. (In English, we only have the one-sided *Letters of Powys to Miller*.)

But it is really Phyllis Playter, Powys's American companion since 1921, so important in his life but important too in the elaboration of the great novels, who is the one great absentee in Powys's correspondence so far. We eagerly wait for that to appear. Meanwhile, may we hope that in the near future the 1929, 1930 and 1931 Diaries, which John Cowper started to write at the instigation of Phyllis and which have been published in English, will find a French publisher ready to give us another great pleasure.

Jacqueline Peltier

Re-inventing the Landscape: contemporary painters and Dorset
by Vivienne Light. Canterton Books 2001. ISBN 0 9541627 0 6.

This is an impressive and valuable account of 11 painters who live and work in Dorset, with photographs of winter coast-scapes by Martin Hampton. The painters, mostly long-practised and long-resident, get 8 pages and 5 or 6 illustrations each; their houses (several of them open to the public) reflect their personalities and the interviews are largely in their own words. Their work as illustrated ranges from almost purely 'abstract' (John Hubbard, Martyn Brewster, Brian Graham, Robert Woolner) where the connection with land is absorbed in colour and atmosphere, to 'figurative' (Robin Rae, Alex Lowery) where realistic elements (roof, steps, cliff) are transformed to carry ideas or states of imagination. Both need quotation marks to convey their interaction. The remaining painters (George Dannatt, Vanessa Gardiner, Peter Joyce, Padraig Macmiadhachain, Alastair Michie) combine both elements, describing the process and their response to landscape in various ways – emotional response to light, to strangeness and change, the land structured as with music, the 'layers of time', patterns of geology and history. Almost all these artists also produce accomplished drawings and open-air studies, many are dedicated walkers, all find a lasting fascination in the special qualities of Dorset: its exceptionally varied geology and changing light.

Is the value of landscape to novelists so different? With many novelists (even often with Hardy) landscape with many may seem secondary to people, but with all the Powyses the non-human often assumes equal rights – more explicitly with Llewelyn; with TFP a pervading presence through the way of life transformed by it; most deliberately with JCP (that most visual of writers) – JCP has indeed been compared unfavourably with Hardy in this repect. But whether translating to shapes or to words, painters and writers share the sense of continuity, of the multilayering of landscape; and an equal sensitivity to its atmospheres of peace or disquiet, and the influence on landscape, and through landscape, of weather, of light, of chance.

KK

To J.C.P. on his 90th birthday

Sir, what you give we have and hold:

Magus, you kiss life into the dead stone;
The plain woman and the crazed man in the dull town
Make quick and green with loving, and make the moon
React to the stretcht dog's pain, and the plant's groan.

John Cowper Powys has felt the thuds of the sun
Startle the wild block of wood; he has shown
Us the Arthurian sword as down it shone
Yesterday afternoon; and he has seen

Unshudderingly the livid spear; caught the sheen
Of that hovering oval, roseate urn
Repolished till it throbs; has made the mean
Insect thrilling and ghostly, and the dead return.

Sir, what you give we have and hold;
John Cowper Powys, ninety years old.

Francis Berry

(This poem was broadcast as part of a discussion celebrating JCP with Professor G. Wilson Knight, Mr Malcolm Elwin and Dr George Steiner, on Welsh Home Service, Tuesday 14th September 1962 at 8.30 pm. The BBC transcript is in the Bissell collection.)

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