Editorial

'Sidelights' might describe several of the features in this *Newsletter*. The somewhat uncharacteristic cover photographs – Llewelyn with dark beard, JCP very tidy with books – illustrate less typical views of the Powyses' American lives. They appear, however, to be wearing the same hat ...

JCP and Llewelyn appear as house guests in San Francisco; a columnist defends Llewelyn's not always flattering views of American society (with a not entirely complimentary view of JCP's lectures); and there are previously unpublished unused introductions (or 'apologies') by both JCP and LlP for Llewelyn's *Skin for Skin*, written in the Catskill mountains. We also have an appreciation of TFP's early novella *Father Adam;* brief views on Powyses from a distinguished woman writer; views from Sweden and from the film world, and more spirited exchanges of letters from the Wilkinson archive.

Two Spring-Summer events may interest members: the proposed TFP discussion meeting in Dorchester – see enclosed leaflet – and the memorial concert 'A Celebration of Sylvia' in Chaldon church on May 4th. The last *Newsletter* sang the praises of Llangollen – an inviting blend of scenery, history, family fun, festivals and literary associations – to be continued in the next.

KK

ON OTHER PAGES

Committee Meetings

The Committee met on 26th October 2002 and 1st March 2003, both times at Myddleton Square, London. Our Chairman introduced them with stern sentences from *Soliloquies of a Hermit.*

The October meeting reviewed the successful conference at Millfield with thanks to all who helped: to Richard Graves, Louise de Bruin and Peter Foss especially, and to Jeff Kwintner whose attentions with welcome drinks were much appreciated. There was a surplus after the bills had been paid. The book sale had done extra well (thanks to Stephen and Stephen). Colin Wilson had written to say how much he had enjoyed it. The possibility of paying speakers was discussed but it was felt this had better continue in the form of a free conference, as with the Organiser. Videos of the conference speakers had come out well, and Jeff was thanked again for this initiative.

Sonia Lewis agreed to take minutes of the meetings. Stephen Powys Marks, the retiring Treasurer, introduced the new Treasurer, Michael French. Barclays will continue as the Society's bank. Old files will be taken to the Collection, and Stephen invited suggestions about the best use of stockpiled copies of the *Review* (notably nos.3 and 4, exceptionally rich and varied issues). It was agreed that the Powys copyright holders ought to be Honorary Members.

A new collection of Llewelyn's essays was suggested as the next publication by the Society (*see page 4*) A future possibility is a modest booklet of JCP's writing on Hardy, to be aimed at visitors to the Museum and to Hardy sites.

Richard and several others of us had visited the Hand Hotel at Llangollen: it is oldfashioned but has space and charm and seems suitable, and the attraction of the site should appeal. The following conference should return to the West Country, and an offer from the headmaster of Sherborne Prep (who came to Millfield) would be investigated.

At an informal meeting in Cheltenham on 6th December, David Gervais proposed a one-day discussion event in which members could take a more active part, to concentrate on a particular Powys book. There would be no need for large numbers; 12–15 would make a suitable group. *Please see the leaflet.*

All committee members were present at the March meeting. Michael French the new Treasurer presented the accounts. There had not been many orders for the videos but Jeff was happy they had been made for the record, and they would continue to be available on our and the speakers' sites on the internet.

Richard outlined the Conference programme which inevitably would again be weighted in favour of JCP; but an evening 'entertainment' devised by Chris Wilkinson on the Alyse/ Llewelyn/ Gamel triangle might redress the balance, as it is hoped will a 2004 conference back in the West Country. We discussed the best wording to encourage new committee members to come forward. Sonia, Jeff, and Kate are all due to stand down this year. Jeff would be willing to continue; Sonia

feels some changes are good, and had always thought of it as a three-year stint. Kate is willing to continue with the Newsletter for the time being. **KK**

Committee News

Honorary Life Memberships

At the meeting of the committee on 26 October 2002 it was unanimously agreed that Honorary Life Memberships should be conferred on the **three copyright holders of the Powys literary estates.** They are Sally Connely, John Powys, and Theodora Scutt. The committee is very grateful for their prudent custodianship of the estates. **PJF**

The Powys Society – Nominations and Elections

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

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

Nominations are to reach the Hon. Secretary Peter J. Foss at 82 Linden Road, Gloucester GL1 5HD, **not later than 30 June 2003.**

Honorary Officers

The present Honorary Officers are:

Chairman	Richard Perceval Graves
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway
Hon. Treasurer	Michael J. French
Hon. Secretary	Peter J Foss

The one-year term of all these Officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 31 August 2003, and therefore nominations are sought for all four officers. Richard Perceval Graves, David Goodway, Peter Foss and Michael French have indicated their willingness to serve for a further year.

Members of the Committee

David Gervais, Timothy Hyman and John Powys each have one or two years of their three-year term of office to run. Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner and Sonia Lewis have come to the end of their three-year term of office and are eligible for re-election. (Sonia Lewis has indicated that she does not wish to be re-elected). In addition, there is one vacancy on the Committee. Accordingly, nominations are sought for four members of the Committee.

In accordance with the Constitution, all nominations should be proposed as above, and submitted to the Hon. Sec. by 30 June 2003.

Publications

The Society is going ahead with the publication this year of **Wessex Memories by Llewelyn Powys**, a completely new book of 24 country essays which appeared in their original form in newspapers and periodicals mostly in the 1930s but have never been republished. There will be essays on all the familiar themes we have come to associate with Llewelyn – Dorset worthies, family landscapes, the Weymouth coast, archaeology and natural history. The book will be edited with notes by Peter Foss and illustrated with his drawings, and a full-colour cover. It will be a5 in size, softback, of about 128 pages. The cost to members will be £8.50. The July issue of the *Newsletter* will contain an order form, and the book should be available at the August conference.

Subscriptions Due

The Committee would like to remind those members who have received this *Newsletter* but not paid their subscription due for 2003, please to send it straight away to the Treasurer, Michael J. French, Wharfedale House, Castley, Otley, North Yorks, LS21 2PY.

Our subscription is only £13.50 – much smaller than with most similar societies and unchanged for many years. I am sure all members would agree that we give very good value for money, but we cannot function fully without our funds coming in on time, so please help us to continue our good work. Cheques are payable to 'The Powys Society', but the best way to help is to convert your annual fee to a STANDING ORDER – write for a form to the Hon. Sec. or print it off the website given at the front of the Newsletter. Many thanks.

PJF

The Powys Society Conference
'Cymric Spaces'

Llangollen, Friday 29th August – Sunday 31st August 2003

'Cymric Spaces' – John Cowper Powys in Wales will be the main theme at this year's Conference, held at the Hand Hotel in Llangollen, a former coaching inn, from Friday afternoon until after lunch on Sunday. Our all-in price of £125 for the whole Conference will include rooms with private facilities, breakfast, lunch and dinner (but not other refreshments).

A booking form is enclosed: please reply early and send a deposit of £25 to ensure a room.

Provisional programme

Friday 29th August Afternoon arrival. Informal reception; dinner; welcome from the Chairman. Talk (1) by Dr David Goodway: 'A Cult of the Sensations: John Cowper Powys's life-philosophy and anarchic individualism'.

Saturday 30th August Breakfast. Talk (2) by Professor Jeremy Hooker: 'Utopian Powys'. Interval. Talk (3) by Professor Charles Lock: 'Celtic Voices, Celtic Spaces' (focussing on *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*). Lunch. Afternoon excursions. Talk (4) by Professor W. J. Keith on *Porius*. Dinner. Entertainment devised by Chris Wilkinson: 'Llewelyn, Alyse, and Gamel'.

Sunday 31st August Breakfast. Talk (5) by Professor Harald Fawkner: 'John Cowper Powys and the Nuclear Properties of Non-Subjective Objects'. Interval and AGM. Lunch. End of Conference.

Other News

Sweden

The Swedish literary magazine *Passus* devotes a special number to JCP this spring, with a section of eight essays including excerpts from *Autobiography* and *A Philosophy of Solitude*, and 'The Inward House is Infinite – on the mysticism of Dostoievsky and Powys' by Owe Wikstrom, author of the widely read *In Praise of Slowness*. *See page 34*: Gunnar Lundin on *Wolf Solent* and Powys in Sweden.

Germany

Zweitausendeins, the publishers of a recent series of JCP's non-fiction in German, are reportedly very pleased with the level of interest in these translations. Waltraud Gotting has won the C. H. Beck Award for her translation of *The Art of Growing Old*.

Henning Ahrens, poet and speaker at the 1999 Conference, has published his

first novel, *Lauf, Jäger, Lauf* (Run, Hunter, Run) (Fischer, Frankfurt).

Art

Timothy Hyman has a solo show in London from June 11th to July 4th at Austin/ Desmond Fine Art, Pied Bull Yard (off Bloomsbury Square). His monograph *Sienese Painting* will be published by Thames & Hudson at the end of October.

Essays

P. J. Kavanagh's *A Kind of Journal*, a new collection from his columns in the Spectator and TLS , is published by Carcanet at £13.99. Powyses make several appearances in it.

Late starters

Jean-Pierre de Waegenaere responded to an item in the TLS 'NB' column on late-starting novelists, with a reminder of all three Powys brothers in this category: JCP aged 43 with *Wood and Stone* published 1915, TFP 48 with *The Left Leg* (1923), LlP 46 with *Apples Be Ripe* (1930) — 'Is this a record?' The letter was duly incorporated by 'NB"s somewhat sardonic editor 'JC'.

Topsy-Turvy

A photograph of JCP with an excerpt from this late fantasy are to appear in *Feng Shui News*.

A Celebration of Sylvia

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the death on 1st May 1978 of Sylvia Townsend Warner, a concert of music and readings written by or associated with her will be given in **St Nicholas Church, Chaldon**, her burial place, on **Sunday 4 May 2003.**

It is hoped that Sylvia's cousin Janet Pollock will be present to introduce the programme which will contain music by composers who were friends of Sylvia Townsend Warner, among them Benjamin Britten, Gerald Finzi, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Percy Buck. It is hoped to include music she had edited herself in her Early Tudor Music days, two of her own favourite composers of that period, John Wilbye and William Byrd, and some of her own original compositions.

Admission is by programme at £7 each from Marion Machen, 38 Oxford Avenue, Burnham, Bucks, SL1 8HR (s.a.e please), telephone no. 01628 602581.

Proceeds from the evening (to include glass of wine for a small extra charge) will be given to St Nicholas Church Restoration Fund.

Marion Machen

'The Figure under the Carpet'

Morine Krissdóttir's talk at the Dorset County Museum on 26th November 2002 was attended by about 80 people, most of them probably not familiar with JCP's style and suitably impressed by one of his cats-cradle diary pages displayed on a screen. Roger Peers, the former director of the Museum and co-author with Morine of *The Dorset Year*, introduced her by way of the enthusiastic reviews that welcomed *Petrushka and the Dancer,* her selection from the 1929–39 Diaries of JCP, published in 1995.

The *Carpet* of the title is of course the life of the subject in question, and the *Figure* under it the Biographer, inspecting its weaving from the back. (Henry James, whose metaphor this was and who hated biographies, thought the pattern in the carpet better viewed from the front.)

MK expressed her gratitude to the Powys copyright holders for authorising her biography, and to the Powys family for their co-operation; and her appreciation of the Museum for its help, with a description of the collection of Powys material held in the Dorset Museum, exceptional among museums for its uniquely rich literary holdings. She welcomed the recent re-issuing of JCP's novels by Penguin, and the programme of republishing by the Overlook Press of which her biography-in-progress is a part. The biography is expected in about two years, by which time the major novels should all be in print.

She gave a short account of JCP's life; and spoke of the difficulty of separating JCP from the rest of the Powys clan; and the mystery of why, having at last found freedom to write and fulfilment in his private life by settling in the New York countryside with Phyllis Playter, he left America for ever in 1934, and then, after staying only a short time in Dorset among his siblings, departed with Phyllis to North Wales for the rest of his life.

A biographer of JCP is fortunate in one way, with the huge amount of source material available, public and private, both in England and America. JCP often wrote 15 letters a day, kept a diary from 1929 onwards, and wrote his own (though far from factual) autobiography. He did not consider it possible for a writer to separate life from work , and did not object to biographers in his lifetime or to letters being published (on the grounds of safety in numbers). Biographers however, have to sift facts and find the story in them – inevitably a form of fiction. They have to be wary of falsity to the untidiness of life, and also of the danger of thinking that when writers' lives are reflected in their fiction (as JCPmaintained) the picture is necessarily accurate. Weymouth, for example, was for him a place of childhood idyll, but the Weymouth of *Weymouth Sands* – Magnus Muir's rock-pool – is injected with adult neuroses, with memory not only as beauty but also as menace. On the other hand, his fiction was often physically reflected in his life, and can be traced in his diary (as during the writing of *Glastonbury* in 1931).

The biographer, avoiding the swings of both idealism or iconoclasm, has to

weigh up how much of life, art, and design there is in a writer. Diaries are not spontaneous any more than an autobiography is: both involve role-playing, aesthetics, story-telling, mannerisms. In the earlier *Confessions of Two Brothers* JCP uses language indirectly, to conceal. His letters and diary are adjusted for their readers: truth is below. Richard Holmes in *Footsteps,* his book on R. L. Stevenson, describes the biographer's dual task, first to order the material and then (more challenging) to establish the imaginary relationship between the subject and the biographer. The HTV film on JCP presented this dialogue in the form of voices off, the writer telling stories about himself. MK will approach JCP as a psychologist as well as a chronicler, but her book will not be directed at any specific category of reader. Overlook's director, a committed Powys enthusiast and internationalist, aims for wide appeal.

KK

Review

T. F. Powys: *Father Adam*
Edited by Ian Robinson,
with an account of the story's genesis by Elaine Mencher. 2nd ed.
The Brynmill Press 2002. ISBN 0 907839 85 1, paperback, 152 pp. £8.40.

John Cowper and Theodore Powys differed as much in their methods of composition as in their published novels. The elder brother, desirous of fame and fortune and convinced of his innate genius, tackled the writing of prose fiction head-on, only to be balked by an inability to free himself from the constraints of the literary tradition in which he had been steeped since boyhood: it needed a devil-may-care attitude towards conventional expectations to effect the liberation involved in the writing of *Wolf Solent.* But with Theodore matters were far otherwise. More concerned with learning how to write than with being a writer, he mastered his craft in the strictest privacy, and with a limited range of literary models that he adapted for his own purposes instead of merely imitating them. *Father Adam* is among the first fruits of a hard-won literary maturity.

Even so, it remains full of imperfections. Powys had trouble with devising plots and had yet to learn how to achieve appropriate dramatic effects. In a detailed account of the genesis of this novella Elaine Mencher demonstrates how the story was pieced together from a mass of discarded material (now in the Bissell Collection at Dorchester and in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at Austin, Texas). This includes three plays as well as the manuscript versions of a full-length novel from which the present tale emerged. Along with these items are a number of aptly named 'Seed Pieces', some of which have been published by

The Powys Society in its *Newsletter* and its *Journal*. These fragments amount to 'experimental stages in which Powys was searching for his true voice'. That voice, tentative but unmistakeable, can heard in *Father Adam*.

While the novella displays several of its author's strengths, it is also a good instance of his main problem as a writer – the difficulty of reconciling allegory and fable with a convincing portrayal of rustic life. The story of how Father Adam, at the behest of his deceased benefactor Ralph Crew, urges his village congregation to observe the Ten Commandments in the belief that this will lead to the salvation of entire world, is naive enough to border on the silly: any lurking ironies, such as would be found in Powys's later work, are forestalled by the reader's incredulity at so whimsical a notion. And yet, considered purely as a fable, *Father Adam* is among the most profoundly Christian moralities that the author was to write. Its argument derives from St Paul's Epistle to the Romans – the proclamation that, whereas a moral law kills because it cannot be fully kept, it is none the less that very failure which turns the sinner to repentance and the discovery of God's love. Chapters 19 and 21 of *Father Adam* make the point explicitly, and in them Powys rises to heights attained in the finest of his later work.

> Mr Martin saw that hate, lust and greed held up the world and that the waters of life flowed always through those three forces into the minds of men.

But there is an addendum to this seemingly despairing perception. 'One other thing Mr Martin had learnt – that love was possible.' Father Adam may have failed to keep the Commandments himself, but in the process he has become the occasion of love in other people. As the hermit Mr Martin tells him,

> We are all idolaters, we are all adulterers, we are all murderers, because these errors form the very substance and being of the life of man. Your servants know that you have been faithful to your trust, faithful in your service ... and they love you.

As a result Adam no longer denies his own love for the girl Eva, but accepts it as the fulfilment of his benefactor's wishes: the Ten Commandments have been assumed into the New Commandments of Christ. 'Instead of reforming the old dead world, Ralph Crew had created a new heaven and a new earth.'

T. F. Powys was to go on to write more accomplished tales than *Father Adam*, but for all its structural weaknesses, the author's moral vision is as clearly stated here as it is in the work of his maturity. Elaine Mencher quotes from a pencilled note made by him in connection with his own literary aspirations. 'Ah, but how one would have loved to have given some real quiet pleasure, joy and a silent laugh or two to some lonely reader.' Such readers may be grateful for the dedication with which the Brynmill Press is making Powys's work available in the present competitive society of ruthlessness and greed. Remote from that society though its concern with the Bible and with the lives of unsophisticated people may be, its

unsentimental Christian humanism keeps afloat on the waste waters of the world in a vessel sturdy enough to withstand the storm. It seems appropriate that this enlarged reissue of *Father Adam* should also contain a couple of previously unpublished stories, both of which are called 'The Noah's Ark'.

Glen Cavaliero

An Interview with Sara Bard Field

This interview was conducted between 1959 & 1963 by the Regional Cultural Office of California. Sara Bard Field (1882–1974) was chosen because of her 'combined significance as poet, leading suffragist and social reformer, and, with her partner and husband Charles Erskine Scott Wood (1852–1944), a hostess to visiting literati and artists ...'. The interviewer is Amelia Fry.

Autobiography *presents Colonel Erskine Wood, 'that noble old Poseidon of the Pacific', as an influential friend of JCP during the various times he spent in San*

Portraits of Sara Bard Field and Erskine Wood, given to Frances Gregg. (Courtesy of Chris Wilkinson.)

Francisco, advising him to return to war-work in England in 1918, and persuading him to change his manager (as JCP came to regret).

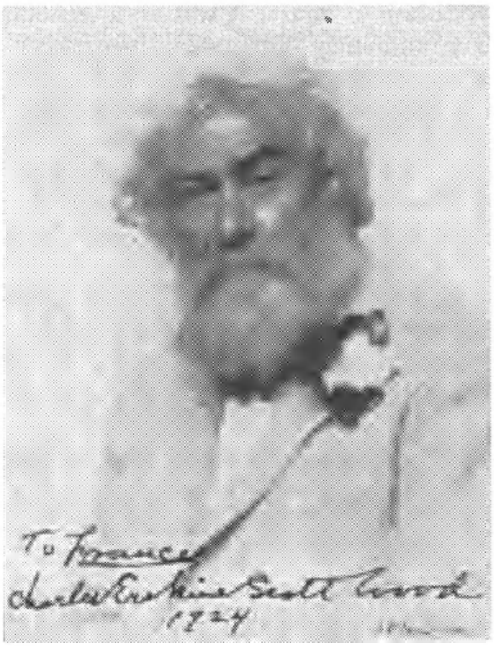
From JCP's letters to Llewelyn and to Frances (who was with him in California in 1919) it's clear that Sara Bard (and her daughter) were also close friends of Llewelyn. ('... it is amusing to listen to Lulu and Sara talking – Sara's abandoned Western idealism and Lulu's Dorsetshire cynicism ...' – Jack to Frances, March 1921*). Sara had been married to a missionary in Burma before her devoted partnership with Erskine Wood. She suffered a breakdown after the death of her son in a motor accident in 1918.*

Llewelyn spent about seven months with Jack around San Francisco in 1921, staying in hotels. In Verdict of Bridlegoose *(p.30) he says they 'used to see a great deal' of Sara and Colonel Wood ('Sarah* [sic] *... spirited and generous, and able to wear, prettily enough, flowers in her grey hair').*

Tony Head (to whom thanks) explains Debs and the Poets *as the volume in which JCP, Sara and Wood appeared in print together in 1920, supporting the imprisoned socialist leader and Presidential candidate Eugene Debs. Other contributors included Carl Sandburg, Siegfried Sassoon, G. B. Shaw and H. G. Wells.* *(See page 18.)*

FRY: *I wanted to ask you about Llewelyn Powys.*

FIELD: Well, we shouldn't begin with Llewelyn. It was John whom we first met. I think he was a far greater writer than his brother Llewelyn. He's still writing; there's a new novel out now by him. It's simply wonderful to think that that man is still going on writing; he's in his nineties now. The way we met John, while we were living in the Broadway house, was by means of a letter which was sent to us I think by Harriet Monroe, who was the editor of *Poetry* magazine to which I had been contributing some poems and some reviews of other poets' books as they came out. She wrote us and said that "the most extraordinary lecturer I've ever listened to is coming to San Francisco. He's an Englishman named John Cowper Powys, and I do hope that you will hear him and do what you can for so shy and retiring a man as he is."



The first lecture we attended was at the St. Francis Hotel, in the Gold Ballroom I remember. This extraordinary figure came onto the platform,

dressed in a Cambridge gown (from which university he'd graduated), stooped, and with an unforgettable face, hawklike, with a searching gaze. When he began to speak it was probably as near as I will ever get to hearing an Old Testament prophet. He simply lost himself in the character, he became the character, almost, of which he was talking, and he brought out the nature of the person as well as the worth of their work and a criticism of the work in general. His audiences were nothing short of spellbound.

And he never planned a lecture beforehand?

He never planned a lecture. He was of course highly educated and deeply versed in English literature, so it wasn't the careless talking of a man who's just had a little taste of things. But he never had any notes and as far as I could see (for you will see that finally he halfway lived with us and I would watch him before a lecture), he never made any preparations. He sometimes sat in deep thought before he would go to lecture, but other than that (and that was probably a rich and deep preparation), just that, there was no outward sign of preparation.

The first lecture I heard him give was on Shelley. I was at a period when my worship of Shelley was deep, and was moved to an emotional state that I'm a little ashamed remembering, because he seemed to bring Shelley right into the room. If ever a man had—a word science despises and I rather feel is suspect too—but if ever a man had magic, to do this very thing.

I remember his telling how plebian, commonplace, the parents of Shelley were, and then to this kid-gloved audience—because of course it was an afternoon audience and mostly women, but a very large audience—he suddenly broke forth, "But I don't believe he was their son. I don't believe he was the Shelleys' son. I think he was a changeling, brought there by the fairies and just put into that crib."

Well, it sounds very soft when I tell it, but if you could know what a bombshell it caused suddenly right in the middle of factual things you would have realized what an effect it had. And of course it was exactly my own feeling, that Shelley must have come from some heavenly source because he was so early deeply and passionately concerned with human affairs.

After the lecture we took the letters of introduction we had and went to speak to him and he invited us to come up to his room. There, in trying to tell him how much the lecture had meant to me, in my shame, in the presence of an Englishman of all people, who are so reserved, I broke down and began to weep. I said, 'I'm thoroughly ashamed of this.'

And he said, 'Don't be ashamed,' and he ran and got a volume out of his bag, a volume of French poems, and he read me a poem in which it said that only the Anglo-Saxons are ashamed of their emotions. He said, 'Undoubtedly you have Latin blood somewhere in you,' and he made me feel at ease, which I felt was gallant of him because of course it was a shameful performance on first meeting a man to cry over his lecture. But he had just worked me up into such a state of

emotional excitement about Shelley that this is what happened.

Well, from that time on he became a very close friend. He was, as Harriet Monroe wrote us, a very shy man. He endured the public but had no wish to have them tracking him down, and so (while he never actually slept in the house), he was at our house a great deal, almost, I think looking back, as if hiding away behind Erskine's broad shoulders. He had a very kind and at the same time sharply critical judgment of our poetry, especially of mine, but he was one of the helpers on my way to whatever growth I may have made as a poet. He had extremely funny mannerisms and temperamental ideas. He couldn't bear to touch linen; we had to supply him with a silk handkerchief or napkin at the table. And he claimed to be a vegetarian and whenever there was meat on the table he didn't touch it, but one night our Chinese cook brought in some simply delicious-looking fried chicken, fried in the Chinese manner in peanut oil, and Erskine just ignored serving any to John, respecting his vegetarian principle, and began helping him to the vegetable salad, which we always provided in abundance for him, and he looked at Erskine and said, 'I'd like some of that.' And Erskine looked at him and said, 'But John, I thought you were a vegetarian.' He said, 'I am, except when it comes to chickens. They're so stupid.'

He once wrote in his autobiography that the one cause that he really could give himself to was antivivisection. Was this why he was a vegetarian?

Oh, that and the cruelty to animals that meat-eating involves. He'd seen cattle trains. He had a habit of putting up his two hands in front of his face when some memory that was an emotional shock to him came back, and he did that in speaking of a cattle train in which the cattle could hardly breathe, they were crammed in so together, and they looked thirsty. I think any outrages to animals would have made him a vegetarian. But the funny thing was that he said he would eat chicken because they were so stupid, they were a stupid animal. So you can see his eccentricities were around.

What did he mean when he wrote in his autobiography, 'Everybody I meet seems to want to assert their ego. "I, I, I!" They all cry this. No one seems to get the depraved pleasure I get from my turning my 'I' into thin air and helping my friends' 'I' to swell and swell till it's a regular balloon.' Did you get this feeling he was helping your 'I' to swell and swell?

No, quite the contrary. He was as I say sharply critical of my writing. He couldn't bear the poem I wrote in *Debs and the Poets*; he put up his hands again and said, '*Oh*, how could you be so sentimental!' I wouldn't say that he ever increased my ego the least bit. In fact quite the opposite. If I had too much—I don't believe I ever had too much but I may have had a little more self-confidence than my work warranted, but I don't think there was any great sense of achievement for me to crow over.

But I can see he could do that. He had a certain malicious streak in him in which he would, if he felt a person was highly egoistic, he would love to do just

what he said, turn his eye on them until they burst 'like a balloon.' I can see that he would do that and get lots of fun out of it inside of himself, but I think he also recognized—He says there that everyone he met was that way, but he had a great capacity for exaggeration.

He also seemed to feel that he could never face himself. He insists that he never read his own writing, once it was down on paper.
No, he didn't. He was a man of strange dark and inner secrets, probably again exaggerated. He liked to think of himself as a kind of devil, and I am afraid that in many ways he had characteristics that could, if carried to the extreme, have been very dangerous to people. I think he had a sadistic quality in him, because in later years he confessed to this and said how he struggled to overcome it, in his autobiography. Of course it was this that made him very cruel to people at times. When he went to Madison, Wisconsin, to lecture, of course he knew Kay [SBF's daughter] and she had become engaged to Jim [Caldwell] there, and he seemed to delight in baiting Jim. Jim remembers him with a great deal of, well, antagonism. And William Ellery Leonard, a famous professor there and a poet, got on his nerves some way too. Kay in her enthusiasm had given a dinner to which she'd invited Leonard and his wife, and of course Jimmy was there; I don't know who else. She said that all through the dinner John made a point of baiting William Ellery Leonard and of belittling him greatly, although he was a very famous man both in the department in which he taught and as to his poems, which I think are distinguished though few.

Did you notice a difference between John Cowper Powys and Llewelyn? Llewelyn was a nature worshipper, almost, and as I understand it John was almost oblivious to nature.
He wasn't oblivious; I used to go on walks with him sometimes, and once we went over to Belvedere together and he saw some flowers, a little wilted, lying on the sidewalk, and he tenderly picked them up and carried them over to a place on the grass, which he said was the only proper place for flowers to die. If they were dying he wasn't going to have them dying on the sidewalk. So he wasn't oblivious to it, and once in a while he could write some very exquisite lines.

Let me see, I think I can quote a few from one of his poems in which he tells how the whips and scourges of life have wounded him, and I have no doubt they did. He must have been a queer character at Cambridge and was probably from the very first made fun of a great deal. He was telling this in a poem of his and then he breaks out, 'But still in the garden I know / The purple hyacinth blow, / And their scent is as it was, / And still where long waves run, / The wet sand gleams in the sun, / And its touch is as it was.' * I think those are beautiful lines, both as to music and as to poignancy. So you cannot say he was entirely oblivious.

This was in the early twenties; was he aware of Robinson Jeffers?

* *This quotation (nearly accurate) is from JCP's poem 'Dialogue' (p. 71 in* Wolf's Bane*).*

No. Robinson Jeffers had just come on the scene. What he thought of him later I never got to know because he finally, when his son grew old enough (the one and only son he had) to support his mother, whom he'd left but to whom he sent practically every cent he earned outside of the barest expenses—when his son, who took orders in the Church, could take care of his mother he retired to Wales with his young mistress and has become the poet laureate of Wales. I have many many wonderful letters from him, but there came a time when he was getting old and he evidently has had to concentrate all his energies on whatever creative writing he does, and I don't hear from him any more. Huntington [Library] has them all. They were like no letters in the world. They had all the strange uniqueness, both the dark and the light of his nature.

In the course of time Llewelyn came over. He was tubercular and had almost all his life fought tuberculosis, although strangely at the end he did not die of it, although he was in Switzerland for it at the very sanitarium about which Thomas Mann later wrote in *The Magic Mountain.* He came to our house through the fact that he'd come out to California to be with John, who was then living in Sausalito, which was not the best place for a person with tuberculosis. They used to come over together then a great deal, and I grew to love Llewelyn in many ways. His was, as you say, a nature sunnier; he was a hedonist by actual profession, you might say. He never hesitated to say that, and he was extremely critical, like his brother, in many ways. If people said something—spoke of a person who had died as 'passing away,' he'd have a fit. 'Why don't you use the good straight English word "died"?' he'd say.

Like John he had no use for anything sentimental, but unlike John, who is very prolific—his novels are long and diffuse and historical—Llewelyn, who didn't write novels but wrote essays, was chary of words and I think wrote a far more beautiful English, though John's works are, taken by and large, probably more lasting. Although perhaps that's wrong. Perhaps it's only to say they are in two different categories, and each is equally destined to live as much as the other. But Llewelyn's essays are really works of art and excellent in every way, and very full of humor. There was a man that took utter and complete satisfaction in nature. He didn't need any assurances of life after death or anything else as long as he could live the good life here and be in touch with nature completely.

He was an epicurean, as I understand it.

He *was* an epicurean. He just delighted in—that's why I say he lived a good life—he delighted in all the good things that life could provide.

He had a sensitivity to atmospheres that was so keen I don't think I have ever known anyone quite like him. I remember one party that he attended at our house at which there was a certain person I don't wish to name, who hated me. She was jealous of me and hated me and would come to a party and just make all kinds of sly remarks. I didn't realize that anyone knew this but myself, but after all the

guests were gone and John and Llewelyn were remaining for a little while before they went to their quarters, he suddenly made the same gesture that John did, with his hands over his face, and he said, "Oh my God, there was hate in this house tonight. You could have cut it with a knife." I thought that was extraordinary; not a word had been openly said, but he just felt this hostility and reacted to it very hard.

He thought that love and the capacity to love were the biggest thing in nature, the most important thing.

Yes, he did. But it wasn't so much love in the way that I interpret it; it didn't seem to reach out into the interest of the world in general. It was circumscribed. He loved his friends, and he always made friends because of his warm, sweet nature. When it came to women I think he interpreted love wholly on the physical side. I don't think he ever, until toward the very end of his life when he married a woman who was the editor of that extraordinary new paper in the East—it was supported by one rich man largely, a magazine of experiment; it brought out Marianne Moore and other poets who now are numbered among the most important of the new school ... It was a person-to-person love. He could dislike as much as he loved. It wasn't by any means a promiscuous love, promiscuous in the sense of just loving everybody he met. He took great dislikes to some people.

He also had a more realistic contact with the world, didn't he, than others, to the point of being highly disturbed at the encroachment of fascism in Europe?

Oh yes, yes he did.

More than, for instance, John Cowper Powys, who never was connected enough with the world for this, was he?

In the period in which I knew them best and had most contact with them the rise of fascism to the extreme point of Nazism wasn't yet prevalent, and I don't remember any discussions with them on this subject. This may be sheer forgetfulness because they were there a great deal, and most of our discussions were about literature and sometimes about people. They were both of them extremely fond of Theodore Dreiser, especially John. He believed in his work very much, which I think is an indication that he felt in touch with social justice because of course Dreiser deals with that, in *Sister Carrie* and other novels.

He was a great fan of Dickens, too.

John Cowper Powys always held that Dickens was not a representative Englishman in his characters; his characters were not authentically English, they were just odd characters of Dickens' imagination, an assortment, and that Hardy's—he used as a contrast, Hardy's—characters were right up from the soil of England. He spoke about having tea with Hardy one day in a little village tearoom in one of the more remote counties, and a girl came in and Hardy said, "Look, John, there's Tess." He saw one of those types.

I read Louis Wilkinson on John Cowper Powys, and he felt that he belonged to the school of Jacobean dramatists, and De Quincey, Emily Bronte and that ilk. He feels he was not an artist, because he wrote without regard to form or style.
That's what I say, it was very diffuse.

He felt that Powys might be improved if a skillful person could cut out a number of passages in his novels and make them a little more succinct.
I don't think that there's any doubt about it. Although Llewelyn worshipped his brother John I think he had the same feeling about John's work. Llewelyn was an exquisite craftsman; as I say, his wise paucity of words was something very different from John's flow, which is very like in his lectures.

Did either comment on the other to you?
I think they did, especially Llewelyn on John. Of course there was a strong family bond in the Powys family, which was an enormous family. There was another brother who wrote, and was considered the real genius of the whole family. He wrote very few things, but his *Mr Weston's Good Wine* was one, about a man who cared more for his pigs than anything else. He lived the life of a hermit; he wouldn't even see if something was delivered to him, it had to be just put down at the door and he wouldn't even go to the door.

He was rather a God-fearing man, wasn't he? Highly religious.
Well, but religion was not as great as bitterness in him. I'd forgotten that that quality was there but I just know there was a great bitterness in his writing, and a great power to look into the heart of a person and see what their true drive was.

What did Llewelyn think of him?
As I say they were a very loyal family. They thought he was wonderful. And there were other brothers; one was an architect, of whom I know very little, and a sister named Marian who had a lace shop for years and years in New York and mended beautiful handmade lace. She was an expert at it.

Was she the poet? Or artist?
No. I think one of the older sisters was something of an artist. I don't know much about her.

Is there anything else you would like to add?
Nothing I can think of now.

Thanks to Jacqueline Peltier for suggesting this from the internet, and to Chris Wilkinson for the photographs.

'Debs and the Poets'

(from Contributors to Debs and the Poets, *edited by Ruth le Prade, published with an Introduction by Upton Sinclair: Pasadena, Cal., 1920)* *(See page 11)*

John Cowper Powys, the British critic, poet, and Oxford lecturer, is one of Debs' greatest admirers and most fearless defenders. Last summer Powys was giving a series of lectures in San Francisco. To hear his lecture on Bolshevism the ballroom of the St Francis Hotel was crowded with the richest and most fashionable residents of the city. Clad in décolleté gowns of silk and satin, and gorgeous with jewels, the dilettante women of San Francisco awaited the platitudes with which they are usually fed. But when John Cowper Powys, clad in his Oxford gown, strode on the platform, tall, dark, burning-eyed and fiery-tongued, and proceeded to lash them with the Truth, they received a shock from which they have probably never recovered to this day. Tossing 'common sense' to the winds, he talked of the things that were in his heart: of Russia, the war, the oppressed, of the man who had but recently become a convict in a federal penitentiary. Tenderly, beautifully, he spoke of 'Gene Debs. 'If,' he concluded—'we have not the courage to take our places by his side—the least we can do is admire him!'

To Eugene Debs

Away with him! he utters the word "Love."
  Dark-souled incendiary, madman forlorn,
He dares to put humanity above
  Discretion. Better never have been born
Than thus to have offended! Learn, good brother,
  That Love and Pity are forgotten fables
Told by the drowsy years to one another
  With nothing in them to supply our tables.
These are the days of hungry common sense.
  Millions of men have died to bring these days;
And more must die ere these good days go hence;
  For God moves still in most mysterious ways.
Ah Debs, Debs, Debs, you are out-weighed, out-priced,
These are the days of Caesar, not of Christ—
And yet—suppose—when all was done and said
There *were* a Resurrection from the Dead!

John Cowper Powys

Skin for Skin: *Unpublished Prefaces*

As Powys enthusiasts know, Llewelyn Powys's fine book of autobiographical reminiscences, Skin for Skin, *was published in America in 1925, without any Foreword or Preface such as had appeared for* Ebony and Ivory *(1923),* Thirteen Worthies *(1923), and* Black Laughter *(1924). Some of those prefaces had been composed by notable literary names – Theodore Dreiser, Edward Shanks and Van Wyck Brooks. Llewelyn was also keen to add his own prefatory comments, usually in the form of disclaimers, such as had appeared for* Confessions of Two Brothers *(1916) and for* Black Laughter. *It is interesting to discover that in fact the same had been intended for* Skin for Skin. *At the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, Texas, there exists a manuscript of his brother's Introduction to the work, and a blurb for the dust-jacket; neither of them used. There also exists in the fifth notebook of the MS of* Skin for Skin *at the HRHRC [Sims's catalogue I:3], an unused* Preface *by Llewelyn rehearsing some thoughts on possible objections to the book. These are printed here for the first time with kind permission of the HRHRC, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, USA.*

Peter Foss

John Cowper Powys: Blurb for the US edition of Skin for Skin *(1925)*

The expert connoisseurs of that noble loving-cup of honey-scented mead, the style of Llewelyn Powys, will be more than content with *Skin for Skin*. Here we have the same unequalled mingling of whimsical tenderness with idiosyncratic humour such as we have come to expect from this ingratiating hand. But *Skin for Skin* is far more personal than anything else he has done and therefore far more appealing. For the more personal Llewelyn Powys is, the more poignant his style becomes; and this book is nothing less than a shameless self-revelation of one of the most integrally sensuous natures that our generation has produced.

John Cowper Powys: Introduction to Skin for Skin

The writer of this book cannot but have been aware that there are certain aspects of the following pages which will strike a not altogether pleasant note in the ears of many.

In the first place there is the delicate matter of the *egotism* involved in such a personal narration. What might be said perhaps just here, without incurring the charge of special pleading, is that the very 'formula' of this particular 'genre' in literature *assumes* such egotism as its necessary medium. The book takes its place in a quite definite tradition and has many unassailable progenitors. The egotism of Montaigne, of Pepys, of Charles Lamb, is something that has come to be recognised as the inevitable clay or pigment, the unavoidable *modus operandi* of these whimsical and realistic minds; and though the author of *Skin for Skin* has far too tender an idolatry for such great names to risk the conceit of challenging comparisons, it would seem that the sort of truth created by their incontrovert-

ible shamelessness may find some smack, some relish, of the same classic candour in *his* experiment. That there is a public response ready for such a 'genre' is proved by the prosperity of Proust's recondite evocations, and there is no reason why the peculiar accent of this great Frenchman's genius should not find some echo, however unmusical, in the blunter tongue of the northern bank of 'La Manche'.

In the second place there is the difficulty of what to many minds must seem the uncalled-for *blasphemy* of certain passages in *Skin for Skin*. In regard to this matter the reader must remember that a certain indulgence is due to what may be called the 'Sons-of-Eli complex'. Brought up in a somewhat austere religious atmosphere, the writer's attempts to emancipate himself from a 'milieu' so heavily charged with traditional piety naturally result in a certain morbid preoccupation with these things, such as a more secularly nurtured mind could never display. There may indeed be found something almost pathetic in the extent to which such attempts at liberation have failed in their bold purpose. A touch of the old seductive sorcery, and for all his gallant words, the 'tassel-gentle' is 'lured back again'! In a very profound sense therefore it might be maintained that the 'blasphemy' of *Skin for Skin* is far less displeasing to the gods than the tough nonchalance of a more worldly, a more indifferent temper.

Finally, in the third place, a word ought to be said in regard to the bawdy passages in this English *Remembrance of Things Past*. Just here one is tempted to adopt a less conciliatory, a less compromising tone. For it seems that it is a healthy and honest symptom in our present generation to refuse to conform to the

Llewelyn Powys at Montoma, 1924, presumably writing Skin for Skin *(from Album 6 at HRHRC, 2002).*

ignoble and already rapidly-vanishing *taboo* of a very brief and very uncivilised epoch in English history. Behind the author's outspokenness in these simple 'country matters' lies the whole prestige and usage of the noblest epochs in our long register. To take exception to his candour is simply to confess to a lack of education. It is to confess to a quaint and touching ignorance of the way in which the great masters of English prose have always, from Chaucer to Ben Jonson, from Fielding to Hardy, found it wise and generous to speak of such things. That for some ill-gendered half-a-dozen decades a set of philistine reticences foisted by a view of 'whoreson' Malvolios upon the classic instincts of the human race should have made Thackeray shuffle and George Meredith skip means nothing at all to the author of *Skin for Skin*. 'He holds,' as Charles Lamb said of Mary Lamb, 'he holds Nature to be wiser.'

It may perhaps have caught the attention of a sympathetic reader of this first installment of Llewelyn's 'memories', that he has dedicated his book to the only one of his ten brothers and sisters not mentioned by name. This is, so he tells me, only partly due to the fact that he owes her so much as his chief solace in his sickness. It is much more due to the fact that the peculiar nature of her quality, 'pure as an icicle that's curdled by the frost and hangs from Dian's temple', escapes, in its proud, intangible, aristocratic reserve, the sort of humorous disorder that lends itself to his sly delineations.

Llewelyn Powys: Preface to Skin for Skin

Although it has been in my mind for several years to write *Skin for Skin*, it is to Mr Sedgewick of the *Atlantic Monthly* that I owe the stimulus that actually set me about it. During the summer of 1924 it was suggested that I should submit an article to the *Atlantic Monthly* entitled 'The Struggle for Life'. In due time I completed and sent to Boston a kind of synopsis of this volume and the succeeding volumes of *Skin for Skin*. Mr Sedgewick's memorandum in reference to this article was as follows: 'September 11th 1924. The trouble with Mr Powys's manuscript is that it is wholly on a physical plane. The interest of such a confession should lie in its spiritual quality. What effect would the fear of death, present through the years, have on a man—not the same physical revolt against the inertia of convalescence or the fright of a haemorrhage.' The memorandum was sent to me with the suggestion that I could meet his criticisms 'by making a few changes in his article'. This communication I could only answer by quoting the old Masai proverb, 'a zebra cannot change its stripes'

I suppose the fact that strong labour had been in vain would have in any case annoyed me—even though by this time I should be used to the whimsies of editors—but what really acted as a goad was the tone and temper of the criticism—the fact of taking it for granted that the interest of such a confession should lie in some uplifting sentiments of a kind palatable to the readers of Mr Sedgewick's famous journal. I also felt I think that his charge was untrue. For the value of my article and of *Skin for Skin* does not depend for its interest on 'the physical plane'—it depends for its interest 'on the physical plane'

as apprehended by a nature scourged to keen and sensitive appreciation by the menace of imminent annihilation. And I hold that a book of this kind has a definite and quite spontaneous spiritual quality of its own—a spiritual quality that belongs to anything that is alert and vivid and alive and not apathetic.

The continual references to Christianity direct and indirect will doubtless strike many readers as unnecessary. I can only defend myself by saying that to anyone brought up as I was brought up, the claims set forth by Christianity and the hopes set forth by Christianity cannot but continue to haunt the mind however sceptical one may become. There will be other readers doubtless who will deplore a certain outspokenness which may also appear unnecessary if not vulgar. I can only say that I am naturally 'broad-minded', and in this I am by no means at variance with a tradition of English literature that has been as constant as it has been healthy.

Sidelight (1926)

Burton Rascoe:
'Contemporary Reminiscences: Some Literary Backfire from a Recent Visitor'.

(An extract from Arts and Decoration *magazine, August 1926. The accompanying publisher's photograph of a very serious Llewelyn is captioned 'Llewelyn Powys, who comments brilliantly on America and Americans in his new book, 'The Verdict of Bridlegoose'.)*

Miss Baird Leonard in *Life* and Heywood Broun in *The World* pounce upon Llewelyn Powys for saying in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* that Frank Crowninshield was wearing a frock coat in his office, when Mr Powys called upon him ... Mr Powys's inaccuracy, however, is forgiveable. Indeed, it is a natural one. Mr Crowninshield has a capacity for conferring an illusion upon one who meets him for the first time that he (Mr Crowninshield) is wearing a frock coat. I believe he could produce that illusion in the minds of some people even if he were surprised in his B.V.D's. [*i.e. 'long johns', ED.*]

Some of the critics have censured Mr Powys for indiscretion in this book of impressions gathered on his stay in America. They speak of 'breaches of the law of hospitality' and of infractions of other rules of conduct in the matter of when to speak out and when to keep silent. What sort of reasoning is behind such talk? Why do people pretend to extract from a migratory penman like Mr Powys, ever on the alert for 'copy', a virtue in print which nobody ever possesses in conversation? The harm, if there is any harm, in Mr Powys's describing a club where he had been taken to lunch as being 'full of senile Philistines', if that is how it seemed to him, is surely not comparable to the harm caused by the criticism and gossip that people offer in conversation about their intimate acquaintances...

Simplicity of mind is the only grave fault, I believe, that Mr Powys can rightly be accused of in his frank, discursive and entertaining, though neither profound

THIS CLIPPING FROM

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N. Y.

NEWS

Aug 7-19

One wonders, if, when Americans go to England, they can be said a mile off, as people insist can be done with Llewellyn and John Cowper Powys, the two distinguished men of letters who have, by way of intermittent residence, almost become citizens of these shores.

To see them ambling down the streets of the village always draws a crowd, toward which they remain detached and slyly amused. They are both the big type of Englishman, loose jointed, and a bit shambling, they both carry enormous briary walking sticks, and one will wear a bright pink and the other a brilliant sky blue shirt. Or, if the day is chill, Llewellyn will wrap a bright orange and red plaid scarf about his neck before he emerges from his little house in Patchin pl.

John Cowper Powys

Llewelyn Powys

Distinguished English brothers.

Another contemporary American view (1924).

nor penetrating book. I have a great sympathy for his failing ... and it has been my experience that those people who are frankest in their outspokenness in print are, in private conversation, freest from referring to the petty faults and foibles of their friends and acquaintances ... In fine, *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* enchanted me during the three-quarters of an hour it took me to read it. Mr Powys is bland, egotistic, and full of sentiment. He is kind toward those who do him favors, and savage toward some whom he had reasons to envy. But is that not a natural and human trait? ...

I salute Mr Powys, then, with ... fraternal feeling. He is in bad taste now and then (that is, he offends my own particular notion of the right thing in a particular occasion to do) but each of us has his criterion of good taste conditioned upon every factor in our bringing up and our associations. He loves his brother, John Cowper Powys the lecturer, and says unkind things about the women who are enchanted by John Cowper Powys's eloquence. When I was in the University of Chicago, it was the great cultural thing to do, to go on Friday nights to Abraham Lincoln Center and hear Powys talk. I went several times and heard him lecture on d'Annunzio, Ibsen, Gorky, Maeterlinck, and Hauptmann. Even at that age I observed that he said practically the same things about all of these men, whose minds and temperaments I knew were not by any means the same. I set John Cowper Powys down as something of an oratorical charlatan (although his eloquence was undeniably effective, and truly as his brother says, of a magic to 'enchant the Greeks') and declined to go to any more of his lectures. Llewelyn Powys tells now with a blandness that must be embarrassing to his brother that these lectures were a 'prostitution of his talents' and that the women who paid to hear them under-

stood nothing of what John Cowper Powys had to convey. That the lectures I heard were a 'prostitution of his talents' is something on which I am ready to agree. But they were always a good show. John Cowper Powys is a striking personality, forceful and yet wistful, handsome, romantic, and full of that sort of appeal that excites admiration in some feminine breasts. His brother has said as much. John Cowper Powys has a voice and delivery that I imagine Demosthenes might have gained pointers from; and upon any personal encounter with him one knew at once that the man was aware of the meretricious motives of some of his most eloquent oratorical flights and gestures. Still, in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, even with its indiscreet revelations and comments, John Cowper Powys rises high in my estimation. Theodore Dreiser once said to me, concerning John Cowper Powys, 'You'd like that man'; and although I had felt some antipathy to Powys's methods, I knew that (if Dreiser said so) I would, indeed, like John Cowper Powys. For Dreiser, too, never says anything to be flattering or kind or agreeable; but says only what is in his mind and what he believes to be the truth. Dreiser knew the conflict in John Cowper Powys's breast and told Llewelyn Powys, 'I'd like to be able to provide a refuge, a cell for my friend ...'

Christopher Wilkinson
Littleton, Louis, Llewelyn, Bertie, Jack

I was intrigued to read in the two letters from Littleton to Lucy (published in the last Newsletter*) of his writing to Louis Wilkinson to complain about references to the Powys family in* Seven Friends. *If this was a re-run of his spat with Louis 18 years earlier over* Swan's Milk *it was entirely understandable, since Louis reproduced, amongst new material, whole passages, often word for word, in everything he ever wrote about the Powyses – particularly when describing the Powys parents. Despite a few emendations, what he wrote in the fifties was as aggravating to Littleton as it had been in the thirties. Here is what Littleton wrote from Quarry House, Sherborne in March 1935 after Louis had written to him regarding his next book,* Welsh Ambassadors*:*

Dear Louis, (for so I have long been accustomed to hear you called),

I think it good of you to have written to me, for I believe that Jack and Llewelyn have pointed out to you how distressed I was by some of the allusions you made to members of the family in your book 'Swan's Milk'. Your letter has given me an opportunity of writing just what I feel, and when you have read it you will know what I may call the worst. I definitely disliked your book [*'but' crossed out*] because I disliked and was altogether out of sympathy with your general attitude

to life; but these feelings of mine you must forgive, for we are all born with such different minds and live in such different environments. When I read what you wrote of our family, I felt that you knew little of it, or I might perhaps better say, only one side of it.

My belief is that there is no family in existence the members of which have throughout their lives been in closer touch with each other—and the two bonds which have held them together are love and an at-one-ment with Nature. The inspiration of the first of these was our mother with her extraordinary capacity for giving love to her children; and they filled with this love have shared it each with the other throughout life in all circumstances. But our father and mother are equally responsible for the second; it would indeed have scarcely been possible for a family to have been brought up by parents to whom Nature meant so much without the members of it imbibing a love of it which passes the understanding of most of those who pass by. With most of them (the members of the family) it is their religion.

Unless you had been a member of the family you could not know or understand the first—that is the love that holds us together. And as I cannot be but aware of your writings that the second means little or nothing to you, I feel it is ['largely' *crossed out*] almost impossible for you to understand the real background of our lives. But I also know the ['real' *crossed out*] genuine friendship which has existed between you and my brothers (four of them) and I fully grant that you probably know more of one side of their characters than any other living person. There is, I daresay, much you know of that side which I do not. But even so I fear that you will miss the real secret which has guided the family in its journey through life, and the world will get a false impression. That is my fear— But I understand your undertaking has the blessing of my brothers, so I will not stand in the way.

These remarks will probably have led you to see why I objected to that chapter headed 'Parta Tueri'—a heading I felt you had not the slightest right to use. I hated your allusions to yourself and Lucy; neither Father nor Mother were allowed to know anything whatsoever of your life nor your views of life so far removed from their own; otherwise those dallyings would never have taken place. And when you wrote that my success in the world,—trivial as it was if it could be called success at all—alienated me from the affection of my mother I fairly boiled with indignation. Nothing could have been written which was more untrue, and every member of the family would bear witness to its lack of truth. To the end of her life I was as dear to her, as she was to me. Her love to me and to all of us was wonderful. It always was and still is precious to me, and if you put yourself in my place, you will I doubt not realize my feelings when I read that passage. I also felt that you were definitely unfair to John; but then since the very beginning of our lives I have been perhaps oversensitive as to the treatment he has received, and I have ever been ready to fight his battles. John & Littleton spent all their childhood

together, and somehow or other, however different their lives may have been, they were and are bound together by ties that can never be severed. What worried me was that I thought that a great deal of what you said was ungenerous in as much as you acknowledged how much you owed to his guidance and help at the outset of your career; I felt you lacked an understanding of his real character.

Now I have got that off my chest and feel I can answer your letter and the references you made to my own desire to write something. When I shall be able to accomplish this, I know not. I had two bouts of illness last year which gave me in all about 5 weeks of quiet and I did make a beginning of a book which I had had in mind for sometime. It will be largely of a personal nature and consequently will be in the way of Reminiscences and the conclusions I have come to about life generally. I had written the first 7 chapters before I had read Jack's autobiography and I was entertained to see how very differently the world and the surroundings in which we lived had affected us from the very beginning—I was immensely impressed by the lack of inborn temperament.

We had hoped to let our house & then I should have been free from civic responsibilities and better able to carry on my writing. But all our schemes have gone awry for the present and I don't see when I shall have the quiet and the time necessary for the work which I so much want to do.

I don't think that I have any photographs or letters that will help you [*in the writing of* Welsh Ambassadors]. There is perhaps one photograph that of John & myself aged respectively 3 & 2. I have countless letters of John written to me mostly from America—we have corresponded regularly all through our lives; but I have no desire to part with these. If ever I succeed in getting my book finished I shall certainly bear Mess[rs]. Hall & Chapman in mind—I have an interest in the firm, for an Old Shirburnian for whom I have always had the greatest regard—Arthur Waugh (Alec's father)—is a friend of mine: he managed the affairs of that firm for many a long year as stated in his book 'One Man's Road'. Once again thank you for writing and giving me the chance of saying what I wanted to say which I hope you will understand. I hope I have no feelings of malice in my heart.

Y[rs]. Sincerely

Littleton C. Powys

One thing I am sure is that there will be no clashings in our writing. So don't worry about my production![1]

Louis replied four days later from Westbourne Terrace in London:

Dear Littleton,

Your letter is generous. I am very sorry that I wrote that sentence containing the expression "somewhat alienated:" I regret extremely that it made you feel as it did. I meant no more than to convey that this was my impression: that it fitted in with my conception of your mother's nature that any worldly success, in one however dear to her, should have this "somewhat alienating" effect. I did not

mean that her love, in its essence, was at all affected. But I see very clearly now that I ought not to have written what I did, and I should not have written it if I had considered its tendency to misinterpretation. Unfortunately the second edition of the book was printed without my being consulted about corrections: but if there is a third edition I will take good care that this sentence is omitted.

On two other points I disagree. The romantic and idyllic character of the interlude with Lucy is so strongly emphasized that it could not, I feel convinced, be thought to show her in any invidious light. I do not know what she feels about it herself, or even if she has read the book: but I hope and think she would not be at all offended. Jack felt sure that she would not be. In what I wrote about him I aimed at telling the whole truth so far as I could—bringing out both my antipathy to him and my affection to him. I do feel and have always felt gratitude to him as well: but my view is that one can be at the same time grateful and affectionate, and antipathetic and condemnatory. Jack understands this: he has emphatically assured me that he does not consider my treatment of him in the book to be malicious, that he entirely disagrees with Llewelyn's opinion that it is.

All that you say of the close bonds holding your family together I know well to be profoundly true, and I have long known it. Since my very early days I have known, from my own mother, of your mother's power of giving love and of receiving it. I think you do me some injustice when you say that Nature means little or nothing to me, although I can understand your coming to this conclusion from my writings, and I know that your brothers would agree with you here. If you will allow me to give you a copy of my new novel when it appears, I think you will find passages in it to show that Nature has an important meaning for me, although not of course the same meaning as for you family.

As to your own book, may I without impertinence express the really earnest hope that you will give other matters something of a go-by for the sake of finishing it? You say in your letter that I may know more of one side of your brothers than anyone else: but of another side (and one that may well be the most important) you undoubtedly know more than anyone else does. I don't exaggerate when I say that it would be a great loss if your view and understanding of your brothers were not recorded (as I assume it would be in any book of yours of a reminiscent kind) for the sake not only of today's reading public, but of tomorrow's. I am not alone in feeling that Jack, Theodore, and Llewelyn will be regarded as among the most important writers now living. What you have to say about them, and about the differences between the ways in which (to quote from your letter) "the world and the surroundings in which we lived had affected us from the very beginning", and those differences of "inborn temperament", would be of great permanent interest. Surely you would be justified in neglecting any other public responsibilities in order to carry out this one? I hope that your schemes will very soon follow a clear course; and that you will have no more bouts of illness.

When I mentioned letters I had in mind such passages in letters to you that

might be of general interest, such as references to your brothers' writings. The photograph that you refer to would, I am sure, be of general interest.[2]

I have written to Chapman & Hall telling them what you say of the present position in regard to your book.

I appreciate very much your writing to me so frankly as you have, and I thank you for doing so.[3]

Littleton wrote back the next day:
Dear Louis,

I thank you very much for having written to me as you did; it has made me feel much happier. We are all born with such different minds, that it is inevitable that there should be misunderstandings—we look at things from different angles and we have all been differently affected by the environments in which we have lived—environments often so very different themselves. What I always fear may be missed in writing about my brothers is that the simple, natural, genuine kindness and goodness of their natures may be obscured by the antinomial (is there such a word?) & sometimes extravagant expression of their thoughts. You will understand I know. You were kind to write as you did.

Yrs. Sincerely
Littleton[4]

The hatchet partially if not entirely buried, Louis then asked, through Llewelyn, if he might quote from Littleton's letters in Welsh Ambassadors.

Llewelyn had already been asked for permission to quote from his own letters back in July. His initial reaction was carefree: "With regard to the Black Woman I do not imagine you will find me touchy on this score," *he wrote.* "It would please me to look over these God damned letters you propose to print—and then I would be able to judge better ... I don't suppose I will be at all touchy—For if you are a dry dog turd it is no use pretending you are not a dry dog turd!"[5] *After reading through the letters Louis intended to include, including the one that recounted 'dragging' a black woman to his bed, Llewelyn was having second thoughts. In August he wrote to Louis, asking if there was any way he could be allowed to edit the passage concerned:*

... I think it is an odd game putting your friends to the moral test of having their intimate letters given to the public without emendation—and publishing their reaction to such a test with a like alacrity ... I would not take out my lechery I would put more in but I would love to take away every opportunity of triumph from the moralists—and not allow them this absolutely authentic side-long glimpse at the apprehensions and difficulties with which honest fuckers have to contend.

Ho! Ho! Ho! I think there is a certain unfairness about immortalizing flash light snap shots—I think they are profoundly interesting but I think the victims should be allowed to tamper with them a little in case of cock and ball—It is like

taking a snap shot of lions at midnight and whether they are yawning or fighting [or] springing on a zebra or scratching fleas or running away is all a matter of chance!!!"[6]

In reply to Louis's latest request, Llewelyn wrote back in September 1935 from Chydyock:
My dear Louis

You were certain to encounter difficulties from all of us for our Egos are scarcely less precious to us than our Cocks—

Littleton told me that he had decided "after having been troubled for three days" that he did not wish his letter printed—"I would rather write what I think in my own book" and then portentously "I have never spoken on these matters yet"—I felt irritated—though recognised that his self protective impulse was as sure as ever. All through life he has avoided jars of every kind and has a marvelous gift for reflecting current opinions. He is one who looks at the shining surface of Life's saucepan with baby eyes and has never had the intelligence to wish to look down its hollow handle into the seething cauldron where frogs are being boiled into funeral bake-meats. I think it will not be hard for you to say what you wish without the letter—if we old sulking mountain rams become restive how much more a plump bell wether in the very midst of a flock and sensitive to every start and shiver of the wooly population. If I had had his breath I would have said something but it was hard to listen to the silliest talk in silence. Of course his real interest has always been with the surface values of life—He loves to feel safe by being well thought of, and by being surrounded by these absurd provincial Sherborne people—the duller the better if they have money or are respected.[7]

This created a fresh diversion. Typically, Louis now wanted to include this letter in his book as well. It wasn't the first time Louis had put Llewelyn's family loyalties to the test. The request threw him into agonies of indecision. Finally he wrote another version, taking out the more offensive phrases. Even then he changed his mind. He was too ill to write in October, so Alyse wrote to Louis on Llewelyn's behalf begging Louis to cut the passage altogether. Louis had by this time written it in to his manuscript and begged in a long and persuasive letter for its retention. Finally, with a few minor alterations, he was allowed to keep it in.

Meanwhile Louis had sent pages of the manuscript to Bertie, who wrote back with characteristic common sense on 7th September:
My dear Louis,

The pages wh. you have sent me that is those that refer to L.C.P. have stirred up an emotional anxiety in me.

Of them—I again dislike the emphasis on 'Powys' this & Powys that & here of 'Powys pride' believing it not true or very much exagerated. We are ordinary—or not much extraordinary—individuals with little of any more than quite common family feelings. Here you repeat 'Powys pride' as if it were a different thing from

other peoples pride.

For instance p.5 x x x —

Littleton was not moved by Powys pride, if he was moved by pride it was a quite ordinary human a[nd] family pride. His anxiety at your reference to 'Parta Tueri' was that you were misusing the family motto in that you applied it to a lesser branch of the family in exclusion to the whole—It was—though I dont suppose he would use so heavy a word for so small a matter—unscientific. It was like applying to the whole tribe of spiders the qualities of one—and that perhaps one wrongly observed & not too well described.

In this passage you seem to argue like a barister in court who in order to make his point gives simple acts & words a twist to incriminate his clients adversary.

There is an odd kind of malice or mischief in these sentences rather like that of a terrier worrying a herd of grazing cattle. The beasts cannot graze & browse in peace for its untidy yapping. I am left wondering whether Littleton or I or some other member of the "collective" family has not by accident troden your bone irrevocably into the ground.

You did not learn from me "That it was 'Powys pride' of another kind". You learnt that Littleton did not think you were right to use the family motto, of wh. we are proud as other families are of their mottos, of the children of C.F.P. apart from all the other descendants of William bailiff of Ludlow. That is a simple thing wh you, like the Court Barister I have invented, have turned it into a curious & perverted ['vice' *crossed out*] and almost silly vice—silly because so innocent & harmless.

"Sacreligious hands on the family motto"—that's an idea of your own: But you are clever enough to make it appear to come from the head of Littleton, wh is certainly misleading to anyone who knows him.

I wonder whether you do this deliberately (as the barister) or whether it is part of that unexpected innocence wh you sometimes so delightfully show.

It is tiresome to ['have' *crossed out*] be made uneasy about this book, to get involved in it & by it. I'd prefer to go on browsing without this disturbing 'yapping'. I dont like either the opportunity you give me to comment; tho' in one sense I thank you for giving it to me. I suppose it secures you from my bringing an action against you for any of the passages I have seen. Not that I would do so—Much to[o] troublesome & even an unfriendly thing to do.

I'm inclined to say that if it were not for your wits in this way of emphasising intimacies & giving the book the twist of animus, it would be a dull book; arguing that we are at bottom a very ordinary family: but Faith tells me that is mock modesty & that my brothers are of interest ['to some people' *crossed out*] to people, who like to read intimate things about them—are curious about them or the family in fact. I'd say let them go on being curious & would not satisfy them. Yet I dont want to spoil your chance of making a penny out of us if you can do it without ['causing' *crossed out*] breaking our peaceful browsing.

I have bracketed the words I'd have you leave out & perhaps from these comments you can make other modifications.

As to the other passages you sent me they seem to me to be "tactfully complimentary"—they may be as lacking in 'scientific' truth as the pages of wh I have commented here. They flatter my personal conciet &, if you will, my 'family pride' at least that's the sense left in my mind. But I won't accept responsibility for any of it.

Yours A. R. Powys [8]

In the margins of the manuscript pages he returned with this letter, Bertie wrote: "You can let this stand, though when I spoke I did not know I was to be quoted & I should have been warned." *Against another quoted remark of his own, misquoted by Louis, Bertie inserted the correction, saying that he was not awfully keen on its inclusion anyway since it had been said* "for the amusement of the moment ... to tickle the air into life." *He added, not without justification,* "You'll kill conversation if you quote everything that is said."

Welsh Ambassadors *was published in the New Year. It was unfortunate that just at that time Bertie, Llewelyn, Littleton and John Cowper were all in their different ways ill.*

Llewelyn was full of admiration:

Welsh Ambassadors arrived yesterday. I like the book well. Of course there are many "items" that make me feel foolish, but I very much admire your own objectivity. I think it is wonderful—You are <u>never</u> tender of yourself and never seem affected by ordinary human weakness and vain self-illusions. I greatly admire this in your writing—It is healthy writing—and I adore its fearlessness—its contempt for the false conventional values of the world. You walk like a huge Hog Rhino with a Cock of Horn on the end of his nose and the sheep scatter and yet you do not so much as notice this. I think you have done a very difficult literary task very well <u>and impartially</u>—I hope to God you do make a penny by it. Of course Littleton does come off badly—but it was largely his fault for meddling with you over Swan's Milk. It worries me that he should be ill at the very moment of receiving this blow for I fear he cannot help being exceedingly worried over it. The book does outrage to the ethos of his circle and he will dislike being in any way involved with it. If he had been hearty and well I would not have worried. I hope Mabel will hide it from him ... .[9]

Littleton was the only Powys with real cause to complain. Louis had got round the difficulty of not being allowed to quote from Littleton's letters directly by describing what he had written in the third person. Although Katie Powys told Louis that Littleton did not seem at all personally disturbed by the book, he must have felt badly compromised. Katie added that Littleton "felt hurt that Bertie had been, as he thought, let down".[10] *Louis could only assume that this was because he had given away "his freedom of thought or speech about L.C.P. and others".*[11] *Llewelyn just laughed:* "<u>Of course</u> you

caught old Bertie by the Bollockinos and made him look a fine sly Dan Russel the Fox with five Archangel quills sticking out of his arsehole as he crossed the carrot patch!"[12] *Littleton took his own form of revenge later in* The Joy of It, *but there was never any suggestion that he would treat Louis with anything less than civility. Right now, it was left to Llewelyn to uphold the family honour, and he duly and dutifully rattled off a letter to the* Times Literary Supplement *objecting to the association of the word sadism with his father (though, as in* Seven Friends, *the actual phrase used by Louis was "repressed ferocity").*[13]

John Cowper said he thought the book a masterpiece and immediately ordered six copies for distribution.[14] *There was no suggestion that he disagreed with Louis's description of his mother. In fact, he himself had written to Louis with a similar description over twenty years earlier, two weeks after her death:*

Yes, my dear I miss my mother in a way that it would be very difficult to analyse— She was remote, ironical, submissive, and very cold; at the same time teased by a thousand objective cares for her family which she lacked the affectionate warmth to turn from annoying duties into friendly pleasures. She had cold deep obstinate romance, secret and almost savage, a romance that tunnelled itself inwards, and—like a reed with roots under water—was happier by night than by day.

She had a look sometimes—wistful—like a planetary spirit vexed and fretted—and laughing, and imprisoned.

She had a fragile merriment, like a wounded deer watching in deep water the reflection of the arrow in her flank—

She hated, with an abysmal hatred, sunshine, prosperity, healthy energy, and above all success. When she was happy at rare times it was like one of those fragile and enchanted moths that go from hedge to hedge with a dread even of moonlight.

She lived always in a large cool dark cavern—and alone—and when anyone came near she hated them though when they went away she loved them—and even while she hated them she knew that the sun was on their side and that her resistance was hopeless & mad. But it was then that she went on and the more hopeless and mad and wicked it was—the more she did it—her defiance of the "All" that ought not to have come forth from the "Nothing"—& yet she was doomed—she who had a madness for being left alone—to have eleven earthy great children![15]

NOTES

1 Littleton Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 9.3.35.

2 This photograph – 'Littleton Powys and John Cowper Powys in Childhood' – appeared in *Welsh Ambassadors*.

3 Louis Wilkinson to Littleton Powys, 13.3.35.

4 Littleton Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 14.3.35.

5 Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 23.7.35.

6 Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 27.8.35.
7 Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson, Mid/Late September 1935.
8 A. R. Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 7.9.35.
9 Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson, Mid-January 1936.
10 Quoted by Louis Wilkinson in letter to Llewelyn Powys, 11.2.36.
11 Louis Wilkinson to Llewelyn Powys, 11.2.36.
12 Llewelyn Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 13.2.36.
13 This letter was published in the T.L.S., 8.2.36.
14 John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 27.1.36.
15 John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson, 16.8.14.

Sidelight

Elizabeth von Arnim

A best-selling contemporary writer who was well aware of the Powyses was Elizabeth von Arnim. Readers unfamiliar with her novels should turn to the brilliant appreciation in Glen Cavaliero's The Alchemy of Laughter. *She was an extraordinary woman. A first cousin of Katharine Mansfield, she was married very young to a chauvistic German count, Henning von Arnim Schlagenthin, and after his death to an equally chauvinistic English earl, Francis Russell, the elder brother of Bertrand. She had several lovers, among them H. G. Wells, and for tutors to her children E. M. Forster and Hugh Walpole.*

In her published diaries, heavily edited by her daughter, the three mentions of the Powyses are brief but telling. On 22nd November 1937, staying with her daughter at Morestead near Winchester, she writes that she 'read in bed an enchanting book by Llewelyn Powys—Skin for Skin. Strange family.' *Clearly she was intrigued, for three months later at her home in Switzerland she was reading* 'a book of Louis Marlow's about the Powys family—badly done which is a pity for they are an outstandingly queer lot.' *By the autumn of the following year, 1939, Elizabeth was in Williamstown, USA. There on 4th October she took her dog, Billy,* 'for a run in the fields, and when he was well exercised took him to the beautiful, hospitable library and read John Powys on Rabelais for a while ... then explored more, the colour and light being most beautiful ...' *

* Leslie de Charms: *Elizabeth of the German Garden* (Heinemann, 1958), p.371, 374, 396.

Susan Rands

Gunnar Lundin

Maturity Is All: the dilemma of Wolf Solent

John Cowper Powys's *Wolf Solent* is both a realistic psychological novel and an allegory about the poet's role in human society.

The circles of the main character's 'mythology', his secret enjoyment, appear in the first part, within Wolf's own personal sphere. He is taking part in a cosmic struggle between good and evil, like a knight whose morality must remain unsoiled, which might be endangered if, for example, he undertook the task of editing the squire Mr Urquhart's scandal-chronicle – he could then ultimately only save himself by refusing the remuneration.

The 'mythology' is the expression of Wolf's life-illusion, a concept from Ibsen's Hjalmar Ekdahl in *The Wild Duck*, but for the meaning in the play of 'life-lie' there has been substituted that of a personality's inmost life-motivation. It is often kept secret, but we have all experienced the way a person gets a new light in their eyes and an authoritative ring to their voice when we touch upon their special field. With Wolf the life-illusion is of a cosmic kind. It has come to life through reminiscenses of lichens, of celandines, of the piles of a pier, of enjoyable connections and influences from walking and the landscape. Despite his discontent and irritability this allows him to live non-engaged with everyday life – yes, as invulnerable: it is when he has 'lost' his life-illusion, symbolized by the bright road in Gainsborough's painting, that he realizes he can now for the first time be struck down by disgrace.

Wolf's 'mythology' starts by being an escape from deeper human relationships; something 'egoistical' that puts him in contact with the cosmic. He conceives it as a sort of personal contract with the sky and with the grass, and he assumes that this stipulates a kind of idealism.

Powys's first Dorset novel describes how the main character gets to subordinate the circles of his mythology to the spirit of human community. What happens is that he adjusts himself to a dialogue with 'the other'; a dialogue which Powys, at a distance from his hero, maintains from the start of the novel.

Wolf matures and becomes responsible. He recognizes and affirms the joy of giving, even if it means soiling his illusory coat-of-arms. He must re-interpret his cosmic message in order to join the human race, as a celandine or a squirrel do theirs. And the end of the semi-circle which still points downward to the non-human might be called a rainbow pointing to a treasure; or at least a help to 'enjoy and endure' as Powys expresses it in the philosophical essays. But here this is only sporadically effected, and the chorus is still 'endure or *escape*'.

Wolf puts up with his situation and starts to learn, like Job in the 'Dialogue of Stars' of the Finnish poet Rabbe Enckell [1903–74], to calm his heart without questioning, and to make do with what he *de facto* has got. He makes himself carry on with his previously obnoxious work as a teacher. He is also reconciled with the

knowledge that his intellectual darling, even if leaving him behind, has found a *modus vivendi* with her re-found half-sister. He accepts the joyful impulse in his soul at the sight of his young wife when she receives Urquhart's dirty money; and he realizes that any deeper relationship implies a risk of getting *mains sales* ['getting his hands dirty', as in Sartre's play]. He develops a sense of the *appropriateness* of each individual life. In this appropriateness, with its resignation, the mythology is reduced to the elementarism which later becomes a theme in Powys's essays. This elementarism is connected with that deepened understanding of the Other which gives its special openness to Powys's discourse.

There are similarities in his novels with those of Dostoievsky. They are sometimes judged as being too erratically verbose and uneven. But their significance is less in concise expression and more in the moulding of contradictory and yet unique and distinctive individuals.

The Wolf we encounter in the first chapter, as he sits in a railway compartment on his way from London to Ramsgard where he spent his youth, holds on anxiously to his ego and is manipulative in his relationships; as he matures he discovers that his soul can flow into and communicate with others, and that it is through relationships that an individual becomes what he is. The process of individualization that goes on throughout the novel is accentuated towards the end. One theme is the liberation from his mother by means of acquiring – at the cost of his libertine father – her practical sense of life. In his twisted idealism Wolf risked becoming a stranger to himself.

Original goodness – free from calculation and ideologies – is found by Wolf as a teacher when he gives a trivial commission to his pupil Gaffer Barge, who doesn't even dream of such a thing as integrity: his individuality is brought to life by the sun of attention. For Wolf this is like being thrown from a fiery steed and picked up by a two-humped camel emanating melodious sounds. In his essays Powys agrees with Rousseau that man is basically good. It is the prejudices of society through education that distort him.

When Wolf's mythology is socialized, a state arises where feelings and actions seem to be able to flow between individuals and influence the world. But this new state doesn't imply asceticism. Does the world become a better place if I refrain from being happy – if I accept the joy that is offered – because others are unhappy? The world, according to Powys, would not subsist one single day if man didn't say Yes to his happiness. This is to become a theme in *The Meaning of Culture*, written at about the same time. In the novels, the practice of this philosophy is put to the test.

Gunnar Lundin is a Swedish translator and writer. His interest in Powys sprang from an essay by Carl-Erik af Geijerstam and a meeting with Sven-Erik Täckmark, with whom he translated A Philosophy of Solitude. *(There are plans for publication of both this and Täckmark's translation of* Autobiography.*) This essay began as a response to*

Gunnar's wife Eva criticising the character of Wolf.
Gunnar Lundin adds:

JCP in Sweden

There is intense interest in JCP in Sweden, with at least two branches. One is from Alf Ahlberg, the translator of *The Meaning of Culture*: as a teacher, and a prolific producer of popular (though subtle) introductions to western writers, he identified to some extent with JCP.

Another is the personal enlightenment and life-long guidance that comes from JCP himself, as a Vergil to many readers in a cultural diaspora. Henry Miller (in his correspondence with JCP) tells of a young Austrian immigrant, newly arrived in the US and travelling on foot from Chicago, who opened T*he Meaning of Culture* while resting in a barn and was still there 36 hours later. Boswell tells a similar story of Sir Joshua Reynolds' encounter with Johnson's *Life of Savage*: 'He met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read when he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move he found his arm totally benumbed.'

JCP belongs with those writers – like Montaigne or Proust – who bring a biographical touch to everything they do: at any moment he can address his reader directly and become vividly present. He offers tools for perception – tools that he himself has recognised in other authors and acquired from them – and a simplified form of life with his 'enjoy and endure'. And he seems to have special appeal to people here in Sweden: as a cosmo-political writer – not just a cosmic one – and also very obviously as an individual, with ancestral traits and personal and geographical circumstances.

A third branch of JCP's reception in Sweden is in academic dissertations: from Janina Nordius and Harold Fawkner among others: notable recent contributions being Mark Boseley's on JCP's walking (as a special variant of the Peripatetic School!), and Ingemar Algulin on *Autobiography*. All these and others are or will be made available in English, the *lingua franca* of our time.
(*translated from Swedish by the author; light editing and square brackets* KK)

Reviews

Joe Boulter, *Postmodern Powys: Essays on John Cowper Powys*. Kidderminster: Crescent Moon, 2000. 70pp. ISBN 1 86171 047 X. £7.99.

Postmodern Powys? Joe Boulter begins this interesting booklet by stating very firmly and clearly that he is not contending for John Cowper Powys as a postmodernist novelist, nor that he is interpreting him using the techniques of postmodernist literary criticism. Instead:

> What I do is use some of the analogies between Powys's themes and techniques and the themes and techniques of postmodernist theorists as the basis for interpretations of some of Powys's novels. In other words, I do not interpret Powys as a postmodernist, or in a postmodernist way, I interpret him in the context of postmodernist theory. (5)

In the four essays that follow, and which I assume he has extracted from his Oxford D.Phil. thesis on Powys, he discusses *Wolf Solent*, *Owen Glendower* and *Porius*, arguing that Powys is a pluralist, like the postmodernists, and not a dualist; that as a consequence his characters each have their particular 'world version' which does not correspond to a reality beyond themselves and which therefore cannot be fully comprehended by others; and that his novels are not concerned with 'constative illocutionary force', or attempting to represent things as they really are (or seem to be), but with 'performative illocutionary force', deliberately using his imagination to go beyond what he knows (or believes) to be real.

Thus in 'Performativity in *Owen Glendower*' Boulter explores the various ways in which Powys intentionally flouts the historical record, as well as depicting his characters, notably Glendower himself, as actors in a theatrical drama: for example, 'Owen thinks to himself', while proclaiming himself Prince of Wales, '"What I'm doing now [will] mean mumming and miming and play-acting and masquerading, till a man's heart runs sick!"' (39)

It is on the other great Welsh novel, though, that Boulter focuses in two essays, presumably concurring with those of us who consider that Powys was right to regard *Porius* as his masterpiece. Not only is '"The Saturnian Quest" in *Porius*' the longest piece in *Postmodern Powys*, it is also the one I found of particular interest with its attention to the much neglected matter of Powys's politics. Boulter concludes that '*Porius* is a multi-faceted argument for pluralism' (24), including political pluralism. Edeyrnion society is socially pluralist with co-existing ethnic groups, although Porius himself subverts conventional categories by belonging to several groups, being part-Brython, part-Roman, part-Cewri and part-forest-people. As for the communistic and matriarchal forest-people, they are non-hierarchical in contrast to the hierarchical Romans, Brythons and Saxons. 'The forest-people have existed alongside the various conquerors with-

out ever accepting, or rejecting (which is an acknowledgment of hierarchization) their rule as anything other than a name.'(16) Moreover a new social group, the Cymry, are opposed to power itself, not simply to particular groups in power. This looks forward (or backwards in Powys's *oeuvre*) to the Welsh national identity of *Owen Glendower*, although Boulter does not make the connection. The oppositionality of the Cymry extends in general to *Porius*, which 'inverts our preconceptions about social power'(19), including the inversion of both Christianity and Arthur's court.

Boulter turns lastly to 'Stella Gibbons's Parody of *Wolf Solent* in *Cold Comfort Farm*'. It will probably come as a surprise to most Powysians that J. C. Powys was being parodied in *Cold Comfort Farm*, but who else could it be in this passage from chapter 4?

> From the stubborn interwoven strata of his sub-conscious, thought seeped up into his dim conscious; not as an integral part of that consciousness, but more as an impalpable emanation, a crepuscular addition, from the unsleeping life in the restless trees and fields surrounding him. The country for miles, under the blanket of the dark which brought no peace, was in its annual tortured ferment of spring growth; worm jarred with worm and seed with seed. Frond leapt on root and hare on hare. Beetle and finch-fly were not spared. The trout-sperm in the muddy hollow under Nettle Flitch Weir were agitated, and well they might be.

The trouble is that Boulter pushes this salutary reminder much too far and only mentions in a footnote that T. F. Powys and Lawrence were also targets. Yet Gibbons recalled in 1979: 'It *is* a parody of Mary Webb ... . But it's also a parody of the Powys brothers' books with a few digs at D. H. Lawrence on the side' (quoted in *The Times*, 1 August 1998).

Boulter's stimulating essays have been ill served by Crescent Moon. For almost £8 you get seventy blurrily photocopied pages, stapled and untrimmed. In some copies, I am told, pages appear upside down. There seems to have been little or no proofreading and, in particular, on page 26 at least one line of text is omitted – and probably more, since at this point I lost the gist of the theoretical preamble to the second essay and did not regain it.

David Goodway

Adamah, *by Jeremy Hooker*

Enitharmon Press, 26B Caversham Road, London NW5 2DU. £8.95.

I imagine many members of the Society will be familiar with Jeremy Hooker's poetry. For those who are not, and in brief, Hooker is one of the most serious and important poets writing today. He has published ten previous collections over almost thirty years, besides his critical work and (recently) an autobiographical

work, *Welsh Journal.* He follows no fashion and is part of no coterie but has worked steadily and steadfastly to his own high standards. Lovers of the writings of the Powyses will already be aware of the – superficiality? cowardice? – whatever it is that means that sometimes strongly individual voices, while they may have devoted (and of course discerning!) adherents, are yet not accepted in some kind of central canon.

Hooker has not shied away from dealing with personal emotion – love, loss, the pains and delights of relationship are all there in his poetry. But with him it is always *sub specie aeternitatis.* His abiding theme is humankind seen in nature and through history. It can be seen in the title poem of an early collection *Landscape of the Daylight Moon,* where *Everywhere upon its surface* /[he] *saw the life of the dead,* and where he finds in a fossil sea urchin what it is that he constantly seeks as a poet, *a mouth on darkness.* Despite the authority that comes from the spare quality in his writing, he is always self-critical and self-questioning. In 'Floating-Bridge' from the collection *Solent Shore* he asked: *Is it, perhaps, the sludge of nostalgia, or the unseen /seen too narrowly?*

The spiritual weight of his work comes always through the questions posed and not from a dogmatic belief system. This volume's final line, in 'Thoughts from a Star-map', is key: *Who will know what we are?* It contains the breadth and depth and height of Hooker's concerns. The stars, as often in his work, give us beauty and a sense of awe, and remind us of our own littleness and brief span. At the same time, we see our loneliness and our yearning to be known, and a sense of all that we can be for good or ill.

Under the title of *Groundwork* this volume contains more of Hooker's ongoing and fruitful collaboration with the sculptor Lee Grandjean, with whom he feels much in common. As he writes in the poem dedicated to Grandjean in the collection *Master of the Leaping Figures*: *...we meet here, we share /words and your hand shaping /the flow, the brute /and graceful wings.* They never illustrate each other's work, but Grandjean's releasing of the shapes he needs from the huge trunks of hard natural material by hard and dedicated work clues us in to Hooker's parallel struggle in finding words. He never loses sight of the oddness and the wonder of our being here at all, and his wrestle to express that with honesty and cleanness always makes me think of a Jacob whose angel is the part of himself that could become egotistical or crowd-pleasing or settle for less than the hard-won truth. Here is 'Standing Upright' (imagine it set out tall): *Two-legged /walking /stretching /like a tree /but not rooted /like fence post /telegraph pole /but not fixed /something /with an inside /made of darkness /speaking hand /dumb mouth / closing /opening*

The sequence called 'Seven Songs' that forms a part of *Groundwork is* something of a new departure for this poet. In his note on the sequence he writes: 'My aim in adopting a voice that dissolves the identity of polarized gender, is to explore grounds of possibility, including hopes for a new life, free of the burdens

and destructiveness of the past, and a sense of the strangeness of human being.' Hooker has travelled a long road from his early *Soliloquies of a Chalk Giant* in which the phallic Cerne Abbas hill figure is the emblem of a powerful and inseminating masculine creativity. To readers of John Cowper Powys it should be an interesting one.

Besides *Groundwork,* the volume is made up from *Landscape of Childhood,* the text of a radio play that was first broadcast in 1991, and *Dedications,* which contains moving and celebratory poems in memory of his mother and his father. From both these sections we gain insight into part of what has made Hooker the poet that he is, and encounter a joyful pegging down of the tents of thought with telling physical detail.

What is the scent on the salt air? he asks in 'Walking to Sleep', and goes on, *I search, and find /a few late flowers ... /sweet alyssum, /tiny white faces /among rocks, sea defences /of Portland stone.* Like the stone he often writes about, Hooker's poetry will endure. But though it is weighty, it can also carry nuances as delicate and sweet as that alysssum's scent.

Kim Taplin

Kim Taplin is the author of The English Path *(republished in 2000 in a second edition by Perry Green Press, Sudbury, Suffolk) and of* Tongues in Trees *(Green Books 1989), both works of ecological criticism. She is also a poet, and her most recent collection is* From Parched Creek *(Redbeck Press, 2001).*

Obituaries

Donald Ward

The President writes:

Older members of the Society will be sad to learn of the death of Donald Ward, at the age of ninety-three. A frequent attender at our Conferences in their earlier days, he was always drawn to the human aspects of a situation: whatever intellectual sparks would fly concerning matters literary or philosophical, he would quietly remind the contestants of the practical and personal issues underlying the discussion.

Having joined the Post Office as a messenger boy at the age of seventeen, Donald Ward was to work for it for almost fifty years. He was also a widely published poet, notable for the delicate exactitude of his perceptions and for his response to beauty seen in ordinary things: you might call him a lyrical observer of the world around him, with an occasional sly humour that went far beyond the knowingness of the merely 'streetwise'. For he was tough. In 1939 he registered as a conscientious objector. In the words of his son John, 'Selling *Peace News* on the

streets of London during the late thirties and early war years, he stoically suffered the abuse of those citizens that did not share his beliefs.'

Throughout the Blitz he was a postman during the day and member of the Heavy Rescue brigade at night ... He was, at the end of his life, as staunch a pacifist as ever and would have marched on this 15th February if it had been at all possible. Despite enduring more than his fair share of the bodily infirmities of age, he remained not only cheerful but creative: a new book of his poems is forthcoming from the Anvil Press. In a letter to me last year he told how he could still be 'shaken with a gentle happiness', and that is how his friends and the admirers of his poetry are likely to feel as they remember him.

Alan Clodd

Alan Clodd, who died last year, was well known as a book collector, dealer, and publisher. He founded the Enitharmon Press in 1967 — its name was inspired by Blake — and ran it personally for 20 years.

Alan Clodd was born in Ireland in 1918. His grandfather was a leading figure in the Rationalist Press Association and the Folk-Lore Society, a friend of Meredith and Gissing and of Hardy, who often stayed with the Clodds in Aldeburgh, Suffolk: the inscribed books and manuscripts in this house were an inspiration to Alan. After school at Bishop's Stortford College Alan Clodd went to work with an insurance firm. During the Second World War he was a conscientious objector and worked with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in Egypt and with UNRRA in Italy. He returned to London and first worked for an Oxford Street bookshop; then for five years on the issue desk at the London Library. This was followed by a series of clerical jobs with firms exporting luxury cars.

During the 1950s he began to collect books. Alan Clodd's collection was strong in the Victorian and Edwardian authors who were contemporaries of his grandfather; he was also a collector of First World War poets, particularly Edward Thomas, Ivor Gurney, Siegfried Sassoon, and David Jones. He acquired volumes by Christopher Isherwood who was one of the many celebrated writers with whom he corresponded, and also had good collections of other authors who became prominent in the 1930s, including W. H. Auden, Edward Upward, and Evelyn Waugh. He had almost every publication by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and other favourites included James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and Seamus Heaney. Many of the books were inscribed. In the 1950s and early 1960s he issued poem pamphlets by Christopher Logue, Ronald Firbank and Kathleen Raine.

The Enitharmon Press became one of the most distinctive private presses in England. By 1985, when its Arts Council funding ceased, Enitharmon had published nearly 150 titles. It offered well-produced publications and tried to promote authors who had been ignored as well as introducing new authors. It revived interest in Frances Bellerby, Hugo Manning, and John Heath-Stubbs.

Alongside the familiar names of Samuel Beckett, Jorge Luis Borges, Federico Garcia Lorca, Harold Pinter, Kathleen Raine, and Vernon Watkins, the Press also introduced newcomers such as Frances Horovitz, Jeremy Hooker, and Jeremy Reed. Alan Clodd especially championed the work of his close friend David Gascoyne. In 1987 he passed on the running of the Press to Stephen Stuart-Smith and retired from publishing. George McLean, his companion for 33 years, died in 1989.

Alan Clodd published Gerard Casey's first work *South Wales Echo* (1973) and his *Between the Symplegades* (from Seferis) in 1980; and two collections of Mary Casey's poems, *Full Circle* and *Christophorus* (1981). In 1979 he launched a Powys series which ran to three titles: *John Cowper Powys and David Jones: a comparative study*, by Jeremy Hooker; *The Hollowed-Out Elder Stalk: John Cowper Powys as poet*, by Roland Mathias; and *Llewelyn Powys: an essay*, by Kenneth Hopkins. Of the Powys brothers he had the highest regard for TF. He visited Mappowder, forming a sustaining friendship with Gerard whom he spoke of as 'the only living Saint he knew'. A certain degree of awe combined with his finding winter conditions in Gerard's cottage somewhat spartan ... Alan Clodd's generous advice and loyal friendship will be much missed by his many colleagues in the book world.

With thanks to Frank Kibblewhite and Joan Stevens.

Wizzie's Castle?

When I met with members of The Powys Society at the conference last August it was suggested I write something for the *Newsletter* about my plans to adapt *Maiden Castle* for the screen. It must have been somewhere in the mid-seventies, shortly after graduating from film school, when I first read John Cowper Powys's *Maiden Castle*. I have no idea how the Picador paperback got into my hands – that same copy is now in tatters, the margins a mess of scrawled notes. There was no question in my mind that this extraordinary novel had potential as a film. The rambling storyline (which always manages, somehow, to come back to its centre) and the quirky, bohemian characters became indelibly imprinted on my mind in wide-screen. However, it wasn't until 1989 that I first took out the film and television option – which I have been renewing annually for the past thirteen years. It is proving to be an arduous journey. It's enormously difficult to draw people to Powys – particularly drama commissioning editors and film financiers who balk at anything that comes under the category of 'period drama'. I won't go in to the list of all those I've approached over the years but it does include BBC Films, Channel Four Films and of course the Film Council. Many believed a 'famous' screen writer was the key to attracting production finance but of course

that requires serious development finance to cover fees. At one point Fay Weldon expressed interest then backed off. So finally, deeply hacked off with the naysayers I wrote the script myself. I had written drama for Channel Four and I have another feature script which has been well received both here and in the US. I've worked in the business all my life – first in theatre, then TV and as Head of Development for a production company. Recently I've been concentrating on producing my own projects and now the distinguished director Phillip Saville *(Lives & Loves of a She Devil, Boys From the Blackstuff*, etc) is very interested in directing my adaptation of *Maiden Castle*. It wasn't until I was well into the project that I discovered my late uncle Robert Dunbar (founder of the London Film School) had known John Cowper.

Of course, bringing a novel to the screen is a task fraught with danger. Everyone has their own 'inner movie' version which they 'saw' when they read the book. It will be impossible to please all. The screenplay is something which is born of the novel and has its own dynamic. My aim has been to distil the essence of Powys as well as give the piece a contemporary edge and work within the medium of cinematic language. I have also had to make the decision as to *whose* story is it? I felt instinctively that *Wizzie* is our central character and have built the script accordingly, although, I feel it is very much an ensemble piece in the tradition of Chekhov. The current working title is '*Days of Wizzie Ravelston*' – *Maiden Castle* could so easily be construed as a Barbara Cartland novel! Apparantly, *Mai-dun* as a title is uncommercial. Films cost millions and need to appeal to the widest possible audience to recoup. So compromises have to be made. I am now looking for co-production finance from the UK, the US and Europe. I am heartened by the recent success of *The Hours*, although not entirely as a period piece. It takes conviction and dogged perseverance to bring a film to fruition and I welcome all support and interest from wherever it may come.

Cari Hamblett

VIDEOS of the 2002 Conference are still available; these are full records of 4 events on three videos—

(1) *Colin Wilson*;
(2) *Iain Sinclair*;
(3) *Richard Graves reading on the Tor*, and
Margaret Drabble with P. J. Kavanagh and Timothy Hyman,
with entertaining glimpses of members of the audience.

These can be ordered from the Hon. Treasurer, Michael J. French.