Editorial

Glastonbury, and *Glastonbury*, this time, with some shameless recycling; and mostly JCP, again with different voices – to an earnest American interviewer; to his reading public; and to Phyllis Playter. From TFP, two more Cheriton girls. (Could these innocents have survived in Glastonbury Town? Given luck they could, I think.) Finally the substantial two-part re-introduction ten years on to *The Meaning of Culture*. Apologies to Llewelyn – but next time he will be there.

Glastonbury today, even to a high-street visitor, is clearly still as complex a skein (though doubtless a less stratified society) as that described in *A Glastonbury Romance*. (Is it *c.*1912, the society he describes?) Communism may no longer be much in evidence, and capitalism less local; but a trawl through leaflets and bookstalls brings up a Symposium (with coach tour) of crop circles, a Goddess Conference, activities (from watercolours to martial arts) on the Millfield campus; a hagiography of the martyred 80-year-old Abbot Whiting; and (a shelf down, in the Arthur/Merlin section) *A Glastonbury Romance*, on sale outside the Abbey ruins as JCP hoped. Chalice Well offers its way to peace, as does the church and shrine to the Virgin Mary, where explanations are now thought necessary of the difference between this (christian) devotion and the (neo-pagan) worship of a mother goddess. It was perhaps sad – perhaps not surprising – to see a quotation from J. C. Powys (actually from Morgan Nelly reporting Mad Bet) brought in as an example of the latter. Should writers be responsible for the over-simplifications of their message – even for their fictional characters – by the next generations? A subject for discussion at the Conference? Meanwhile the windy Tor is as wonderful a sight as ever, and the lanes beyond the town still warm and scented with meadowsweet.

ON OTHER PAGES

Essays on Glastonbury

Members might like to be reminded about the the 'Glastonbury number', no.9 (1982) of *The Powys Review*. A verson of the cover photograph of JCP reading to his American publishers, and 'The Creation of Romance', in this *Newsletter* were printed in no.9, which also contains among other articles on *GR* 'The Cave of the Man-Eating Mothers' by Penny Smith (on the Wookey Hole episodes and passages omitted) and Ned Lukacher on 'The Language of Myth ...'. *Review* no.13 has 'Romance and Naturalism' by Elizabeth Barrett; no.19 'Stone Worship and the Search for Community' (Dorothee von Huene Greenberg); no.20 the most useful 'Aspects of the Topography' by Susan Rands; no.27/28 'The Topicality of *A Glastonbury Romance*' (on the real-life Flood) and no.21/32 'The Glastonbury Libel' (on the real-life Philip Crow), both also by Susan Rands.

These and other issues of *The Powys Review* are still available, from its editor Belinda Humfrey (Beeches House, 25 Harborough Road, Desborough, Northants NN14 2QS) and it is hoped they will also be on sale at the Conference. Complete sets of the *Review* numbers issued to members of the Society (Nos 1–26), including an Index, can also be obtained from Stephen Powys Marks – see inside back cover. **KK**

Chairman's Report for 2001

Last year our Acting Chairman Griffin Beale reported that he found himself in a rather unusual position in preparing his Annual Report for the past Financial Year, as the period in question covered the last months of Paul Roberts's time as Chairman and the period until John Williams's resignation. He added an account of the difficulties through which the Society had passed in the year 2000, and wrote that it seemed likely that it would be some time before the Society fully recovered.

The first months of 2001 were marked by further severe difficulties, which led among other things to the cancellation of plans for the 2001 Conference and to the decision by several Officers of the Society not to offer themselves for re-election.

We therefore lost the services most notably of the Acting Chairman Griffin Beale; of the Hon. Secretary Chris Gostick; and of John Batten, the Editor of our *Newsletter*.

However we were fortunate not only that our President Glen Cavaliero remained in office, but also that Stephen Powys Marks agreed to stay on as Treasurer for another year. A further degree of continuity was assured by the retention on the Committee not only of John Powys, Jeff Kwintner and Sonia Lewis but also of Kate Kavanagh who undertook to edit the *Newsletter* at very short notice and prepared a first-class number that was the highlight of the Society's activities in the last quarter of 2001.

These stalwarts formed the core of a new Committee which from the time of the AGM in August 2001 had gathered into its ranks Timothy Hyman and David Gervais with the warmest of welcomes, a welcome that was accorded in no less measure to Peter Foss as its new Hon. Secretary, to David Goodway as its new Vice-Chairman, and to me as its new Chairman.

What has happened so far during 2002 must be the subject of next year's report.

I will simply say that a line has been firmly drawn beneath past difficulties, and that the Society can once again concentrate upon enjoying the works of the Powyses and upon passing on that enjoyment to others. That's our way forward!

Richard Perceval Graves

Committee Nominations 2002

The following **Officers** have been nominated by Society members and have agreed to stand:

Position	*Nomination*	*Proposer*	*Seconder*
Chairman	Richard Perceval Graves	Timothy Hyman	David Goodway
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway	Susan Rands	Cicely Hill
Hon. Secretary	Peter Foss	Shelagh Hancox	Jeff Kwintner
Hon. Treasurer	No nominations received		

Members of the **Committee** who are prepared to continue are:
Jeff Kwintner, Sonia Lewis, Kate Kavanagh.
John Powys, who comes to the end of his three-year term, is prepared to continue; nominated by Richard Graves; seconded by Peter Foss.

The Annual General Meeting of The Powys Society
will be held in the Music Room
at Millfield School, Street, Somerset,
at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday, 18 August 2002

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the 2001 AGM
published in the November 2001 Newsletter.
2 Matters arising from the Minutes.
3 Report of the Hon. Secretary.
4 Report of the Hon. Treasurer and Audited Accounts
as published in the July 2002 Newsletter.
5 Report for 2001 of the Chairman
as published in the July 2002 Newsletter.
6 To note election of Officers and Committee members for 2002-03.
7 Appointment of Hon. Auditor.
8 Date and location of 2003 Conference.
9 Any Other Business.

P. J. Foss
Hon. Secretary

Hon. Treasurer's Report for 2001

The accounts for 2001 are set out on the following pages; they have been approved by the Society's Hon. Auditor, Stephen Allen. Once again I am most grateful to him for his advice and his work. (Comparison figures for 2000 are shown in parentheses after 2001 figures.)

Our paid-up membership was 292. 174 subscriptions were paid by standing order; under Gift Aid arrangements we recovered £579 of tax. Although our membership was down from last year's record of 315, the tax refund was more than twice previous refunds, bringing the total subscription income to £4,825 (2000: £4,611); this represents 79.4% of our total income of £6,074. Net income from the sale of publications was £528 (£785). Donations (£549) included a legacy of £500. This year we did not hold a Conference, but incurred modest expenditure of £29 in holding the AGM in Dorchester.

As in previous years the largest part of our expenditure has gone on our regular publications, *The Powys Journal* and three issues of the *Newsletter*; the net cost of producing these, including distribution but excluding copies of the *Journal* taken into stock, was £4,519 (£4,178). This includes £737 which is regarded as

charitable expenditure in furtherance of our objects, and is therefore excluded from the calculation of price. The total represents 93.6% of our subscription income, a little over our target of 90%. This year we expended the exceptional sum of £2,362 on the Powys Collection kept at the Dorset County Museum; this was the culmination of several years' work largely by the Hon. Curator, Morine Krissdóttir, on the acquisition, accommodation, conservation and cataloguing of our very important collection; this year's expenditure included the purchase of additional shelving and a new showcase for the room to which the Collection was moved during the year. Unfortunately, arrangements made for a repeat of the very successful 1999 visit to East Anglia were poorly supported and had to be cancelled, incurring a cancellation fee.

We had an excess of expenditure over income of £2,129 (£1,273); as in previous years, the value of stock pre-dating the year has been written down by £592 (£699); the resulting excess of expenditure together with the writing down, £2,721 (£1,972), has been deducted from our General Fund, to which £2,000 was transferred from the Wilson Knight Fund. The substantial excess of expenditure appears alarming, but is more than outweighed by expenditure on the Collection which will not recur; it should be noted that the Collection has benefited from the substantial profits from the sale of our own publications in earlier years, some of which had been placed in the Wilson Knight Fund.

Our net worth at the end of the year was £5,696 (£8,417) of which £2,749 (£2,962) was represented by the value of stock. There has therefore been a significant decrease in our net worth of £2,721 (£1,972), of which £592 is a paper loss due to the writing down of stock; the decrease in our cash resources was £3,194 (£1,438). This outcome is somewhat disappointing, but is almost wholly due to the two non-recurring items already mentioned (the Collection expenditure and the cancellation fee): the Society will need to be careful, but can expect to continue with its regular activities.

Stephen Powys Marks

Subscriptions

The annual subscription to The Powys Society is due on January 1st, as follows:

UK £13.50 overseas £16 student £6.

We are very grateful to the 250 members who have paid their subscriptions for 2001,174 by standing order; 143 people have signed new Gift Aid Declarations, and a few covenants are still in operation. However, there is a large number of members who have not yet paid their subscriptions: reminders are enclosed. Those who have not paid will not receive the latest issue of *The Powys Journal*, volume xii, which will be ready for distribution at the AGM. **SPM**

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2001

Income [1]		£	£	*2000*
subscriptions	for 2001 (292) [2]	4,107.81		
	tax refund under Gift Aid [3]	579.20		
	for 2000 paid in 2001 (9)	138.50	**4,825.51**	*4,611*
donations [4]	legacy	500.00		
	other	49.50	**549.50**	*135*
publication sales	stock publications	699.54		
(excluding postage)	*less* cost of publications sold	–171.45	**528.09**	*785*
Conference 2000	*deficit*		–	*–892*
fees for use of collection, 2000			–	*93*
refund of cost of stationery purchased in 2000			**46.59**	–
bank interest, paid gross			**124.09**	*281*
			£ 6,073.78	*£ 5,013*

Expenditure [1]		£	£	*2000*
The Powys Journal XI (2001):[5] (a) charitable element of publication			**737.17**	*642*
(b) cost of members', complim. and copyright copies (329) [6]		1,069.25		
cost of distribution		449.39	**1,518.64**	*1,432*
			2,255.81	*2,074*
The Powys Journal IX & X, cost of supplying to late subscribers			**6.84**	*2*
Newsletters (3) (including cost of distribution, £513.03) [6]			**2,363.13**	*2,105*
Powys Checklist, complimentary copies to new members			**5.00**	*5*
The Dorset Year, honoraria to editors and designers, 2000			–	*160*
Weymouth Walk booklet, 2000, abandoned			–	*86*
Powys Collection			**2,362.19**	*736*
East Anglia visit: fee for cancellation and lost deposit at Hengrave Hall			**550.00**	–
copyright fee, 2000			–	*4*
stationery and leaflets			**69.80**	*409*
website			**50.00**	–
AGM (£28.99), officers' expenses (£191.96), committee travel (£318.81) [7]			**539.76**	*705*
	2000		**8,202.53**	*6,286*
excess of expenditure over income	*–1,273*	**–2,128.75**	**–2,128.75**	*1,273*
less writing down of stock [8]	*–699*	**–592.35**	**£ 6,073.78**	*£ 7,752*
excess of expenditure, including writing down *carried to Statement of Funds*	*–1,972*	**–2,721.10**		

Auditor's Report to the Members of The Powys Society

I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved Auditing Standards. In my opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view of the charity's affairs at 31st December 2001 and of the deficit for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

J. S. Allen, Chartered Accountant, 12th June 2002

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

I *General fund* [14]	£	£	*2000*
funds at January 1st 2001		**3,520.55**	*5,493*
excess of expenditure over income, incl. writing down of stock		**–2,721.10**	*–1,972*
transfer from Wilson Knight benefactors' fund		**2.000.00**	*000*
funds at December 31st 2001		**£ 2,799.45**	*£ 3,521*
represented by:			
stock *The Powys Journal, The Powys Review,* and books at cost at January 1st 2001		**2,961.77**	*3,495*
add cost of new publications [9]		**555.75**	*768*
less cost of publications sold	–171.45		
complimentary *Checklist* to new members	–5.00		
writing down of stock [8]	–592.35	**–768.80**	*–1,301*
value of stock at December 31st 2001		**2,748.72**	*2,962*
cash at bank at December 31st 2001 [10]		**212.78**	*1,409*
sums due to the Society [11]		**110.00**	*50*
		3,071.50	*4,421*
less subscriptions received in advance [12]		**–150.50**	*–538*
creditors		**–121.55**	*–362*
		£ 2,799.45	*£ 3,521*

II *The Wilson Knight benefactors' fund (WK)* [13, 14]	£	*2000*
funds at January 1st 2001	**4,896.18**	*4,896*
transfer to General fund	**–2.000.00**	*000*
funds at December 31st 2001	**£ 2,896.18**	*£ 4,896*
represented by cash at bank [10]		
	£ 2,896.18	*£ 4,896*

NOTES

1 Cash turnover in 2001: total receipts, £5,923.11; total payments, £9,226.99, of which £555.75, relating to the cost of publications (*see* note 10), is carried forward in the General fund. Other adjustments, relating to cost of publications sold, writing down of stock, subscriptions received in advance, and sums owing to or owed by the Society, give excess of *Expenditure* over *Income* for the year of £2,128.75 (2000: £1,273), all as shown in the accounts.
2 This figure comprises 253 (174 by standing order) paid in 2001 (£3,569.51) and 39 paid in advance in 1999 (£538.30).
3 This figure includes refunds on subscriptions received since April 5th 2000, including those paid late for 2000.
4 In addition, committee travel costs of £511.25 were not claimed; regarded as donations + £549.50 shown = £1,060.75.
5 *The Powys Journal* XI: gross cost £2,362.17. 500 copies stocked, sold or distributed @ £3.25 = £1,625; remainder of cost (£737.17) treated as cost of fulfilling charitable purpose of publishing *The Powys Journal*. 329 copies distributed, 171 taken into stock @ £3.25 = £555.75
6 Total net cost of producing and distributing for members *The Powys Journal* X (£1,518.64) & 3 *Newletters* (£2,363.13) = £3,811.77; with charitable element (£737.17) = £4,618.94 = 95.7% of 2001 subscriptions including tax refunds (£4,825.51) (2000: 90.6%).
7 Total travel costs: £381.81 claimed + £511.25 not claimed = £830.06.
8 This is arrived at by writing down the value of stock at January 1st 2001 by 20%; new stock in 2001 is not affected.
9 Undistributed copies of *The Powys Journal* XI, £555.75 (*see* note 5).
10 Current account £157.22 + deposit account £2,951.74 = £3,108.96, *less* WK £2,896.18 = £212.78 in General fund.
11 Sums due to the Society: cheques in hand at end of year.
12 Subscriptions received in advance: for 2002 (10), £132.50; for 2003 (1), £18.
13 All interest has been retained in the General fund.
14 **The Society's net worth at December 31st 2001:** General fund £2,799.45 + WK £2,896.18 = **£5,695.63** (2000: £8,417).

Stephen Powys Marks, Hon. Treasurer

Committee News

The Committee met again in London on 22nd June. Louise de Bruin was invited to report as Conference organiser. The Chairman read a poem from *Samphire* about rats. We heard about the development of the Website (continuing), and the possibility of a new treasurer (hopeful). Numbers at the Conference are expected to be 50–60. It was decided (by vote) that consorts of speakers should not be expected to pay. It was decided (by agreement) to keep the afternoon of Saturday free for unplanned activities. Recording of the Conference will go ahead. It is hoped to sell books and other material at the Conference (volunteers from the Committee), and that copies of *The Powys Review* dealing with Glastonbury will be available. Llangollen will be re-investigated as a possible Conference site. The Secretary read letters he has received, among them one from an Italian publisher interested in JCP's philosophy and *Mr. Weston*, previously known only from French translations.

The Committee would be glad to hear in advance from anyone who would like a particular subject to be brought up in 'other business' at the AGM; and any questions for the discussions with the visiting writers.

Other news

A substantial collection of books by and connected with T. F. Powys was to be sold at Sotheby's on 12th July. A sizeable review by Chris Woodhead of the reissue of *Maiden Castle* by Overlook Press (£25) appeared in the *Sunday Telegraph* on 26th May. A. N. Wilson's 'End Column' in *The Daily Telegraph* on 1st July, on the delights of rediscovering old magazines, mentioned the pleasure of finding an essay by Llewelyn Powys in *The Countryman*.

Judith Stinton's new book, *A Dorset Utopia,* on Homer Lane and the Children's Commune established at the time of the First World War, should appear in the autumn.

It is hoped that a toast will be drunk to Llewelyn on his birthday (13th August) as in former years. **KK**

The Powys Collection at Dorset County Museum

This is a personal view. The upstairs room (up a *lot* of stairs) where the Powys collection is housed is smallish but bright and agreeable, especially in summer with its glass door to the fire escape open and a view over the roofs of Dorchester (on one of which reposes a large unidentifiable skull, escaped from the Museum perhaps). It could be cold in winter. The family paintings are on the walls. It contains a new display cabinet for treasures (such as the MS of *Mr. Weston*), a new

blue carpet, and a smallish table with a computer on which Judith hopes to transfer the various inventories (which will then be able to cross-reference). As things are now there would probably not be enough table-space to work comfortably; but I guess that a serious student could be accomodated (with a folding table perhaps); and there is also the possibility of using the reading room on the ground floor (which does contain large tables, and seldom more than a few Museum members reading in it).

All the material is kept in the secure room leading off. The sorting of the Collection continues. Judith Stinton (who deals with it on two days a month, as the Museum's employee) is at present adding details to the Inventory, putting in order the rest of the letters from JCP to Littleton, and listing a bequest of material about Littleton and Elizabeth Myers. The system is a little complicated for someone previously unfamiliar with the Bissell and Feather collections. As I understand it the Feather collection is chiefly of books, with other material mostly of TFP, and the Bissell has all kinds of material on them all. The inventory made by Morine Krissdóttir lists each brother separately, in sections (MSS, TSS, Books by, Books on, ex libris etc.). There is now a helpful copy of this for use by the *Newsletter* editor or others. Non-Bissell and non-Feather Powys material (books later donated and so on) is not listed with the collections, and some belongs to the Museum. It will have a separate catalogue (I hope soon).

The Museum's long-term plans are said to be on course, though not yet begun. They hope eventually to make a serious library with areas for their different literary stars and facilities for reading and study, to develop links with higher education through the South (Bristol, Exeter ...) and be open to further literary collecting. Downstairs, the reading room would become a bookshop and a present store-room a café. Some of this might begin at the end of this year ... Meanwhile they have rearranged the first-floor balcony with its painted ironwork as a History of Dorchester display. The literary galleries continue as before, with in the Powys section a display of Maiden Castle material, and another cabinet of Powys treasures. I'd like to see (since they have them) a Powys 'touch screen', even if shared with Sylvia and the rest, also clearer signposting between the rooms. But there is a friendly feeling about it all.

Dorchester on a sunny June market-day was lively with cheerful shoppers and street musicians, and Weymouth as it ought to be, thronged with happy pensioners sitting with icecream cones, and small children running on the sands with spades. Shops are festooned with bunches of coloured inflated plastic, and the sea was shallow and warm as milk. **KK**

Gamel Woolsey and JCP at Glastonbury

See Diary, *1929, Saturday July 27th: '... When last mght we were in the middle of the Ruins of the Abbey Gamel was vexed with Lulu and Alyse for debouching thro' the space where the lost old walls were. She said she felt distinctly pushed back by those walls ...'.*

The Creation of Romance

(First printed in Modern Thinker, *Vol 1 No 1, March 1932)*

Author's Review: a literary forum for authors, wherein are presented those largely intangible factors which go into the writing of a book — its genesis, its motivating ideas, its form, its subtler and less apparent qualities. A Glastonbury Romance *by John Cowper Powys: described by the author in the form of a Dialogue or of an Author's Catechism.*

How long were you writing this book?

A year and nine months.

Why did you write it?

I wrote it for seven reasons.

Name them.

1. To earn my living.
2. To get the sensation of reading what I wrote; that is, of writing the sort of book that it pleases me most to read.
3. To get the pleasure of my friends liking what I wrote.
4. To get the pleasure of imagining complete strangers liking what I wrote.
3. To get the pleasure of triumphing over my enemies.
6. To express certain moral, philosophical, and mystical ideas that seem to me unduly neglected in these days.
7. To get the pleasure of having my imagination for a long space of time fixed intensely upon England.

Are your characters taken from life or are they pure inventions?

Every one of them, save the grandfather who is dead and the architect who only appears in his buildings, is a pure invention.

Why is it such a long book? Why is it so crowded with characters?

Because a long book is the kind I like to read; and because a great many characters, by thickening out such a book, convey the impression of a convincing world, of many dimensions, in which it is possible to fancy yourself moving about freely and recognizing houses, streets, gardens, lanes, alleys, people and things, down to the least stick and stone.

What is the main idea of A Glastonbury Romance?

The main idea is a life, not a theory or a speculation, and in this case the life of a particular spot upon the earth's surface.

Enlarge on this a little, if you please. You speak too enigmatically.

The main idea was to isolate a spot on the surface of the earth, a spot known to the author from his boyhood, and to write a story about this spot, making the spot itself the real hero or heroine of the tale.

Upon what method is the tale composed?

Upon the method of making the story exciting and arresting in the precise way in

which I myself like things in real life to be exciting and arresting.

What way may that be?

The use of epical and ballad interest *as against* lyrical and dramatic interest; and the use of *physiognomic* observation – as Spengler names it – as against scientific observation; and finally the use of philosophical psychology free from slavish adherence to the new psycho-analytical phraseology.

How can a spot, or region, or locality be treated psychologically?

By describing it and analyzing it under the moods of the weather and under various chemical and spiritual influences and in regard to its flora and fauna and geological strata; and in regard to the historic changes that have come to its human inhabitants in connection with these things; and to its whole being from zenith to nadir, and from circumference to centre.

You speak of "spiritual" influences and "chemical" influences. What do you mean to imply by such extra-telluric forces?

I refer to certain astronomical powers or bodies, possessed of sub-human or super-human consciousness, who have a definite effect, magnetic and chemic, and even personal, upon the characters of the story.

What powers and what bodies are you talking about?

The Sun, the Moon, the Evening Star, the Milky Way, the Constellations. All these are to be found exercising both psychic and physical influences upon this particular region of earth, according to the revolution of hours, months, and seasons, and for as long as the story lasts.

How long does the story last?

For a little over a year.

Who is the hero of the story?

Glastonbury herself. The story is concerned with Glastonbury's struggles against both Chance and Fate.

How can a mere place, or region, have a personality?

I cannot tell ... But I know that it has one!

What supernatural forces, if any, enter into your story?

The First Cause enters into my story as a super-human entity; and it is manifested as a dualistic force, partly beneficient and partly malefic.

God and the Devil in one, you mean?

You have said it.

What other supematural power have you introduced into this presumptuous narrative?

The Grail.

In these modem times? Contemporary with airplanes and "wireless" and the Quantum-theory?

No less.

What effect does the Grail have?

It divides the characters into two hostile camps.

Is that all?

No. The spiritual differences discovered by the Grail blend themselves, in our industrial age, with economic and political forms of conflict, and thus it works out that the protagonist of the story is an energetic Industrialist, hostile to the Grail, and bent upon converting Glastonbury into a prosperous industrial centre; while the anatagonist is a prophetic visionary, anxious to rouse into being the beginnings of a new "Culture" – in the mystical Spenglerian sense – towards which all the western nations might draw, for a fresh growth of life.

It has interested me also to re-create the profound symbolism of the Grail mythology and to discover it re-enacting itself in various significant groupings of animate and inanimate existence in these modern days.

All this, though it will clearly reveal itself to anyone with a *penchant* for mythology, does not in any way interfere with the philosophy of the book or become an encumbrance to any reader's enjoyment and understanding of the conflict in it between its two main forces.

Does the struggle between these two cover the whole field?

Not by any means; for the life of any spot, like that of any person, is too rich and chaotic to be accounted for by one tension alone.

Name another tension.

Another? Why, I have the whole life of a community on my hands: with housewives, lawyers, doctors, chemists, innkeepers, procuresses, clergymen, servants, old-maids, beggars, madmen, children, poets, landowners, labourers, shopkeepers, an anarchist, dogs, cats, fish, and an airplane pilot.... There are no less than six major love affairs, one murder, three births, two deaths, and one raising from the dead.... In short my Glastonbury world resembles all other worlds on this planet and is a melee of adventure, traedy, comedy, chance, hopes, despairs, triumphs; and all these take their course on their own level; while the greater forces –thrones, dominations, principalities and powers – advance and retreat on theirs.

What force produces the denouement of the plot?

I have already explained that this tale is so prolific in plots and denouements that the outcome, like that of life itself, will appear in different forms to different readers.

What ends it then? What excuse did you find for writing "Finis"?

The excuse found by God when *his* world got beyond his control.

What was that?

The Flood.

John Cowper Powys

This interview was also printed in The Powys Review *9 (1981/1982), edited by Belinda Humfrey. With thanks to Louise de Bruin for the original cutting.*

Finding A Glastonbury Romance

Libraries terrify me – all those books and the silence. Even when I enter one with notes on my quarry, the reason for the expedition dissolves.

In 1948 Jim and I spent the first eighteen months of married life in an awful furnished flat in what had been a badly bombed Southampton. Mercifully, the 'Thirties-built Civic Centre still stood. This included an Art Gallery and Library. In the gallery I found comfort in repeatedly visiting a beautiful Utrillo painting, but in the Library, on my first visit, fazed as usual, I was grateful to Jim for suggesting I sampled *A Glastonbury Romance.*

I had never heard of John Cowper Powys and was enchanted by the book, which is still my favourite. Since that time I have read it at least three times. On each occasion, as is always the case with great works of art, I have discovered something new. On the last reading I was particularly struck by the way JCP explores all the aspects of different kinds of love.

Having made sculptures and etchings inspired by *The Brazen Head* and *Porius* over a twenty-year period, I more recently completed six sculptures of characters in *A Glastonbury Romance.* They are of Mad Bet dancing in the moonlight on Wearyall Hill; Philip Crow embracing Percy in Wookey Hole; Johnny Geard giving the Marquis of P's daughter a lift on his hired hack; Cordelia Geard sitting in the Evans shop; and the twelve-year-old boy wearing a cockerel costume in the Pageant.

Patricia V. Dawson

Patricia Dawson's poems have appeared in a number of Newsletters *and her etchings on their covers (nos. 33 and 44). Photographs of her Powys-inspired sculptures appeared in* The Powys Review *4 (*The Brazen Head*) and 21 (*Porius*). She lives in South London. She and Jim Dawson heard about The Powys Society from G. Wilson Knight, and joined in 1972. Jim served on the committee during the 70s.*

Mad Bet Dancing
Drawing for sculpture by Patricia Dawson.

'Shall I dance for 'ee, me pretty gents all?' cried Mad Bet, rising unexpectedly from the iron seat and catching hold of the heavy flannel skirt which she wore and exposing her wrinkled woollen stockings. 'Here we go round the Mulberry Bush!' chanted the old woman, skipping up and down with an expression of childish gravity, while the loose, beaded tassels hanging from her hat bobbed this way and that over her ghastly white skull. 'It's like seeing moonlight on a gibbet,' thought John ...

(A Glastonbury Romance chapter 14, 'Maundy Thursday'*)*

A last word on Celandines, from Glastonbury

(Mat and Sam Dekker walking to tea with the Zoylands)

As they went on, they were sometimes compelled to stop and stare at the hedges, for it was weeks since they had been that way and they were astonished at the extraordinary beauty of the celandines this year. The ground was uneven, broken up into many little depressions and small hillocks, and whether because February had been exceptionally wet, or because the winds had been so steadily blowing from the west, not only were the petals of the celandines more glittering than usual, but their leaves were larger and glossier.

'Celandines were my father's favourite flower,' said Mat Dekker as they moved on again after one of these pauses. It always pleased him to think of his father when he was alone with his son and to speak of him to him. It made him feel that the three of them — three generations of Dekkers — were intimately bound together, and bound together too with that fecund Somersetshire soil. His piety in this classical sense was one of the massive single-hearted motives by which he lived. *(chapter 5, 'Whitelake Cottage')*

Robert Nye: Prospero – to me

I never met John Cowper Powys, but he was my friend for eight years — as it happened, the last eight years of his life. The friendship came about in this way. When I was 15 years old, I picked up in a public library a copy of a very long and odd-looking novel entitled "A Glastonbury Romance."

In the usual style of 15-year-olds I started at the back. The last 20 pages or so of that book made the solid portals of the library disappear into thin air as I stood there reading them. (For anyone who has not yet realized what an extraordinary writer Powys is, I still recommend as his best introduction, this vision of myth penetrating history in the person of Cybele, "Our Lady of the Turrets," "her Towers forever rising, forever vanishing: Never or Always.")

I took the book home and read the whole thousand pages of it in a couple of sleepless nights and days. I did then what I've never done before or since: I wrote a fan letter to the author.

I remember thinking that I was writing to a modern Merlin. I didn't honestly expect to get a reply. I had to address my letter care of his London publishers, and I noted that "A Glastonbury Romance" had been some 20 years in print, and that the dust jacket indicated that John Cowper Powys was in his 60s when it was published. So he might well now be dead. My word, he was not! I've never.forgotten that blue envelope with the Welsh postmark that fell through the letterbox of my parents' house a week or so later. Powys's handwriting was like Shelley's — a furious seismograph of his mind's movement, a desperate race to keep up with the thoughts and fancies that crowded in upon him. As in Shelley's notebooks, too, the pages of a Powys letter would be decorated with lordly loops and fantastic drawings — I remember one drawing, especially, of a Nightmare Twig like a finger which haunted his dreams at that time. Henry Miller somewhere describes that handwriting (having himself felt compelled, in a similar way, to write to old "Friar John") as the most exciting he ever saw: as though it were set down while its writer was dancing round the room. Well, something in John Cowper Powys could dance and write at one and the same time, and isn't that what we are all after, in our own writing, and what we value in our reading?

Anyway, suffice it to say that the 82-year-old Powys wrote back to an unknown boy, and wrote with a kindness and an openness which I soon found to be the hallmark of his many-faceted character. And over the next eight years the correspondence went on. He read my earliest attempts at writing poetry, and was generous and helpful in his responses, though I cannot now imagine how he managed to put up with the stuff. For my part, I soon made myself acquainted with every published word he had written. I found out quickly that here was a novelist on the grand scale, who had been grandly neglected.

But it was the Autobiography that impressed me most of all. It still strikes me as one of the most truthful and inspired autobiographies ever written, containing

passages that plumb the darkest depths of the secrets of a man's soul, and others that soar to the heights. Nowadays, I would reckon that "A Glastonbury Romance" and the "Autobiography" represents Powys at his finest, and what is interesting here is that these works date from the same period, almost exactly 50 years ago now, when illness brought Powys's public career as a lecturer in America to an end, and, allegedly dying, he wrote in upper New York State far from home, the works of his major achievement. And then lived another 30 years.

How very fine this man's finest is — an opinion not offered by a 15-year-old fan, nor just by myself now. Two years ago, in a long and detailed critical assessment in the London Times Literary Supplement, George Steiner put it on record that we ought to consider Powys in the company of Melville and Lawrence as one of "the three greatest writers in our language." He also pointed out that the quality of imagery which Powys has at his command when most inspired, lifts him right out of the rank of novel-writers altogether, and that it does no harm to compare some of his imagery with Shakespeare's.

But then mention of Shakespeare only serves to remind me that at this time of my correspondence with "Old Friar John" (as Powys loved to call himself, and did to me — as he does in his published letters addressed to Henry Miller) he liked also sometimes to sign himself "Prospero." And, in the same mood, treating him as my tutor in magic, I would sign my letters 'Ariel' or 'Caliban' — depending on how I had been behaving myself!

Robert Nye *(The Christian Science Monitor,* 1977)

In Memoriam John Cowper Powys 1872–1963

Knowing the horror of the house
More intimately than its mere ghosts,
You practised to unstitch
The mirror from its silver
And write down your name without wondering who.
O Prospero, no elegy for you.
You have been sent to Naples, that is all,
And this bare island is the barer for it.

Robert Nye

JCP to Phyllis Playter

This letter coincides with the start of the 1929 Diary. It seems to me to show all that is needed to imagine the "just exchange" in this partnership, generous and understanding on both sides, above all encouraging.

[Postmark 7 June 1929]

White Star Line
On board SS "Majestic" Tuesday 4.15 pm

I am waiting in the lounge in hope of a cup of tea ... but neither yesterday did I have one for the mental scramble to get one is really too agitating to my nerves — so I tell myself, and indeed this is true, that if tea does not appear or rather if it does not come round to you until nearly five and dinner is at six, it is best to give up the struggle. Today since it is rather inclined to rain I have decided to test my patience — but I perceive I cannot stand it much longer. Ship board is not designed for persons of impatience, as I am; who turn their heads like turtles & have not learnt to wait! Well I shall give it up if the tea does not come soon now — just give it up! The scrambling for it is awful. Sea trips do not suit me: but ... they are healthy.

I think it must come soon. Will it? Won't it? Will it? Won't it? Here is a solitary empty chair, near this desk, at a table that has been "laid"; will someone else take it? Will they? Won't they? What a fuss! Well, it is just to avoid this agitation which is too much for my nerves that yesterday — that today I shall probably bolt on deck. But today I do really think I would like some tea! But it will soon be five o'clock.

I have half finished Crime and Punishment. There is one short story about Svidrigailov which does seem to demand repentence but as it is told by that awful suitor of Dounia whom she so indignantly turns down on behalf of Razumihin her brother's friend I don't know whether we need believe it. But I begin to doubt my first notion that there really was very little about him deserving of the remorse he feels. I begin to think that there must have been.

Do try to get the works of Ford Madox Ford & see what you think of them! They surely are in the Public Library.

Wednesday June 5th 10 a.m.

Last night the deck was wet with rain and the horizon a wavy blurred fluctuating bank of Cimmerian mist (out of the lonely one's Treasure Box it must have come, floating, floating, what the Thin did hurry off to bring quick, quick, to the Stranger when "They Artists" were the topic) and it was as if the sea were the sky raining upwards instead of downwards for the vertical rain was such soft water,

and very salt too. But O I did feel such intense consciousness of your identity, thin Jill. Think now, on Tuesday evening; & Tuesday night; were you particularly thinking of Jack? Were you particularly missing your Petrushka then, were you a little bit sad then?

I do blame myself for not having got from you a sort of Itinerary of your engagements before I left so that I could think in a rough way what you were doing. I can't recall about the Rodin studio engagement and the Schell studio engagement how they came — tho' I do believe it was today that you were to meet Helen Morgan.

Thin, please please please do note and see, in your memory, if you can recall all the events & your changes & ups & downs of feelings from that Friday night when you called me upstairs & shut the door — and then waved for the second time — right on till tomorrow Thursday afternoon when I shall think of you going down that well-known passage in the Grand Central to the South-Western Express.

Will the Purple Loosestrife be out, on those green islands Up State, what we've got so fond of? No! I suppose not yet. And will you sleep so sound that you don't wake up till after Bellefontaine? I expect, in spite of having all those days, maybe you had to sit up late the final night, that is to say tonight!

But what I most shall want to hear is your story about those days. I know very well you never begain your Diary! I am writing mine regularly for you to see. It is something I can do to please you.

I got tired of waiting in this lounge for tea after all! But I got a cup on deck; but I swear I shall not attempt it again — for, an hour off supper, it is silly. It's not a material scramble for tea. It's a moral struggle to be polite and wait. It does not suit my Diplodocus ways!

Looking at the rainy sea at twilight last night I found out once more how I love you. O I am finding that out — you may believe — and tho' I knew it already — you never do know what new fathoms it's going to sink into!

Thin, I'm made to love you! that's one thing I am made for! To love you — you alone, in this crazy way. Other loves are so calm and free from that awful "hostage-to-fate" feeling — Mine for the Abject is calm enough; but God! It's not free from that sinking in the pit o' the stomach!

Don't 'ee be cross if I go rambling on, & if this writing will insist on turning into a love-letter. What the hell does a person be doing — when after five years (we shall always, I suppose, call it five years, tho' no doubt it will soon be nearer ten!) he is still as shiveringly (and with all that thrilling lovely feeling) in love with a girl.

And what is a girl? I know what it is. And it's beyond the shakiness of the knees on the Beach or on the step-ladder in John Ashurst's library!

Of course it's because you're like you are, Thin — with the particular kind of beauty you've got the particular kind of consciousness you've got — It's all you, my lovely princess, and don't 'ee make any mistake. It would be the same, for

anyone who came, to know how thrilling you are in every way! — it's only that I had the wit to find it out before "they artists" got on the track. It was all because no one had the chance. That's where my guardian angel came in — to give me the chance — O chance, chance, chance, great divine chance! You are my only god: & Kwang is your only son. Bring us safe together O Spirit of M.C.P.!

Thin, you don't find all this too monotonous? What a good thing girls like being written to and told and told about how they're loved! How awful if you just skipped every page when you saw how my ramblings were drifting!

But O deary I, little Thin, Tiny Thin, how I did think last night whatever would Petrushka do if you were to die! What would Petrushka do — who would know the way his arms went and his head went? It was no mere "sideways" feelings I had last night. It was just a knowledge that we had passed some stage in "being fond" that we'll never be able to drop back from after this.

No, Thin. It's a terrible "hostage" to feel so, in a world of such chances. But there it is! It is beyond calculation. Don't 'ee mind the way I talk — You oughtn't to have taught Petrushka to love. He is silly; & goes on & on about it. But don't 'ee say "hush" when he's so far away.

Yes, I did get that awful feeling last night — what if the Thin were to die? Do be careful. Do remember — who would tie Petrushka's bootlaces together? Don't walk too late by Glank's [?] river or catch cold or a fever or walk up from Black Jack too late at night.

Well, Missy — you are a girl who do know what it is to be loved very much. O dear! I wish you were to have something extra, some "lift", some real change. Don't you think I don't know how you need such a thing — But enough of that.

Last night looking at the rainy sea grey, so grey, like your invented land I thought of so many things. I thought about whether you & I would or would not survive death. And I thought — even if we did — there could hardly be, on any of those levels your father so believes in, anything exactly like what your face looks like under certain conditions when I see it in certain ways. And I thought we both really must will very strongly — (never mind how comical, or selfish, or optimistic, it is, to do such a thing!) to grow very old side by side — Jack 88 like your father and you 64 like your mother — That is thirty years, Jill, do you realize, thirty years. So don't in your love of extinction hesitate about this. For maybe if you will and imagine both together such a thing will happen. And then whatever happens after death — well! We shall have supplied to the great terrestial dreamy half-consciousness one more experience of two skeletons have learnt something — of "two having made their bed"!

But — hush! Thin, listen! — last night as I looked at your Cimmerian sea, I did, faintly it is true, but still I did, get a sort of fragment of a floating idea that there might be some way in which the movements & looks and ways that I so love in you

would be retained in any new condition — somehow retained; though your skull were bare of its flesh!

But however that may be the great thing is to use your imagination (never mind if its selfish & odd & absurd!) to vision Jack & Jill as old together — quaint old figures & don't 'ee stop doing this — & I will do it too! And then when we are old, you nearly seventy and Jack ninety (like Landor) we might drop over the side of the —— Mauretania! Or it wd be by that time probably the "Ithacania"; from the isle of the old Ulysses! — but whatever it was — we might drop over its side — possibly in the Mediterranean — possibly in the Sea of Marmora — & by that time Lulu himself wd be too old to do more than lift a half-quizzical eyelid!

But no Occultism, Thin — I won't, I won't, I won't have it. There was occultism in the air when you were so unhappy. Now that your happy lets stick to the will and the imagination; for those are the things that make the real "Mythology of the Mothers" — & no one knows any more.

But I never will say "go to hell" really, even to a poor delapidated half-demon who initiated the Tiny Thin — I never would — I'd say to it "Go tell the Abject to use her will and her imagination — Tell her that I love her always and always feel her near".

Don't 'ee be cross with this rambling, fussy, "shaking-the-pillar-box" kind of letter. Some there be that love and talk; some there be that love and are silent. I'm often the listener over the gilded table (not much gilt left!) & now it's your turn, Jill, to be a listener as you read this — So "pout for your dear Jack" — "smile for your dear Jack" — And remember what I told you when you called me back and shut the door; that you are and have been, these times, a more good and enchiridion girl than I ever thought you could possibly be. "We all like to be praised" so I seriously tell you that — little Thin, Tiny Thin.

It was strange though — that sudden calm that came over you in the middle of your worst misery of getting the breakfast on that Friday morning. O by the way, Thin, I forgot to say goodbye to Mr Gillman and also to the Italian. I wish I'd not forgotten those two — well! It can't be helped. I hope you did see Mr Tityell; as you thought you might.

With thanks to the National Library of Wales: John Cowper Powys, Letters to Phyllis Playter, 1929, no 18.

Letter: JCP and Spiritualism

*From Cicely Hill, on 'Table Talk' by Chris Wilkinson (*Newsletter *44)*

G.Wilson Knight writes in *The Saturnian Quest* (1964): 'That Powys did have a séance experience of spirit communication is clear from an incident described in Maurice Browne's *Too Late To Lament* (London 1955, xii, 205), and discussed further by Glyn Hughes in 'Two Worlds' (no.3842, March 1964).'

Wilson Knight also refers to this séance (again referring to Glyn Hughes, 'Famous Author Tried to Stop Séance' in 'Two Worlds') in his essay 'Man's total nature, an analysis of Powys's *The Complex Vision*', in 'Mosaic' (University of Manitoba Press, undated). Here he writes: 'When Powys refers to Spiritualism in practice, he seems to be relying on unfortunate experiments. We have an account of his being involved on one occasion in an experiment of authentic but embarrassing nature.' In this essay, Wilson Knight equates the 'invisible companions' of *The Complex Vision* [1920] with the 'spirit guides' of Spiritualism, and berates Powys for using the word 'dabblers': 'The use of the cliché-term 'dabblers', regularly used by those who malign Spiritualism, is evidence of unease. Powys shows a grave lapse of style in these denunciations, so unlike his usual courteous tone.'

It might seem to us that Powys's style was as little affected by unease as, happily, Wilson Knight's interpretive genius was clouded by his Spiritualistic bias. What seems certain is that, looking back, JCP would have counted the little party round the ouija board that evening in New York as among the dabblers.

But in the same essay Wilson Knight also writes: 'In his letter to me of 25 April 1955, [Powys] referred to the dangers, saying that people like ourselves had enough of the occult in them without searching further. For myself, I would deny occult insight; with Powys it was unquestionably true.'

Powys's letter in fact puts it much more strongly: 'But Beware of the Occult! My dear friend O beware of it! You and I have enough of the *Demonic* [*italics CH*] in us without that! Its effect on us is a weakening one and a blurring one and not an enlightening one. Beware! Beware! Beware O maestro mine!' (*Powys to Knight*, Cecil Woolf 1983).

(The letter to Phyllis also shows JCP's mistrust of occultism and awareness of its dangers to the unhappy. KK)

Lucy to JCP

Horsebridge, King's Somborne, Hants

March 23rd [1932]

My dearest Jack,

How can I thank you for giving me your new book and for dedicating it to me — All day I have longed to share the pleasure with Mother and have thought of how she would best have understood it — You can fancy how it has come back again and again to me to-day — first the excitement of having the book to read as slowly as I like & then the feeling that it is so especially mine from you.

Now it is evening & Hounsell is sitting opposite to me with it (the book) in his hands —

It is as if you had lit a beacon for me on some hill in the night.

(March 24th) It seems wonderful that you have written this great book since you were here with us — sitting in the orchard with your mind in our country. Hounsell likes to think it is about his neighbourhood.

What a nice cover the book has inside, and I do so much like the picture of you — and the little symbol your publisher puts inside* which makes me think of Willie [...]

The redshanks came back last week and because it is moonlight they cry with the plovers all night.

I had been so longing to see your writing to know that you were all right — when I found the parcel in the porch yesterday — the happiness of seeing it and of having the book and the surprise of the dedication: I had looked at the picture of you & your writing my name in it — but it was Hounsell who first saw the other & Mary came running to tell me. I do hope all will go well with the book [...]

I have been given bunches of wild daffodils for Easter — Mary and I wish we could see them growing — do you remember we used to look for them at the bottom of Battle field where there had once been a house.

Mary and I send our love

Always your loving sister Lucy.

* *a sower of seed against a sun (shown here)*
With thanks to Louise de Bruin

T. F. Powys: Two more 'Songs of Innocence'

These two further 'Cheriton' essays, from MSS in the Bissell Collection, are copied from photocopies kindly provided by Elaine Mencher. Punctuation and spelling are as in the MS with one or two corrections ('sweet' for 'sweep' in para. 3, 'a girl who speaks' from 'speak'). The essays are written in a careful large hand (the first page is reproduced on the back cover). It is hard to tell when paragraphs are intended, with few words on the line and no indents. Spacing and italics and intended to reflect this.

Mary Aston

Amongst the good shadows of our chalk downs Mary Aston dwells in modest fashion.

A thing of beauty in her country modesty she is the very flower of our life in Cheriton, the very flower of our good homely shadows.

Oh modesty, thou art rare and precious, although there be some who do say that tis but untouched ignorance that goes by that name. If it be so, then tis a blessed ignorance that abides in sweet peace under our hills thinking no evil ...

Perhaps it is the cold whiteness of the chalk that lies so very near the surface of all our village lives that gives us this taste for modest living.

But however that may be Modesty is reckoned here at least by me as a thing of beauty. And Mary Aston is typical of this fair modesty of living.

I have watched her in good neighbourly fashion for near twenty years and so I know ...

Mary used to live before she became the wife of homely John in an ivy covered cottage close beside our little brook that runs so merrily over the little pebbles.

Many are the times — and never one too many — that I have passed Mary on her way to or from our village shop.

And often have I watched her from my window at work in her garden, her slim girlish figure being ever most industriously employed.

When ever I passed her in the road she would vouchsafe me a look that was always most blithesome and friendly, and she does so still.

She is dark of complexion, of temperament full kindly, of step light and firm.

She loves to run, and when she is met trying her paces on a hard winters road, she smiles as though the very road doth love her.

Tis in nature to produce sometimes in quiet country places a wonder of womanhood that is of kin to the lilies.

To Mary Aston all things are good, because she is good. And I doubt if at any time in her life Mary had the slightest desire to touch in the usual crude earthly fashion of country people the subjects that soil the mind.

And yet think not by any means that Mary is deficient in natural lovableness. Nay her every motion shows the brave tenderness of loving.

There is that even in the sound of her voice — and tis pleasant to hear, that by granting one a plain "good evening" carries in it all the witchcraft of a girl, a girl who speaks a man right free and modest. Would that all girls could satisfy a man in kindly charity in a like manner.

There is never in Mary the least sign of false modesty, nor yet hath good John taught her any, she is ever in natural manners, as the sea is, and as the wind is, and as the heart of an honest woman should be...

There is a blessing in Mary's look even, a merry look, yet tender, a look that can come only from a heart that knoweth not malice.

Tis a thing to welcome this passing look of Marys, tis a talisman to carry far in this our earthly pilgrimage ...

Twas but last Autumn when the leaves were falling that I chanced to walk beside Mary Aston down the Church path. She had more than half a mind I believe to try to catch a leaf that was slowly falling in a melancholy manner towards the grave of old James Bird.

Resisting the temptation to run after the leaf, Mary Aston told me in sober tones that she feared the winter would be cold because her Mothers cat had sat for near a week with its back to the fire ...

The bright star of modesty under which Mary was born is neither cold nor prudish. It is warm, with a warmth that gives, and more rare still, can give without harming the receiver.

Look, come a little to this side of the window and you will see Mary pass by.

Doth she not look like a thing born of the hills and watered by the fair rains of God. See she stops for a moment and speaks to Jeremy Bird.

Will not the poor man go to his shabby home with a better grace now that he hath met her in the way.

She lives beyond us my brothers, she hath no wolfs ears to catch and hold the evil sounds that move along. Her whole mind and habit moveth in pleasant places, in country places, she knoweth no idle dalliance that satiates, she never wants to die.

No vulgar matter is Mary, no common thing, her Modest way of living reaches far, 'tis the other side, and not Marys that cuts joy into pieces.

In Marys life there was and is both beauty and goodness, and withal there is something more.

A something that is given to her by the very innermost.

I know it, for when I see her the intolerable burden of my evil self is more easy to be born. And indeed I fancy at times that even my evil self may be changed, so that I follow no more the lowest, but live as she doth in fair modest fashion.

I sometimes wonder, and who in a like situation would not wonder too? What would happen if there were no Mary to pass by and to look at me kindly. I need her indeed, for alas in my loneliness despair and solitude are too often mated.

If Mary do go, by St Chrysostom I am betrayed indeed.

Moon Daisies

If there be sermons in stones, there is poetry in the flowers.

There is indeed something more than poetry in the flowers, there is a shy coyness of beauty that gives an almost spiritual nature to the meanest and most simple of these meadow weeds.

There is commonly, and near in every ones mind — let the word be deeply used — a fairy place kept for the little flowers of the field, that in the winter is a garden of memory and in the spring a budding reality.

As I write this I am looking into a fair meadow of fancy where there are moon daisies growing. No matter if it be winter weather, no matter if the snow lie deep upon the ground, I can see the sun warmed grass and the daisies.

But why, and I have often wondered at this question, why do the moon

daisies with-hold from me the full virtue of their modest being when I stoop down to cull them from the grass? There is something, and I know it, that they will not give to me. Is their beauty perchance the beauty of a child that a touch can spoil?

Or do I conceive in my mind a wonder more than their wonder, do I expect to gather in them more joy than they in their coy beauty can give?

And yet, — and I cannot help a little envy in my heart — there are those I know — not you dear for they must be children — who can in simple joy pluck a garland in a field and be satisfied therewith.

'Tis to the children that the daisies yield themselves most gladly, for the children are in league with the flowers, and break off their stalks with a brave carelessness that all nature loves.

The children laugh as the moon daisies laugh, and love them as one child loveth another in careless fashion ...

When the fair spring-tide really awakes the first moon daisies are seen — by those of us who still hug the fire — to be scattered in the roadways. But who calls the children to the fields and tells them that the flowers are there?

The first swallows perchance, or the humble bee, or perhaps the cuckoo has called out the secret on the day when he bought his voice at Shelton fair?

Of all the flowers of the field, the moon daisies are the most responsive to the touch and feeling of the little hands that pluck them. They shine the whiter when the children come, even though the babes gather them so recklessly. It may be this very recklessness, so like the daring wasteful ways of nature herself that the flowers love, for a garland culled with gentle care hath never in it the negligent grace of a ruder gathering. Like will to like, the flowers and the children that gather them are of the same body, they feel about them the same growing earth of moss and mould ...

Foremost among the children, and careless of April showers or of May lightning, was ever little Nancy, Queen of the moon daisies. No miry ways or rushy ditch ever turned her feet from the meadow that she loved.

I have seen her often from the little hill near by stoop for a second and then dart like a bird to the next flower. Has Nancy think you, a soul in common with the moon daisies that she loves them so well?

Is she, this darling of the fields who so carelessly moves, giving to all the meadow a new soul and a childlike being. Doth the meadow catch her colour and joy, and become for ever and aye in its mossy soul a child?

However nearly her imperious ways — and she queens it in her steps — do touch the flowers, Nancy tells to me many a sweet meadow story, as she runs, a red flower herself, in a coloured frock upon the green land. She tells me of all the spring-tides that have come to the valley, she tells me that in a childs heart there is a place where flowers never wither and where the spring is everlasting.

This Queen of the moon daisies, this child of but seven summers, is wiser than we are, my learned readers. Words are heard by her that we cannot understand.

The first swallow that rests under the eaves of her cottage speaks to her in her dreams. Midnight beings, timid and wistfull, born of the mists of the night, are well known to Nancy, because she meets their day time brothers in the meadows.

Oh Nancy run out again into the fields, only wait wait, fancy can only run out now. Stay awhile Nancy, wait for those gentle sounds to come that tell is that Spring is near. You know Nancy, you know or ever I do, when the child life in the earth beginneth to shyly peep out of the mould.

And when they come Nancy, tell me your secret, tell me how I can become one, in the way that you can become one, with the flowers of the field. Give me back this sense, sweet Nancy, that I have dropped while sleeping perchance, as good Christian did his roll in the arbour. I want to pluck the flowers as you do pluck them, so that I may have a new being in the earth, so that I too can hear the call of a new becoming, a call that sinks like soft dew through the moist thatch at midnight saying that the beloved of the earth is risen, is risen.

Oh why do I not still hold the visible tangible truth in beauty that you know so well, why is life become a thing apart from my being, a something other to what I am.

"Consider the lily of a day". Yes Nancy, someone else also loved and blessed the flowers — and 'tis He, the same One who calleth you out to the meadows when the spring comes.

Reviews

Ancestral Haunt, Poems by Glen Cavaliero

Poetry Salzburg 2002; introduction by D. M. de Silva; 107 pp.

Cavaliero sets his tone early — 'Land for development' is the first line of the first poem — 'this holy well is clogged with plastic mugs, barbed wire' is the last line of that first poem. Yet he is not merely concerned with regret at change and decay: he has a sharp, almost an anthropologist's, eye; his characters are stereotypes in the sense that they typify, and their inwardness is contained in their externals. 'The Last Virgins', about the generation of women denied husbands by the slaughters of the First World War — 'they seemed to be the men they would have married ... felt hat, stout shoes, / a jumper, stick, companionable dog' — the generalisations about their kit (did they *all* wear felt hats?) — works anthropologically because we know the *type*, and then we relish the poem because we soon see it is packed with military references used aslant: 'Nightgowns and chemisettes, bust-bodices, / directoire knickers ... / for a soldier boy who never came to rifle / treasures of silk', and rises to a note of passionate sympathy with these lives. In his imagination the butterflies embroidered on the unworn stockings in their bottom drawer take flight, they 'soar / delirious with virginity from the guns' unending roar'.

'The Death of Edward Longbourne' is another steroetype wittily plumbed: a modish author, outmoded, rediscovered by TV. 'Laid out for the first Doctorate, he is consummated, properly dead.'

These are people, and Cavaliero writes of others (he can also be funny about a personal mishap; try 'Stopover'). However, the character that most absorbs him is that of landscape, place, its past, its present, and the way it seems to be saying something we can never quite hear; an insight promised and then, not so much denied as tantalisingly withheld:

> So — if there is only one world, seeing is believing
> you are relieved to say? And yet believing's
> also seeing —
>
> ('The Strong Gate')

Landscape as metaphor? 'The Strong Gate' (an actual gate also used as metaphor — 'It takes a strong gate to hold apart / two worlds when each one craves the other') ends by making explicit the good question that hangs inside most of these poems and makes them ring: he wonders whether 'all we know is language still unspoken'.

P.J.Kavanagh

John Cowper Powys: *Owen Glendower*,
with an Introduction by Dr Morine Krissdóttir, Walcot Books 2002.
xxiv + 777 pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 0 9538442 0 X.

This republication of *Owen Glendower* was motivated, the publisher, Rob Stepney, tells us in a note, 'both by a passion for the book and by an interest in the historical Owain Glyndwr'. 'The original text', Mr Stepney informs us, was 'scanned ... into computer and put ... through an optical character recognition programme'. Without knowledge of the technology, I presume this means that the text is the same as that of the first edition. The 'Argument', on the other hand, has been cut, and its title changed to 'Historical Background'. The reader should have been informed of these alterations.

Having made this minor criticism, I come to my main point, which is that the publisher is to be warmly thanked for this new edition. All readers of John Cowper Powys will welcome it, and we may hope that the novel will now acquire new readers. This edition is also to be welcomed because it comes with an Introduction by Dr Morine Krissdóttir.

A particular value of Morine Krissdóttir's Introduction is that she writes with reference to Powys's diaries, 'hitherto unpublished', recording his life in Wales during the period from 1935 to 1939 when he was writing the novel. These enable her 'to explore how the events of this period, both private and public, were integrated into the novel itself'. Among these events, she considers the expectation of world conflict, and the death of Llewelyn on 2 December, 1939, when John was working on the first draft of the final chapter of *Owen Glendower*. Her account of the life experience behind the writing of the novel is persuasive. She deals interestingly with the hiraeth – Powys's longing 'to return to the land of my remote ancestors' – which led to him and Phyllis Playter moving from Dorset to North Wales in 1935, She also shows the influence of Phyllis Playter upon the novel. Influence, though, is rather a weak word for Phyllis Playter's input, which began with her suggesting the idea for the novel, in May 1935, took the form of close criticism throughout its composition, and led to Powys bringing in 'Reality in the more stirring & historic form of large national movements, both political and religious'.

'Historic', of course, is the problematic word in relation to *Owen Glendower*. A map of 'Wales in the time of Glendower' has been added to the new edition. This is both useful as a guide to the historical landscape of the novel, and helps to compound the problem caused by Powys's description of his story as la historical novel'. Morine Krissdóttir deals rather summarily with the question of Powys's historical veracity, which, to my knowledge, was first raised by Roland Mathias. *Owen Glendower*, she says, 'is an interpretation of a man and a movement sieved through the consciousness and memory of a brilliant story-teller, told with a verve and psychological truth that makes the murmurs of "historical inaccuracy"

ultimately irrelevant". In my view the issue is not so easily disposed of, and should not be, as much for the sake of determining what kind of fiction the novel is, as for the sake of Welsh history. If we do overide the kind of objections Mathias raised to Powys's treatment of the latter, we are also in danger of failing to take into account the part played by Powys's own lifeillusion in the making of the novel. I ref er here not just to his sense of himself as a magician, which has an obvious bearing on his portrayal of Owen, but to his treatment of the imagination as a shaping agency in the history both of individuals and of a people.

It is arguable, certainly, that Powys made over the Welsh people in the image of the 'mythology of escape', which was his own mythology. To dwell overmuch on this point, however, would be to risk undervaluing the novel as the work of a 'brilliant storyteller'. It isn't only that there is 'no authorized version' of history, as Emyr Humphreys has said. It is also that Powys puts imagination back into history, by endowing his characters with this most human of faculties. Whether the result is an accurate picture of what actually happened, and why, is anybody's guess! The question is not insignificant, I think, but it is perhaps unlikely to trouble many readers who will now, through this welcome new edition, have the opportunity to be drawn into Powys's wonderful story. Finally, this edition comes with a nice bookmark, for which the publisher is also to be thanked.

Jeremy Hooker

Philip Callow: *Passage from Home, A Memoir*

Shoestring Press 2002, ISBN 1 899549 65 x.

Philip Callow and Ron Hall, the 'Coventry lads', discovered JCP (like many others) through Henry Miller; wrote to him and were inspired by him to be free spirits. Ron Hall described this in his introduction to the Village Press edition of JCP's letters to Miller, and also his 1952 visit to Corwen, in *The Powys Review* 9; *Review* 17 has a tribute to him after his early death, with a poem by Callow.

Philip Callow's *Passage from Home* is a visually detailed and convincing memoir of the childhood and youth that led up to that liberating friendship. We're in 1930s and 40s Coventry – the world of front doors on the street, happy first school on the corner; poverty, sympathy, enjoyment, occasional puzzlement and fear. Inevitably it's also a 'social document', and a memoir also to his parents: his worrying, toiling, loving mother, his father rendered impassive by horrors of the trenches; peculiar uncles who came and went, deaf grandfather who stayed; magical grandmother on the hill in the country above the city; the enclosing, accepted, public face of England, a world of 'never cheating and never doubting'.

He relates it (distanced by use of the present tense) with a measured balance of involvement and detachment, a poet's eye and a novelist's over-view. As not always in such memoirs, it is relative happiness he describes – a hated school is escaped from, there is tedium but also interest in the machinery he operates as an

engineering apprentice. It isn't a detailed study of adolescence, though we hear of his changing relationship with his mother and his escape into reading, ending with the almost angelic appearance on the scene of the younger Ron Hall: quick, clever, impish, inventive, admiring – the magical presence that changed the course of his life.

Kate Kavanagh

John Cowper Powys: The Meaning of Culture
Introduction and Conclusion to the Tenth Anniversary Edition
(Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1941: originally published in 1929 by W. W. Norton, Inc., USA).

Introduction

There must be I think a certain psychological interest, both for a writer and his readers, in noting the various changes — some of them developments, others, no doubt, reversions — that occur in the inner life that we call culture during the passing of time.

Ten years have now gone by since I added the final touches to this book, in the companionable presence of its publisher and his wife in Fordington Great Field, outside the chestnut walks of Dorchester;* and how many mental, emotional, and spiritual "alarums and excursions" have occurred, during this decade, in the lives of all of us — and how many unpredicted events!

For myself I notice at once that I am even more interested than I was ten years ago in those exciting generalizations which we all make — and often so hastily, so superficially ! — about the culture of nations other than our own, and about the great civilizations of the past.

But side by side with this enhanced curiosity as to what actually was the inner life of an Homeric Greek, an Augustan Roman, a Mediaeval Scholar, or what today is the inner life of a German, a Russian, or a Frenchman, my introspection, such as it is, seems to reveal a stronger belief than I used to have in the *right* of my own mind and the *power* of my own mind to re-create itself *on lines selected by itself.* This re-creation of the mind by itself is of the very essence of culture; and only on the strength of it does it become possible for us without interrupting the diurnal routine of our ordinary work to make pearl-fisher dives into the mysteries of the Homeric, the Mediaeval, the German, the French, and the Russian mentality. Only on the strength of it, too, while we "dig in" and "bank up" in what is indigenous to ourselves, can we appropriate, as new parts of ourselves, such things as the spirit of the Odyssey, the wisdom of Rabelais, the inspired

clairvoyance of Dostoievsky. And finally only on the strength of such re-creation of the individual by the help of the universal can we reach that common human element within us which, as St. Paul puts it, is "neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor Barbarian, bond nor free."

It is Goethe, the greatest of Germans, who declared he couldn't hate the French when he owed to them so much of his culture; but I confess, as I try to weigh what the last ten years have brought me, while my mania for generalizing about the cultural *differences* between nations, between classes, between the sexes, between youth and age, is as strong as ever, it seems to me that whenever I am lost in admiration for a man or a woman, as fulfilling my ideal of what a human being should be, it is rarely that such a person fits precisely into the formula whose qualities I have defined so patiently as bearing the hallmarks of culture.

What does this mean ? Has it needed the ten years from fifty-five to sixty-five to impress the son of my father, who of all men kept the thing in its place, that culture is after all not everything? No, I think it simply means that the continuous bludgeonings of life, however much you are protected, tend to make your values less naively clever, less neatly sophisticated, less challenging in their arbitrary provocations.

In plain words culture falls into its place in the infinite cosmos. It may be — it often is — the most precious issue of our education; but just as the best education is merged and swallowed up in culture, so the best culture is merged and swallowed up in something else. And what is this "something else" ? Well! If I could answer that question I should be able to define what it is that we derive from Cervantes' creation of Don Quixote, what it is that makes Shakespeare so unfathomably appealing, what it is to which we respond in Homer, in the "logoi" of the ancient sages, in the great poets of our own race.

Whatever it may be, it is clear that it appeals to elements in us which are deeper-rooted and more widely human than any trained aesthetic taste or any industriously acquired scholarship. That this is the case can be proved by the fact that one hears so many clever and ambitious youngsters who have passed their examinations with distinction and are on the verge of a brilliant career declare that they can find little or nothing to their purpose in these old-fashioned books. They "studied" them at school but school is over now. Education is over too. "Real life" is beginning; and for success in "real life" something different from culture — though they may have their lively and distracting substitutes for it — must be the dynamic urge.

Let us try to imagine ourselves upon this first rung of "young ambition's ladder." What if we fail? What if things go wrong? What if we get what we want and find ourselves unsatisfied? Ah! "there's the rub!" I am sometimes tempted to regard the truest culture as the compensation of the unsuccessful; something that, like religion, can remain with us when all else is taken away! But culture in this sense must clearly be something different from a good education, something

different from a trained aesthetic taste. For with failure - comes poverty, and with poverty comes a lack of opportunity for gratifying our fastidiousness, our refinement, our craving for sophisticated beauty. We are thrown back upon ourselves. Concerts, theatres, art-exhibitions, the opera — they are all beyond our reach. It is at this point that the secondhand bookshop, that sanctuary of the defeated, offers its "realms of gold." Here's a test for the value of our education! Has it taught us enough Latin, enough Greek, enough French, enough German to turn a battered school-text, a paper-bound classic, into a ferryboat to the Isles of the Blest?

But now, granted we have had education enough to serve our turn, we arrive at a still greater test — the test of our culture. If our culture has been corrupted by sophisticated niceties and perverted by the curiosities of disillusioned modernity, how will a dime's worth of classic stoicism, a quarter's worth of classic imagination do us any good? Dust to dust! Ashes to ashes! A cinema ticket were a wiser choice.

The truth is that as education is only real education when it is a key to something beyond itself, so culture is only real culture when it has diffused itself into the very root and fibre of our endurance of life. Culture becomes in this way something more than culture. It becomes wisdom; a wisdom that can accept defeat, a wisdom that can turn defeat into victory.

And it can render us independent of our weakness, of our surroundings, of our age. It is at once an individual thing, a fortress for the self within the self, and a universal thing, a breaking down of the barriers of race, of class, of nation.

No wonder the totalitarian states distrust culture. An individual who has once entered into the spiritual inheritance of humanity and has thereby detached himself from what might be called the *power-arena* of competition, as far as his fellows are concerned, though he may have his vein of heroic patriotism, will hardly make an uncritical contender in the *power-arena* of competing nations.

Certainly our present risk of a world war between "Spartan" Dictatorships and "Athenian" Democracies carries the culture-issue down pretty far; carries it down to an issue that is cheerless enough for everybody, the privilege of dying for the State or living on the Dole.

But the recrudescence of this Spartan idea of sacrificing the individual to the State is a challenge to our notions of what is most precious in life. It is certainly a challenge to our individualism and to whatever personal culture our circumstances may have enabled us to patch together as we went along.

It has a personal interest to me to think how it was only a little over twenty years ago that I wrote in the New York Public Library the first prose-work of my life entitled "The War and Culture." And during the following ten years my notions of the "Meaning of Culture" did, I think, grow considerably more mellow. I can only hope these ideas have mellowed yet further during the ensuing decade!

The present book, though not primarily addressed to the young, has certainly

made me an astonishing number of impassioned adherents. From the remotest places all over the globe has it received the recognition of the young, especially of young men. And that it has been so beautifully translated and so well appreciated in Sweden -- of all European countries the one which takes most seriously the culture of its youth — is, I think, a token and a symbol of the same thing.

An honest book on culture must necessarily, as Goethe taught, be a book on *one's own culture,* such as *that* may be; for how else could it make its appeal to youth? For youth, as we older people know to our cost, detects in a flash the repetition of pious tags and pompous platitudes. Well then, what I would emphasize now, even more strongly than I did in the following pages, is the necessity of forcing our culture *down and in,* till it is blood of our blood and bone of our bone. When we do this it is forced to fuse itself with and merge itself into what we call "character" and "morale".

The reason why that super-refined aesthete, Mr Osborne, the villain in Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, is so repulsive a figure, is that his culture has remained purely intellectual and aesthetic. It has neither fortified his stoicism, nor subtilized his human sympathy. Culture without natural human goodness has an extremely disconcerting effect. There is something weird and terrifying about it. Indeed its effect upon the imagination of our race is summed up in the popular image of Nero fiddling while Rome burned.

Goethe's *Faust* is the best analysis I know of the more ambiguous chemicals in the crucible of culture; for it must be admitted that the Devil *does* play his part in stirring this magic cauldron and without him its fumes would suffer from a certain "whoreson lethargy".

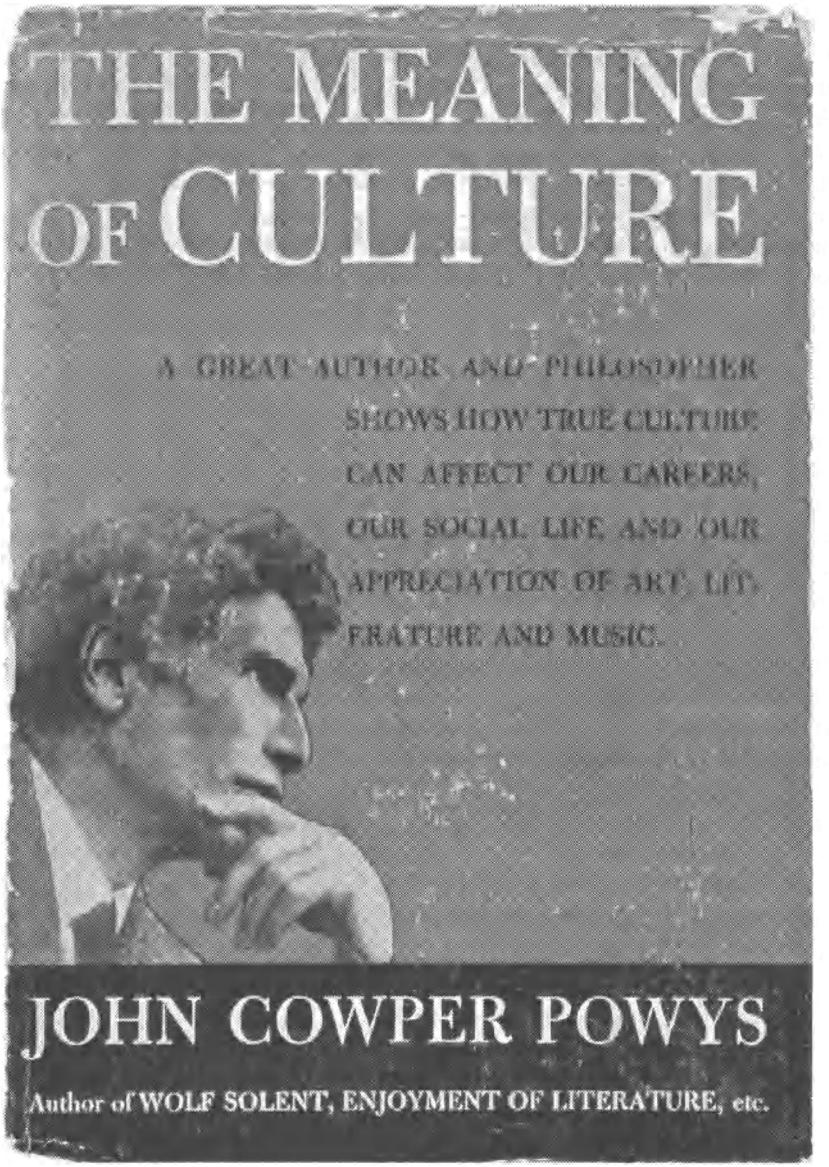
But, as with all other human activities, it is only by a lucky mingling of circumstances and character that this queer son of chaos is made so serviceable a devil. Who can sound the bottom of this mystery of good and evil? But it certainly has presented itself to my mind during these last ten years that just as rustic mother-wit has a charm and a dignity that education too often spoils, so the whole problem of Culture is really the familiar problem of Horticulture. It is in fact the problem of how to graft the subtle and the exquisite upon the deep and the vital. For, by this grafting alone can the sap of the natural give life and strength to the unusual, and the roots of the rugged sweeten the distinguished and rare.

*

Conclusion

If it gives an author a somewhat queer feeling to write an "Introduction" to a book he wrote a decade ago, it gives him, at least it gives the present author, a still queerer feeling to write a "Conclusion."

Thank Heaven the real "Conclusion" to such a matter as has been discussed in the foregoing pages, a matter as near the nerves and the conscience as our lifelong



Cover of the 1939 edition.

struggle to adjust ourselves mentally and spiritually to our human fate, can never be written. The "Finis" is not for us, nor for our friends, nor for our enemies.

A saint dies in a poorhouse infirmary, and all that we know is that there is one tramp less to seek a night's lodging in a public shelter. A scoundrel dies in a mansion given him by the nation, and all that we know is that historians will estimate and re-estimate and re-re-estimate to the end of time his ambiguous motives, his devious ways. The Mask in the tramp's guise has vanished with his secret; and the Mask in the statesman's guise has vanished with his secret. The "Conclusion" of their struggle to adjust themselves to life has been transferred to another author, an author whose pleasure it is to erase his summing-up under repeated signatures of his own monosyllabic name — death, death, death, death, death.

As I look back over what I wrote ten years ago I find I have little to retract, little to unsay. I have to worship no idols I burnt then, to burn no idols I worshipped then. What I do feel, as I write the "conclusion" which I dodged writing when I wrote the book, is that the longer we live the harder it becomes to separate, as the Scripture says, "the wheat from the tares."

Rarify as we may, deepen as we may, our definition of the cultured as against the uncultured, the conclusion of the matter remains obscure, simply because so much of the decisive data lies hidden under that "Black Letter" signature of our invisible collaborator!

And in view of the immense antiquity and the huge prevalence of the idea that our attitude to ourselves, our behaviour to ourselves, our discrimination among the contesting elements that make up ourselves, affects something in us that outlasts death, it seems only right to affirm that what has been said here would need no revision, from the present writer's standpoint, were either alternative of the Great Rabelaisian "Perhaps" incontrovertibly established.

Culture in the sense in which I have sought to analyze it would still retain its value were we made sure — which probably we never shall be — that nothing of us survived death; and in the same manner, if any portion of our mysterious personality *does* survive death, it seems to me that after adapting ourselves as best we could to our earthly conditions, we have a right to hope that our purer self will find a way of adapting itself to those of the next dimension.

But after all, if what I have sought in my tentative and hesitant manner to indicate as the abiding constituent of all true culture, namely, a certain fluid scepticism, is really its permanent quality, the only honest position for us to take is that the Rabelaisian "Perhaps" remains a "perhaps" still! And if we grant this, am I not justified — in spite of the time-honoured opinion of saints and mystics that only when certain human desires are suppressed, especially those connected with sex, can the purer self ascend into the Empyrean — in feeling that it is wiser not to renounce "the bird" in our poor trembling human hand for the more problematic one in the far-off ether?

It is ridiculous to say that culture has nothing to do, save covertly and indirectly, with these crucial problems, for we cannot open any famous human classic without encountering them; and although our English Shakespeare is the most secular of all great geniuses, far more so than Rabelais or Goethe, we must remember that in the cautious adherence to the Shakespearean temper I am advocating here we are setting at defiance a far older tradition than our own.

This very fact that the pervading tone of this book — a tone still in keeping with the instincts and intuitions of ten years later — is so obstinately polytheistic and pluralistic, and has so many more chords responding to the magical and the miraculous than to the mathematical and metaphysical, is one more evidence of the truth of William James's statement that all oracles, big or little, windy or laconic, optimistic or pessimistic, use what scraps and crumbs of reason the gods have given them merely to nourish, cherish, defend, and elaborate the illumination of a few simple flashes of glow-worm vision which spring spontaneously from their temperamental experience.

And this leads me to the further point of what might be called the "psychology of culture", namely, that as one grows older one's culture tends to rely less and less on public opinion, to drift less and less with the world-movements of our time.

I would go so far as to say that it relies less than it formerly did on authority or tradition, but steadily draws more and more of its enlightenment and inspiration from the "minute particulars" of its daily experience.

Here I touch upon an evasive mystery. But I am confident that it is possible as we grow older to capture the immemorial magic of certain recurrent groupings, gestures, and even sensations of the generations of humanity, in response to which — as if to immortal vignettes of earth-life, engraved upon the air by some planetary consciousness — our own limited and transitory existence is made mellower, larger, tenderer, and humbler.

I think it shrinks more and more too, this personal culture grown older, from the snobbish conceit of feeling itself superior to the hypnosis of simple, yes! even of vulgar mass urges; discovering, perhaps, that the more truly sophisticated it is the less it depends on the uncommon and the unusual. And although our culture tends to narrow itself down and simplify itself as the years pass, I believe it becomes bolder and less conventional. The curious material it uses gathers itself together like an Echo "made Flesh" from all manner of queer directions. Not only does it rise from particular places, moments, figures, volumes, that have appealed to us out of the past. It rises from thousands upon thousands of small, separate, personal experiences of a quaint and particular kind in the life that is flowing past us. The dominant element in the culture of two people may often be the same; but it is this un-numbered series of minute, but momentous, personal experiences that creates the difference between them, making the same influence look out of those two faces with such diverse expressions.

Thus, if I may offer myself as a typical "case" for the consideration of the psychologists of culture, the slightest attention to the tone I automatically adopt towards these thoughts of mine of a decade ago will reveal the fact that though I have dug myself in, and banked myself up, in my particular mental and emotional groove, I have been affected by very evasive atmospheric influences. I refer to the fact that although it is to our great European sages, to Heraclitus, to Epictetus, to Homer, to Rabelais, to Cervantes, to Shakespeare, to Goethe, rather than to the metaphysical teachers of the East, that I have consistently turned, as lending themselves more easily, so it has come to seem, to all those little day-by-day experiences to which I have struggled to give a definite direction, yet I have been obscurely and strangely influenced by the magical "aura," so to speak, of my recent life in Wales. Does not Goethe hint again and again that we can only really absorb into our culture what the *daimon* within us, who drives us forward, can appropriate to itself? Thus to any brilliant youth with a passionately modern mind who feels that science has inaugurated a new era, wherein the old human wisdom, the old human humour, the old human imagination, although not perhaps completely superseded, are no longer basic elements in a rational culture, almost all I have said, or indeed can say, will seem just old-fashioned rhetoric, the evocation of a mentality that has lost touch, just as so much in Wales has done, with the dynamic pressure of the world's progress.

And on the other hand, to many passionate students of the great oriental Seers both the simple classic stoicism with which I strive to buttress up my weakness, and the simple epicureanism with which I strive to clarify my response to the magic of earthly life, will seem uninspiring and unexciting.

Well, there it is! No man with any honesty of purpose can go beyond what he has found in his own experience. What has served his turn among the various supports and refuges and reconciliations and escapes that culture offers will only serve the turn of kindred spirits. He preaches to the already converted, for so in the profoundest sense must all real listeners be; though it may easily happen that their previous conversion has been so hidden from themselves by circumstance and chance that only the shock of some kindred electricity reaching them from a distance can lift it into consciousness.

The great metaphysicians — those deadly enemies of the magical and the miraculous — would certainly feel that it would damn me as a professor of culture if I declared, as my Bardic predecessor Taliesin presumed to do, that I get my inspiration *from Europe and Africa,* not mentioning Asia at all! This queer attitude of mine, shared with Taliesin, may perhaps be connected with the intimate link between the syntax of the Welsh tongue and that of the Berbers of North Africa, but it is certainly connected with a non-moral conviction, deep as the roots of my life, that culture becomes a kind of mental chain-gang as soon as it loses an element of the wanton, the wayward, the arbitrary; as soon, in fact, as it becomes regimented and social, and ceases to be a solitary mania.

True culture was, is, and ever will be personal, individual, anarchistic. Life is based on forgetting how intolerable life is; and the most magical *gesture of culture* I know, and I would oppose it to all the "yogi" of the orient, is a certain threefold motion of one's whole being. I would define this threefold motion of the self in the following manner. Help your neighbour. Forget the unbearable. Sink your life into the Four Elements. If there is something of "Hell! Let's have a drink!" and something more of a simple Boy Scout morale in this gesture, I cannot help it.

When Jesus said that to enter the Kingdom you had to become like a child, of what aspect of a child's character was he thinking?

I think he was thinking of the three things that it takes most of us a long life to learn again.

The child's power of being born afresh every day; the child's passionate absorption in the miracle of the moment; and the child's impulse to thrust upon you, and sometimes — though not always! — to bestow upon you its most cherished discovery.

John Cowper Powys

* *Publishers in Dorchester:* see *Diary*, 1929 — Sunday July 21st: 'Sat under a shed with the Nortons working at my MSS on Fordington Great Field in view of Max Gate & Maiden Castle ... I recall how when I first went as a youth to see Hardy here I made a vow to write a good book — & here was I bringing my publisher to read my MSS under a hawthorn hedge and a shed with thistles and nettles ...'

(*With thanks to Jeff Kwintner for suggesting this. The much-corrected MS of the Introduction (not the Conclusion) is in the Bissell Collection. In her Inventory MK includes a page from JCP's Diary, Monday 3rd April 1939:* 'The T.T. wants me to finish Chapter XVI [of *Owen Glendower*] before I start on the new Preface to Culture-Book & a new conclusion yes a new conclusion ...' *Despite their being apparently written at the same time, the two parts seem in somewhat different voices — the Introduction closer to* Pleasures of Literature, *the Conclusion with its 'Hell, let's have a drink' more like* Mortal Strife. KK)

The Front Cover

JCP on the porch at Phudd Bottom reading A Glastonbury Romance *to his American publishers, May 1931. (This photgraph is from the Powys Collection. A similar group was printed in* The Powys Review *9.)*

See Diary, 1931, *Tuesday 26th May (in New York):* '... finished the XII chapter of my Book & wrote the Dramatis Personae & took these to tea at Inner Sanctum with Schuster & Fadiman & Rosenberg and Shimkin. It was a very friendly meeting and a pleasant one. They were thrilled with the photos taken by the T.T. Schuster collared them to take home to show his mother ...'