Editorial

Afon Dyfrdwy on the front cover is the editor's idea of a 'Cymric Space'.

Two other spaces are featured in this edition – the abbey ruins at Valle Crucis where JCP stayed with his son in the 1940s (perhaps the Real Glastonbury? as the Llangollen tourist leaflet claims); and the 14-plus books that were born from JCP's imagination during the twenty years (1935–55) he lived at Corwen, with some reactions to them over the years.

Between these comes a wide-ranging essay on the 'fables' of Theodore Powys, with an account of the very enjoyable meeting to discuss them that was held at Dorchester Museum in June. Llewelyn is represented by news of *Wessex Memories*, the Society's new publication which will be ready in August (see order form).

An enthusiastic preview of Llangollen and the Hand Hotel was in last autumn's *Newsletter* (no 47, page 6). Details of the Conference are enclosed with this one. Apart from the lift, all reports on the hotel and the surrounding attractions continue very favorable and expectations are high. And the Cymric weather — Cimmerian, or as below? *We shall see.*

> **Corwen, Saturday 29th August 1936.** Another Perfect Day. The weather is really Astonishing. Day after Day without a cloud! ... I was so struck by the beauty of the Ling — & by the autumn Gorge & the red berries of the Mountain Ash ... & the yellow gorze ... Took Old to the Meeting of the Rivers — Stood for a very very long time watching the little trout on a promontory of grey pebbles opposite that deep hole at the meeting of the waters where the Big-salmon lives & I saw Llangar Church reflected in the water ...

ON OTHER PAGES

Chairman's Report for 2002	2	Various Views of JCP	26
AGM & Committee Nominations	3	Louis and *Morwyn*	34
Treasurer's Report & Accounts	5	Rose Macaulay and Hamilton	39
Reflections on the Committee	8	Subscriptions	40
Committee and other News	9	The Powyses and *The Dial*	41
Valle Crucis: Son and Father	10	The *Journal*	43
Dorchester meeting	13	*Daily Express*, 1925	44
T. F. Powys: *Fables*	13	Review: *Less Simple Measures*, Poems by Cedric Hentschel	45
Two Views of de Maupassant	21	Cedric Hentschel: Two Poems	46
The Corwen Books	23		

Chairman's Report for 2002

In my last report I stated that by the end of the year 2001 The Powys Society had seen 'a line ... very firmly drawn beneath past difficulties' and I added that 'the Society can once again concentrate upon enjoying the works of the Powyses and upon passing on that enjoyment to others. That's our way forward!' I can now tell you that during 2002 the Society has kept steadily on its feet and is flourishing.

Last year I said how important it was to us that Stephen Powys Marks had agreed to stay on for another year as Treasurer. His knowledge and patience were both invaluable; and when he retired in August we were delighted that he agreed to remain with us as Publications Manager. We were equally delighted to welcome Michael French who continues as our new Treasurer.

A major achievement of the year, which received overwhelming approval from the membership in a ballot conducted in April, was a revision of the Constitution. The aim was to make the election processes of the Society more democratic. As every Society is bound to go through occasional periods of considerable change, we have tried to ensure so far as possible that in future such changes would be less disturbing than they have been in the past.

An extremely successful Conference was held at Millfield School in Somerset, entitled 'In View of Glastonbury'. This was our first Conference for two years, owing to last year's cancellation. About 45 resident members attended, with about another twenty non-residents and visitors. It was focussed on the works of John Cowper Powys and especially his masterpiece *A Glastonbury Romance*. Colin Wilson, Iain Sinclair and Chris Woodhead were guest speakers, and Margaret Drabble took part in a discussion with P. J. Kavanagh. It was a happy occasion of which we subsequently had many good reports, thanks especially to Peter Foss and to Louise de Bruin for their excellent organisation. A new feature of the Conference (inaugurated by Jeff Kwintner) was the video-filming of several of our meetings. These videos will be an asset for promoting the objectives of the Society and a record for future Powysians. They can be purchased through our Web site.

Our substantially revised Web site can be found at www.powys-society.org. It has already brought in new members, and we hope it will continue to expand.

Our 152-page *Journal* for 2002, edited by Professor J. Lawrence Mitchell (from Texas, thanks to modern technology, with Stephen Powys Marks in Somerset on the publishing side) contained articles on John Cowper Powys and walking, on the influence on JCP of Charles Kingsley, and on 'Frustrated Narrative' in his late novel *The Brazen Head*; on T. F. Powys's relations with his publisher, with some newly-found letters; an unpublished story by Llewelyn Powys from the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre in Austin, Texas (where our Secretary spent a month on Powys research); and on the diary of an eighteenth-century Powys ancestress.

Our three *Newsletters* of approximately 48 pages, edited by Kate Kavanagh, contained (together with reports, news and reviews) previously unseen archive material from Dorchester and Aberystwyth and from private collections, as well as articles by and about the Powyses from the 1920s and 30s, and contributions from members.

At the end of 2002 we looked forward among other plans to a new publication by the Society and a discussion meeting based on one particular Powys book. These will be described in next year's report. To conclude I will simply say that we continue to be guided by our founding principle, which is to establish the true literary status of the Powys family through public awareness and recognition of their works.

Richard Perceval Graves

An illustration for

Wessex Memories.

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society

will be held in the Dinas Bran Suite at The Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday, 31 August 2003.

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the 2002 AGM – published in the November 2002 *Newsletter.*

2 Matters arising.

3 Report of the Hon. Secretary.

4 Report of the Hon. Treasurer and Audited Accounts – as published in the July 2003 *Newsletter.*

5 Report for 2002 of the Chairman – as published in the July 2003 *Newsletter.*

6 To note the election of Officers and Committee members for 2003–04.

7 Appointment of Hon. Auditor.

8 Date and Location of 2004 Conference.

9 AOB.

Peter J. Foss. *Hon. Secretary*

Committee Nominations 2003

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

Position	*Nomination*	*Proposer*	*Seconder*
Chairman	Richard P. Graves	Timothy Hyman	David Goodway
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway	Peter Foss	Richard Graves
Hon. Secretary	Peter Foss	Shelagh Hancox	Jeff Kwintner
Hon . Treasurer	Michael French	David Goodway	Timothy Hyman

Members of the **Committee** who have come to the end of their three-year term, and have agreed to stand again, are: Kate Kavanagh (nominated by Louise de Bruin; seconded by Cicely Hill), and Jeff Kwintner (nominated by Shelagh Hancox; seconded by Susan Rands); Sonia Lewis does not wish to stand again. David Gervais, Timothy Hyman and John Powys continue with their three-year term. There is one further vacancy on the committee.

*****

Sonia Lewis writes:

After three years on the Powys Society committee I am standing down. I do hope that someone will come forward to fill my place as it seems so important that there is a steady change in the group. I have enjoyed my 'stint' and wish to thank all the members of the committee and the officers in particular for their generous friendship and capacity to listen. The committee meetings have been both lively and informative – the Society is in good hands.

(*Sonia's* Reflections on the Committee *are on page 8.)*

Phyllis Playter and JCP on Cae Coed.

Honorary Treasurer's Report for 2002

The accounts for 2002 are set out in the following two pages. They have been approved by the Society's honorary auditor, Stephen Allen, and once again we are most grateful to him for his work and advice.

Our paid-up membership for 2002 was 277. This represents a continuing small decrease from 292 in 2001 and 315 in 2000. With a tax refund, under the *Gift Aid Scheme,* of £513 our total subscription income was £4,454 or 65.7% of our total income of £6,777 (as compared to £4,611 or 79.4% in 2001). The significant percentage fall is accounted for by the strength of our non-subscription income (2001 figures in brackets) of £2,322 (£1248): comprising legacy £500 (£500), conference book sales £273 (nil), net publication sales £715 (£528), conference £689 (nil) and other £145 (£220).

As in previous years, the largest part of our expenditure was on our regular publications *The Powys Journal* and the three issues of the Society's *Newsletter.* The net cost of producing these, including distributing but excluding copies of the Journal taken into stock, was £4,152 (£4,619). This represents 92.6% (93.6%) of the subscription income from members, only fractionally over the Committee's target of 90%. Included in the £4,152 (£4,619) is £641 (£737) regarded as charitable expenditure in furtherance of the Society's objectives and excluded, therefore, from the calculation of the price to members.

The Society ended the year with a surplus of income over expenditure of £1,823 (as compared to a deficit of £2,129 in 2001). The value of publications in stock, predating the current year, were written down by £550 (£592) and the resulting excess of income over expenditure of £1,273 (minus £2,721) has been added to our General Fund. The significant turn-around from 2001 is accounted for by the strength of our non-subscription income in 2002 and the exceptional expenditure in 2001 of £2,362 on the Powys collection at the Dorset County Museum and a cancellation fee of £550 in connection with a proposed visit to East Anglia.

Broadly, the finances of the Society remain healthy. However, our continuing publications, collection and conservation programmes in support of the Society's objectives require the support of a strong membership base, and I hope that members will use every opportunity to interest others in the work of the Society and help move our membership back over the 300 mark.

Michael J. French

Subscriptions — please see page 40.

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2002

INCOME [1]			£	£	*2001*
Subscriptions	In arrears (4 members)		65.50		
	For 2002 (277) [2]		3,876.00		
	Honorary members (14)		0.00		
	Tax refund under Gift Aid [3]		512.91	**4,454.41**	*4,826*
Donations [4]	Legacy		500.00		
	Conference book sales		273.00		
	Other		111.74	**884.74**	*550*
Publication Sales	Stock Publications [5]	834.38			
	Less cost	148.60	685.78		
	Commission from publishers		29.27	**715.05**	*528*
Conference	Registration Fees		4,616.49		
	Less costs		3,927.01	**689.48**	–
Other	Refund of cost of stationery			–	*47*
	Bank interest (gross)			**32.98**	*124*
	TOTAL			**£ 6,776.66**	*£ 6,074*

EXPENDITURE [1]		£	£	*2001*
Powys Journal XII	Cost of members', complimentary and copyright copies (319 at £3.25)	1,036.75		
	Charitable element of publication [6]	640.69		
	Cost of distribution	301.11	**1,978.55** [7]	*2,263*
Powys Newsletters	Printing costs, Nos 45, 46, 47	1,612.20		
	Cost of distribution and illustration	561.39	**2,173.59** [7]	*2,363*
Powys Collection			**76.69**	*2,362*
Ballot on Constitution	Printing and distribution		**148.35**	–
East Anglia Visit	Cancellation fee		–	*550*
Administrative	Web-site maintenance	70.00		
Expenses	Officers' expenses	330.19		
	Committee travel [8]	176.50	**576.69**	*665*
	TOTAL		**£ 4,953.87**	*£ 8,203*

EXCESS/(DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	**1,822.79**	*(2129)*
Less writing down of stock[9]	**549.74**	*592*
EXCESS/(DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE (including writing down of stock) as carried to Statement of Funds	**£ 1,273.05**	*£ (2721)*

AUDITOR'S REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE POWYS SOCIETY

I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Charity's affairs at 31 December 2002 and of the surplus for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

J. S. Allen (Chartered Accountant), 14th May 2003

THE POWYS SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS

GENERAL FUND [10]	£	£	*2001*
Funds at 1 January 2002		**2,799.45**	*3,521*
Excess/ (Deficit) of income over expenditure		**1,273.05**	*(2721)*
Transfer from Wilson Knight Benefactors Fund		**00.00**	*2.000*
Funds at 31 December 2002		**£ 4,072.50**	*£ 2,799*
Represented by:			
Stock of Powys Journal and books			
(as written down at 1 January 2002)	2,748.72		
Add cost of new publications [11]	588.25		
Less cost of publications sold	148.60		
Less writing down of stock [9]	549.74		
Value of stock at 31 December 2002		**2,638.63**	*2,748*
Cash at Bank 31 Decembert 2002 [12]	2,919.40		*213*
Add sums due to the Society [13]	12.50		*110*
Less subscriptions received in advance [14]	306.07		*151*
Less creditors [15]	1.191.96	**1.463.37**	*122*
		£ 4,072.50	*£ 2,799*

THE WILSON KNIGHT BENEFACTORS FUND [10, 16]		
Funds at 1 January 2002	**2,896.18**	*4,896*
Transfer to General fund		*2,000*
Funds at 31 December 2002	**£ 2.896.18**	*£ 2,896*
Represented by		
Cash at bank [1]	**£ 2,896.18**	*£ 2,896*

NOTES

1 Cash turnover in 2002. Total receipts, £11,661.94; total payments, £10,147.28, of which £588.25, relating to the cost of publications (*see* note 11), is carried forward in the General Fund. Other adjustments, relating to the cost of publications sold, writing down of stock, subscriptions received in advance, and sums owing to or owed by the Society, give an excess of income over expenditure for the year of £1,822.79. In 2001 a deficit of income over expenditure of £2,128.75 was recorded.

2 This figure comprises 267 (161 by standing order) paid in 2002 (£3,743.50) and 10 subscriptions in advance (£132.50) received in 2001.

3 This figure includes refunds on subscriptions received since 5 April 2001, including those paid late for 2001.

4 In addition, Committee travelling costs of £255.95 were not claimed, so regarded as donations. Total donations, therefore, £255.95 + £884.74 = £1,140.69.

5 This figure excludes postage of £89.01.

6 The charitable element is calculated from the production costs (£2,265.69) less the value of copies (500) distributed or stocked at £3.25 per copy (£1,625.00).

7 Total net cost of producing and distributing *The Powys Journal* and *Newsletter* to members £4,152.14 (£1,978.55 + £2,173.59) represents 92.6% of members' subscriptions (£4,483.91 including tax refunds) in 2002.

8 Total cost £432.45 (£176.50 claimed; £255.95 not claimed).

9 Value of stock at 1 January 2002 written down by 20%. New stock in 2002 is not written down.

10 **Society's net worth at 31 December 2002 £6,968.68** (General Fund £4,072.50; WKB Fund £2,896.18).

11 181 undistributed copies of *The Powys Journal* XII at £3.25 = £588.25.

12 Community Account £1,229.55, Savings Account £4,586.03, Less WKB Fund £2,896.18 = £2,919.40.

13 Cheques in hand at the end of the year.

14 Subscriptions received in advance (£18.00 from 2001 accounts; £240.07 [15 subscriptions for 2003] plus £48.00 [3 subscriptions for 2004]).

15 Cheques paid to the Society but not presented by year-end.

16 All interest has been retained in the General Fund.

Michael J. French, Hon. Treasurer

Sonia Lewis: Reflections on the Committee

The Powys Society is made up of individuals involved with and interested in the Powys family – the books of JCP, TFP and Llewelyn, and the family and its history which includes Marian's lace-making and Gertrude's and Philippa's paintings and poetry. What a diverse group!

The Powys family members themselves varied in their practical abilities as well as in their genius. It is difficult not to be aware of JCP's lack of practical ability – his many descriptions of boiling water to make tea and preparing bread and butter show just what a major undertaking these tasks were in his eyes. On the other hand ARP was probably very practical and Littleton as Head of Sherborne would have needed a range of administrative skills.

Somehow the members of The Powys Society came together to form a group that would FUNCTION to promote and further the interest in all things 'Powysian'.

After a group has formed it is normal for a committee to deal with the managing of that group. As members of The Powys Society came from such a varied background and with such different reasons for being in the Society at all I find it amazing how successfully it functions and am not at all surprised (with hindsight) when it doesn't.

The Powys Society is lucky to have such able and efficient officers. Both present and past Treasurers are outstanding, producing reports and accounts that both astonish and bewitch me. The present and past Secretaries deal with correspondence, agendas and organising the conference as if it is 'just a little extra', without apparently becoming ruffled by the volume of work. The *Newsletter* appears by magic.

Our present Chairman has his finger on the pulse. This is reflected in the fact that our meetings begin with a reading. This is the opposite of 'Thought for the Day' – it is for us to remember the real reason for all this practical work – it is the other side, the real reason for organising.

> *What he sought to give an enduring expression to ... was the large flowing tide of human experience as it gathered in great reiterated waves, under the old pressure of old dilemmas, and rolled forward and drew back along the sea banks of necessity.* (*JCP*: After My Fashion)

From the Editor

This is my sixth *Newsletter* and I would like to thank everyone who has helped and contributed – please continue! I hope members have found the mixture entertaining, and that they will suggest anything they would like to see in it.

Committee News

At the committee meeting on 5th July the main subjects discussed were practical arrangements for the coming Conference (less trouble to organise in a hotel) and its timetable. Jeremy Hooker who has had to cancel because of family ill-health, hopes to come to the following year instead. About 40 people are expected – much as last year, apart from fewer non-resident people coming. There would be enough members willing to give lifts in cars for excursions. Chris Wilkinson's entertainment-reading for the Saturday evening will have the title *Lost to the Common World*. He hopes to find a member-reader for the part of Alyse, but may be obliged (owing to average age of the Society) to import a young actress to read as Gamel. Jeff hopes to make videos again. Some overseas Powys publishers could be invited as a goodwill gesture. Officers doing a lot of organising work could be offered attendance allowance, always bearing in mind that the conference ought to break even, if not make a profit.

The new Society publication *Wessex Memories* (see leaflet) will be ready in August. What kind of marketing should it need? We will be sorry to say goodbye to Sonia after the conference, but share her belief that a committee should have a regular turn-over of members. We will continue to hope for volunteers. The Chairman was pleased with the friendly spirit at the TFP meeting at the Dorset Museum in June, and hoped this could continue in other similar events. He was also pleased to have the chance to meet the new director of the Museum there, and hopes before long to be able to liaise on arrangements for the Powys Collection. **KK**

Other News

Francis Feather in Zimbabwe recently celebrated his 95th birthday.

****

Peter Redgrove, whose introduction to TFP's stories was in the last *Newsletter*, has died.

****

The Swedish JCP Society has decided to make its newsletter bi-lingual with English. Its fee for members abroad is now 10 Euro. Send to its Treasurer, Susanna Åkerman, Artillerigaten 57 (iii), 114 45 Stockholm.

****

Sven-Erik Täckmark's translation of *Autobiography* into Swedish is confidently expected this year.

****

Another anthology of translated writings by the Powys family has appeared in France, from Elizabeth Brunet, a bookshop-editor in Rouen. *La lettre powysienne* 5 tells us its title is 'Scènes de Chasse en Famille' ('Family Hunting Scenes' doesn't sound quite right), and that its 500 pages include JCP's poems *Wolf's Bane*

(bilingual), LlP's *Impassioned Clay,* Philippa's *Driftwood* and three TFP stories.

****

La lettre powysienne no 5 for Spring 2003 has autobiography as its theme. Essays (in both English and French) are on JCP's *Autobiography* by Ingemar Algulin; 'Self-portraiture in George Borrow and the Powys' by Cedric Hentschel; and 'Gamel Woolsey: Thwarted Ambitions' by Barbara Ozieblo, with an excerpt, also translated, from *Death's Other Kingdom*, Gamel Woolsey's book about her experiences of the Spanish Civil War.

****

The Dorchester Museum has a new Director, Judy Lindsay.

****

The enclosed leaflet gives details of *Wessex Memories* by Llewelyn Powys.

****

A salute to LlP [Llewelyn Powys] on his birthday, 13th August.

KK

Valle Crucis: Son and Father

April 6th, 1941

It's decided now that I am to stay alone with my son Littleton Alfred under that darling Mr Owen's care, the old gentleman who always wears a bowler hat and replies to the clanging bell at that West Front, actually with[in] the precincts of Valle Crucis! I shall take a black kettle and many rugs and pillows and bread and tea (but JAM for him), and Mr. Owen swore *he'd* make a huge fire in that sort-of ramshackle *summer-house*, if you recall ... a funny kind of garden-lodge house by the fish pond at the back of the ruins behind the *unruined* perfect vaulted Chapter-House if you recall it? 'Twas in this Chapter-House I wrote the first sentences (the first page rather) of my OWEN GLENDOWER and left it uncorrected because the spirits of those Cistercian Monks were inspiring it although it breaks the proper rule of never alluding to any person or book or event later than 1416, when Owen disappeared, until, like King

JCP and Littleton Alfred at Valle Crucis.

Arthur ... But I DID begin by describing Rhisiart mounted on 'Griffin', a piebald horse with a medieval crusader's sword and an old suit of chain-armour hanging over Griffin's shoulders and a bag with his books, riding down from Exeter College Oxford to join his cousin Glyn-Dwr at Glyndyfrdwy! and I compared them—Rhisiart and the piebald—to Don Quixote and Rosinante, which I ought NOT to have done, but having done, I wouldn't change a word!

(from **Letters to Nicholas Ross**, *ed. Arthur Uphill, Bertram Rota 1971, Village Press 1974)*

Sat: April 19th 1941

Ha! Sea-Hawk! What a good letter from you was the one about those Acids that you have conquered (Touch Wood! D.V.!) & I hope to conquer ere long ... for I am really the better for my Valle Crucis excursion & those long days free of all care all letters all visitors all work! ...

Both L.A.P. & myself were in Radiant Spirits all the while ... Phyllis had packed up a little hamper for him with a litle pot of home-made Jam ... the last of her mother's making & two bars of chocolate (got God knows how!) & a good piece of cheese & a fine half-pound of Will's Kenya Butter ... as well as Margarine & plenty of fresh eggs. So he was mighty well content & so was I & Mr Owen showed him a log of Ash wood & another of Oak wood & lent him a saw. He found however that his muscles were not what they'd been at Weston for sawing wood ... all his studies had slackened them ... as well as—for he gets up at five & has long hours of study of Aristotle & of St Thomas Aquinas and other ancient Schoolmen of the Middle Ages—given him a great necessity for sleep ... We always settled down to sleep at ten but were so unused to sleeping side by side that we were too nervous to be able to sleep till twelve but then we slept sound and fine till about seven when my son made himself a cup of tea in a cup—he had brought his *Primus* stove—took away all the *black-out* which Phylis had prepared so well for us. *He did all the work* ... and was as considerate & thoughtful for his Dad as a daughter! He got endless sticks and bits of old wood—especially *driftwood* from the stream at the back—and kept the fire going with regular *boy-scout* skill!

I said 'I'll walk to Eliseg's Pillar and touch it and come back ... and he said how long? and I said: a quarter of an hour: and he said: 'breakfast will be exactly ready then!' And so it was! It was thrilling to me to touch Eliseg's Pillar & come back to strong tea made by my son & raw eggs and stale bread & he boiled his eggs or ate some cheese & had tea again!

(from **Powys to Sea-Eagle**: **letters to Philippa Powys**, *ed. Anthony Head, Cecil Woolf, 1996)*

Morine Krissdóttir adds, from the Diary for April, 1941:

Since returning to Great Britain, JCP had met with his son for a few days each year. In 1941 this visit took place for the first time at Valle Crucis. In his diary, Powys recounts the details of this happy time. Phyllis spent a day and a half

'packing all the things Provisions etc. etc. The T.T. has worked O so hard to make my adventure with my Son a great success—what she has done!' and on Saturday afternoon, 12th April, the two of them set out in the car of the local hotel-owner with all the things. Phyllis made up the double bed, unpacked the provisions and put up the black-out blinds. Then they walked along the canal to Llangollen and she took the bus back to Corwen. He waited at the bridge for his son who drove up in his car at 6.30. They drove to Valle Crucis, and *'found the Farm Gate of Mr Davies' Farm here at Valle Crucis open & came straight to the Abbey Gate and ... got the car into a good unobtrusive position under the wall & removed the little object called 'The Distributor' which he says is a Police-move and compulsory on motorers against the enemy.'* They had their first tea together, and Littleton was delighted with the chocolate, jam and butter which Phyllis had managed to obtain despite rationing.

On Sunday, 13th April, in the early morning, they drove over the Horse Shoe Pass, saw Dinas Bran and went to Mass. His son *'made friends with everybody and told everybody he met all his affairs—just as I do—& gave a lift to some people who turned out to have an Inn at a little village — yes who turned out to have an inn at a little village called Craig Fechan. The Little Rock. Here we gave them a lift—about 2 miles — back and for 4/6 they gave us breakfast ... I felt rather sad and uneasy when my dyspepsia went on & on & on ...'*

On Monday, the son slept most of the day but *'My son is thrilled with Everything. He is happier than I have ever seen him ... He is thrilled with the Valle Crucis Privy which has a stream beneath to carry the excrement away & has the seats & the doors carved with panelling contemporary with this 18th Century 1734 little house!'* In the evening JCP told Littleton *'the historical part of Owen & he was thrilled. I lectured him on the Welsh Nationalists & on Saunders Lewis and he was thrilled.'*

On Tuesday, JCP's ulcer pain and dyspepsia was a little better, and they had several walks, one *'a Perfect New Walk the other side of the stream along the base of the great steep hill—to the left—where the Abbot saw Owen & said he was born 100 years too soon ... My son is really a perfect companion for anyone as helpless as I am. He is neat & tidy & deft as a girl with all his height 6 foot 2 or 3 & he waits on me like a Daughter! He washes up & turns the cups and the pot upside down—I can philosophize with him and talk metaphysics while he is doing all. He makes the bed, he washes up, he gets the meals, he puts up and takes down the black-out.'*

On Wednesday, 16th April, his son left at 11.30 to visit another priest in Ellesmere, and Phyllis came to get JCP in the afternoon.

A view of the Valle Crucis ruins is on page 48.

Powys Society meeting at Dorchester, 14th June 2003

David Gervais *introduced a meeting of members of The Powys Society to discuss* **Fables** *by* ***T. F. Powys****. A 'baker's dozen' met around noon in the Schoolroom at the Dorset County Museum, adjourned for a pub lunch and continued the discussion in the afternoon. The helpful Museum staff provided tea, and during this interval people sat in the sunny courtyard, or went upstairs to see the Powys Room with the family portraits and other treasures on display, among them the MS of* Mr. Weston.

The discussion, gently conducted by David, ranged wide and deep, with contributions both from long-term TF enthusiasts and relative newcomers to him. A number of us had not read the Fables *for years, or never, and almost everyone felt they had discovered more aspects of T. F. Powys than they had previously thought of. In perfect evening weather, some of the group continued for a second tea at Mappowder, in the garden of the cottages where Lucy Penny, Mary and Gerard Casey once lived, with TFP's house and the church a green field away.*

A video of the discussion made by Jeff Kwintner is available – please request. David Gervais's introduction follows.

Fables

Welcome to what it is hoped will be the first of a series of seminars on particular Powys books. The Powyses are probably unique among important modern authors in having an audience that is divided between aficionados, like the members of The Powys Society, and general indifference. Unlike Joyce, Lawrence and others they have, for instance, never been prescribed as 'set texts' in schools and universities. Years ago, I 'did' *A Passage to India* for 'A' Level and then had to read it again at university. In time, it became a film and a best-seller. Meanwhile, Powys books were regularly dropping out of print. The danger in this is that, if books are not studied critically, they are never properly tested against the culture they belong to. For some of us, today will be the first occasion when we have ever sat down to examine a Powys book closely and share our views on it with other readers. One hopes there will be other such opportunities in the future. Critics cannot create readers, of course, and works of art do sometimes slip below the horizon – Donne took three hundred years to come into his own and Botticelli had to be rediscovered by a late Victorian – but a writer's admirers still have a responsibility to ensure that they get a proper hearing and figure as an experience and not just as a name.

Fables appeared a year or so after *Mr. Weston's Good Wine,* in 1929. The first edition sold out before publication. It belonged to the great flowering of T. F. Powys's art in the years before he stopped writing altogether, in 1933: the period of *Unclay, The Only Penitent* and the late novellas and tales. A better word for the book than 'fables' might be 'parables', because each of the stories remains

equivocal and open to interpretation. They do not proceed to clear, black-and-white resolutions or offer us any moral conclusions that we can pocket for their practical good sense and use in other contexts. There are no worldly-wise maxims to assure us of the author's experience of life, such as we get at the end of the fables of Aesop and La Fontaine. In so far as a Powys fable has a moral at all it is one that is set down obliquely and asks to be treated with circumspection. Far from making us feel complacently knowing, it is likely to leave us with the sense that we are floundering in quicksand. Though Powys is thought of as an allegorist, a follower of Bunyan, we always need to be on our guard against the allegories themselves. Often, it is far from clear whether we are meant to take them literally or ironically. How can any tale convey Truth when Truth itself is such an elusive, shifting thing? Such, at least, is the basic assumption of *The Soliloquy of a Hermit* (1916), the book which provides the spiritual blue-print for all Powys's fiction:

> *If a man is sincere he will change his opinions with every mood, at least about the things that belong to the spirit ... I change my mind most in what I believe ... unbelief is the only good soil for the believing mood to grow in ... How, I should like to know, can I know the Truth when God Himself is always contradicting it?* (36–7)

Thus, though the tone of *Fables* is often intensely serious and sometimes attains to grandeur and solemnity, the book also has a pervasive air of humour and even whimsy about it. There are moments when we wonder whether what seems serious may not be facetious too. On the lookout for some profound and cryptic moral we sometimes suspect the author of telling surreptitious jokes. Whatever moral the stories enact clearly has little relation to the received wisdom

Dorset County Museum: tea in the garden.

we expect from conventional religion and morality. Though Powys was a deeply religious writer his work has rarely appealed to clerics or believers themselves. He is religious, rather, in the antinomian spirit of the Blake of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* For instance, in the *Soliloquy* the wish for immortality is seen as a form of decadence, a greedy desire to preserve the goods of this world into the next. In the fiction, therefore, Powys's clergymen tend to be either helpless innocents or grasping monsters. God Himself is the most unforgivable of sinners for having created a fallen world. Thus, for Powys, a religious fable inevitably flourishes on paradox. His stories remind us of those of Kafka. Their setting in Madder and Dodder may be very different from the setting of *Metamorphosis* but the conclusions they reach can be equally unnerving in the way they sweep the ground from under our feet. For example, one does not expect to hear a dead man in his coffin pleading with God *not* to be resurrected. I mention Kafka because *Fables is* not, as is sometimes supposed, a throwback to an older kind of fiction like Bunyan's but, just as Kafka's is, an advance on the realism of the nineteenth-century novel. What Walter Benjamin (in *Illuminations*) said of Kafka would apply perfectly to Powys too: 'His parables are never exhausted by what is explainable; on the contrary, he took all conceivable precautions against the interpretation of his writings.'

The most striking thing about *Fables* on a first reading is that they appear much bigger than their modest length implies. The stories seem slight but their implications are momentous. Each of them has a way of resonating in the mind after it is over. This effect is partly due to the extraordinary concentration and simplicity of the prose, the way Powys uses language not for its own sake but for what it can point towards. There is prose-poetry there but nothing that is poetical, no consciously fine writing. As early as 1906 Powys had written in a letter, *'I cannot see the use of many words ... It is man's conceit that has made him explain so much.'* A singular opinion, coming from a writer. Clear thoughts explain themselves; explaining things too much prevents a writer from evoking them. Moreover, the things Powys writes about are by their nature inexplicable. As Glen Cavaliero says of the way he writes about God: 'God simply is – no more can be said by way of definition.' A novelist cannot explain God in the way that Jane Austen could explain what sort of bonnet Emma was wearing or how elegant the grounds of Donwell Abbey were. More than in most fiction, with its lust for detail and verisimilitude, in *Fables* we have to look for meaning not in the lines themselves but between them. Fiction bent on exploring a thought, as the fables do, has to beware of being side-tracked into too many illustrations. The purpose of *Fables* is not the invention of an imaginary world, like Balzac's Paris or Dickens's London, but the articulation of thoughts that are clear enough to be contemplated for their own sake. In other words, what Mr Pim *sees* is more important than what Mr Pim *is*. His material setting is merely a prelude to the immaterial idea it discloses. He is the tale's occasion, not its subject.

The typical movement of a Powys fable begins from some quirky or genial reflection on human nature which is then explored by analogy in the feelings of either animals or common physical objects. Out of this a dialogue develops, often deceptively light in tone, until the issues raised come to some sort of crunch. At this point, the story tells itself and its implications are expounded with an ineluctable finality that takes us by surprise. A tale that began by seeming humorous and urbane may suddenly become tragic or shocking. By the end, we are left contemplating not the characters, the Clout and the Pan or the Hat and the Post, but simply the naked thought that their talk has conducted us to. The story is only a stepping stone, designed to transport us beyond its own premises. Thus, 'John Pardy and the Waves' begins as a wryly melancholy tale about the family ne'er-do-well but ends as an eloquent meditation on death. This procedure is quite unlike that of most novelists. For instance, the first part of D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* may appear to describe the same sort of rural world as *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* does but, whereas Lawrence charts the way England is changing through the various generations of the Brangwen family, Powys presents Folly Down *sub specie aeternitatis.* There is no suggestion that its rural way of life is subject to any other kind of decay and change than has obtained ever since the Fall. The social changes that concern Lawrence hardly seem to interest Powys at all. His perspective on life seems closer to that of Sir Thomas Browne or Jeremy Taylor than to that of any modern novelist.

If this is so, how are we to explain the fact that Powys's concentration on universals does not make his fiction seem nebulous and abstract? For, to all appearances, he was going against the very grain of fiction itself and thereby condemning his work to seem marginal and out of touch with his times. Yet, in fact, *Fables is* notable for its precision and almost uncanny limpidity, a perfect adjustment of means to ends. In the endings of the stories in particular – for Powys was always good at endings – every word counts and there is never a single word too many for what has to be said. Take 'John Pardy and the Waves' where the last sentence is the utterly simple: 'John Pardy walked into the sea.' The terseness of this suffices Powys but most writers would have devoted a paragraph to telling us what was going on in John Pardy's mind as he walked into the sea. That is something Powys leaves us to infer for ourselves: what really interests him is not his character's mind but the refrain of the waves themselves. In this respect, he is as precise and concrete as the next writer would be. It is simply that he is not precise about the same things. John Pardy's psychology is not the point since the waves might say exactly the same thing to any of us. The force of their appeal ensures that we don't take him literally as an ordinary suicide.

What was it, we might ask, that made this extreme concision possible in a form so much more noted for profusion and repetition? One explanation is that Powys, unlike more realistic novelists, was still able to ground his fictions in a mythology, a common framework of thought and belief that extended over centuries of

English writing. Most days, before he sat down to write, he would read the Bible for half an hour. He did not take it literally, of course, or use it as an infallible yardstick, but he found in it a source of reference and allusion on which he could rely. A fable like 'The Dog and the Lantern', for example, depends for its effect on the reader's knowing the Gospels. The tale's paradoxes are launched from a common starting point which is a guarantee that they will not seem simply obscure or arcane. The tale itself partakes in a much larger discourse that has already preceded it. To appreciate the surprise endings of Powys's fables this common culture needs to continue to be accessible to us. The less secure our grasp of it, the more the stories will seem eccentric and weird. More mainstream modernist writing may also depend on allusion but, in this respect, Powys is unique. Joyce did not expect his reader to have the *Odyssey* at his fingertips and Eliot did not expect his readers to know the *Upanishads* by heart (they probably relied on their not knowing them) but Powys did write for readers who had read the Bible. The fact that today's readers know the Bible less well than readers in 1929 did may explain why Powys's work is less well-known than it deserves to be. Formally, it strikes me as more modern than most novelists of the period are, so suspicion falls on its content. Anyone who has taught Milton recently will probably have met students who have no idea what the Trinity is. What hope, then, that they will understand a story like 'The Only Penitent'? Take 'Mr Pim and the Holy Crumb', one of the finest of the fables, a tragi-comic meditation on the mystery of the eucharist. Here is the final page or so:

'But every one wants to rise again,' remarked the Crumb, 'even the clergy.'

'Clergymen,' observed Pim, 'baint easily satisfied. They do keep servants, and often a little dog. They do eat mutton and rice pudding, stretch out their legs before the fire and listen to music being played.'

'Say,' inquired the Crumb, 'do people ever talk about me here? Do they name me at all?'

'Thee's name be useful,' murmured Pim.

'For what?' asked the Crumb.

'Shepherd do shout Thee's name to 'is dog, Carter Beer do damn wold Boxer wi' Thee, and Mr. Tucker do say Thee baint no liar.'

'And yet I made the green grass, Mr. Pim!'

''Tis plain Pim with the clergy,' remarked the clerk.

'Mr. Pim!'

'Yes, Holy Crumb.'

'Mr. Pim, I am disappointed with you. I hoped you would have wished to dwell with me, for, to tell you a truth, I made heaven glorious for you and for John Toole.'

'But Thee made the earth too, and the sweet mould for our bed, and Thee'll have Miss Pettifer in heaven, who be a lady.'

'But you, Mr. Pim, who have never eaten of the tree of knowledge: I had a mind to be

happy with you for all eternity.'

'Ha! Ha! Ha!' laughed Pim, 'I do see the fix Thee be in, but baint 'Ee God?'

'Yes, alas so!'

'Then do 'Ee come and be a rotted bone by John and I. But allsame Thee needn't hurry I there. I have a mind to eat a spring cabbage at Easter.'

'Mr. Pim, Mr. Pim, you are exactly what I meant myself to be. When I consider the troubles I have caused,' said the Holy Crumb in a low voice, 'I almost wish I had entered into a mouse instead of a man.'

'Hist! Hist!' whispered Pim, 'Thee may do thik now, for a mouse do live under the altar table who do creep out when all's quiet.'

Pim moved to the front pew, winked at the Crumb and remained silent. A little mouse, with a pert prying look, crept out from under the altar and devoured the Holy Crumb.

The epigrammatic precision of this ending, the way the thought is embodied in the surprise twist to the action, should be apparent to any reader. But if our understanding of the ritual is sketchy or second-hand the ending is not likely to seem much more than ingenious or cerebral. The lightness of the tone is deceptive: under the irony there is awe and even horror. The humour has the effect of de-stabilising us. Is this God in everything, even a crumb, or are we left contemplating the dead God of Nietzsche? There is more than one way of reading this ending but one wonders if it is possible to take in its full force if Powys's religious allusion, so real to him, is dead to us. One should not under-estimate the extent to which his fiction translates us to an utterly different world from that represented by the latest contestants for the Booker Prize.

Dorset County Museum: admiring the Collection room.

I'm not sure this is a reservation about *Fables* itself or simply a reflection of the cultural breakdown of its period. Some readers would say that T. F. Powys paid a price for being cut off from the world around him; for others, he had the same right that Blake had to plough his own religious furrow in his own way. Setting that debate aside, I will simply end by sticking my neck out and claiming that *Fables* is Powys's most characteristic and successful book. *Mr. Weston's Good Wine,* superb as the best things in it are, moves more slowly and sometimes seems like a series of short stories stitched together into a novel, but in *Fables* there is no padding or repetition, nothing but a concentration on essentials embodied in language that itself strips everything down to essentials. It is hard to believe that writing of such purity could ever be dated, whether we respond to its subject-matter or not. What we do need, rather, is a willingness to take these stories at another level than that of social realism, as little Platonic dialogues or philosophical epigrams that are quite separate from the English novel of manners. If we can do this they may seem more modern than we supposed from their setting. We may even conclude, as the poet Peter Redgrove does, that their bleak vision 'makes Harold Pinter look like an amateur of life and Samuel Beckett a trifler'. Few works that are so aesthetically satisfying are so uncompromisingly bent on telling the unvarnished truth or so tragic whilst making so few concessions to grand tragic gestures. The purity of the writing is both aesthetic *and* moral at one and the same time.

David Gervais

Discussion

Among the points that came up in discussion were: TFP's use of 'clichés' from the Bible and Prayer Book – His ideas (ironic or otherwise) of 'sin' (pride, cruelty) and its defining opposite Innocence (usually shown as simplicity, and strongly signalled, as if with a halo) – Is this a specifically Christian view, or not? John Pardy in his Fable has a different sort of innocence – really a scrounger – a traveller – type of the Prodigal Son?

TFP's affinities with Buddhist thought – Being over Doing – non-achievement a 'virtue' in contemplatives.

The mysterious end of 'John Pardy and the Waves' – Is it suicide? Revenge? Merging with the infinite? A homecoming? But why is he pleased – or is he – at what the Waves offer – the chance to destroy? With TFP you feel always on the verge of understanding. We might expect the Waves to represent indifferent Nature, but their philosophy trips us up. You can't confine TFP to exact symbols – the Waves could be seen as a mystical other dimension – as death – as a place beyond creation or destruction – as the Mother we return to. We need to redefine continuously. Is John Pardy seeking Happiness by walking into the waves? Does this mean he has achieved some form of wisdom, yielding up his personality, or is it a sign of his continuing folly, still expecting some reward? Are the waves

projections of himself – or spokesmen for the author? Or just like waves?

TFP's dark endings – the Moods of God include bad moods, and inscrutability – possibly also under-achievement – God making mistakes. The Bible contains all experience, TF believed. His morality may be equivocal, but his style is hypnotic: those waves are seductive ...

TF's affinities with Blake – Blake's *Book of Thel* about a child questioning clouds, etc., but escaping to life: Blake's version of Christianity. Is TF more nihilistic, or agnostic? Or pietistic, letting the Moods flow through his stories – expressing through art not doctrine.

In 'Mr. Pim and the Holy Crumb', what's the attitude to traditional religion? Mr. Pim's (mis)understandings of what he's been told (by the vicar), and what he's observed of the ways of the gentry, against his primitive, almost vegetable-like, chatting to his old friend in the grave – the Holy Crumb offers him heaven, but is rejected.

The 'Dog and the Lantern' – a cruel story. Meant to be funny? A satire on religiosity, as in the 'Light of the World' painting? Unusually, in this Fable the wicked get their just deserts (like Mrs Vosper in *Mr. Weston*). The brutality of village life (true to life, as villagers told TF). Blake's 'Tyger': 'Did he who made the lamb make thee?' Old Testament punishment – Sodom & Gomorrah.

TFP's refusal to be pinned down – a philosophical method. Dialogues in the Fables are low-key, dispassionate, gentle, polite. Strategies and tricks in the writing – changing gear at the end – leaving the ball in your court.

Most of the Fables end in death: sometimes a release, sometimes not. But TF isn't lugubrious or morbid – why not? There's a lot of humour – sensuous beauty too (description of a boat with seaweed waving below – TFP used to row under the cliffs).

Did he enjoy teasing readers with gloom? exaggerating it – or offer oblivion as really preferable (in a deeply un-Christian way). His affinities with C17 'Metaphysical' religious poets (Vaughan, Traherne) – death both familiar and mysterious. In 'The Corpse and the Flea' – the flea as Christ?

Was he writing for people who thought like him, ambiguously, or aiming to shake up conventional people? To understand him, do you need to be a believer or at least a spiritual seeker, the sort of person who'd read Eckhart or Boehme? Or is he aiming to entertain, with a simple moral, as Bunyan did.

His control of dialogue (arguing with himself?) – a sense of shape, building through jokes, turning on the tap at the end. The short form of Fables suits him – no room for character development – compare Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, full of decadence, error, etc. – TFP deals with 'Everyman', with the universal Nature of Things – no point in psychotherapy here – characters like chess pieces, no angst. 'Parables' is correct. You can read him like a poem. The more often, the better he gets.

KK

Two Views of Maupassant

John Cowper Powys (1938)

I read him in French very enthusiastically, the volumes one after another, and selling, I recall, several precious old folios and quartos — for example, Fuller's *Holy State* and Baskerville's quarto edition of Catullus and Tibullus — to keep this canal-stream of de Maupassant going. This was before I was 30, a considerable time before that! *Then*, after 30 and ever since, in a steadily increasing *descent*, my interest in him has gone down.

I refer purely and solely to my personal response and what he means to my own private culture. (Oh, of course I would say he is an important artist and realist in the history of French literature.) But to me personally, since I read him so passionately in my twenties, he means *nothing at all.* I think his method artificial, his materialism limited and narrow, his imagination defective, and his style forced and tiresome. But then, my dear sir, save for the works of the incomparable Henry James, *I detest all* short stories. *I dislike that form of literature* and regard it as a bastardly form and an artificial form and a false form.* You see, my favorite novelist is Dostoievsky, which will easily give you a clue to my reacion to G. de M.! A great deal of my fondness for him in my twenties I put down to *his* simplicity and *my* simplicity; and to the erotic appeal!

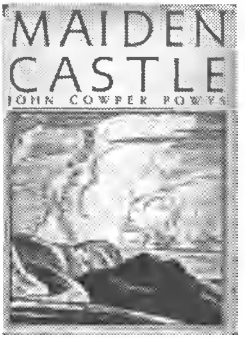
I think the worst critical blunder ever made was when Nietzche wrote of de Maupassant as "*that great Latin*".

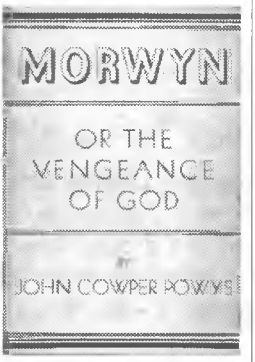
Llewelyn Powys (1938)

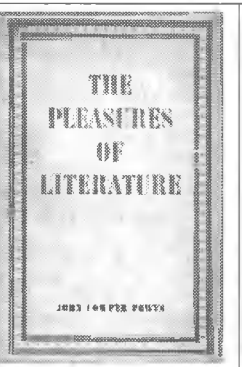
Guy de Maupassant I have always regarded as a very great writer. Especially in his short stories is he a master. I think he is far superior to Tchekov. His simplicity, lucidity, restraint and remorseless insight defy emulation. He gives us a sure clue to the safest direction of human morality — imagination, understanding and firmness of spirit — compassion purged of sentiment! In my own literary career and in my own philosophic attitude to life I owe him an enormous debt. I place him very high amongst the world's writers and do not believe that his position has been or will be threatened.

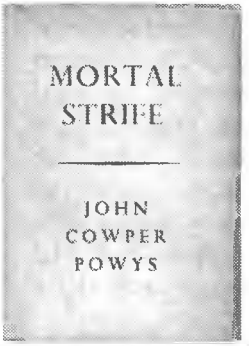
* *See* Autobiography, *chapter 7, 'Court House' (Picador p. 256): 'I held then, as I hold now, that that kind of tricky brevity is the lowest form of literature ...'*

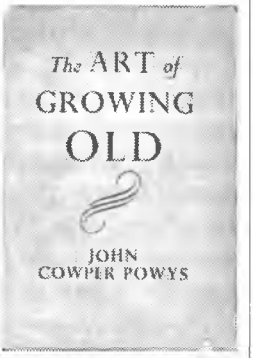
From Pour et Contre Maupassant, enquête internationale: 147 témoinages inédits, *Lib. Nizet, Paris 1955 (also in* Maupassant Criticism in France 1880–1940, *NY 1941*).
(With thanks to Joan Stevens for providing this revealing contrast.)

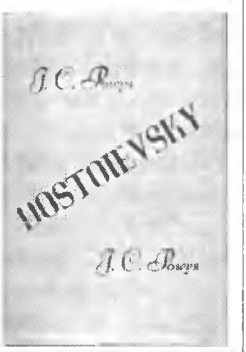


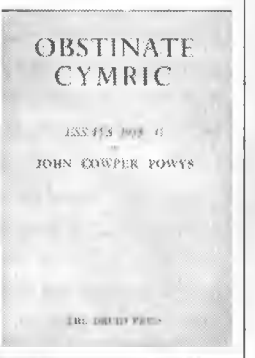


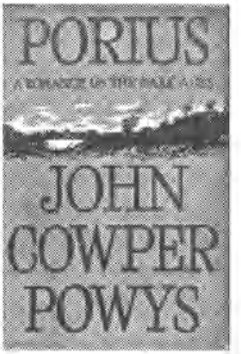


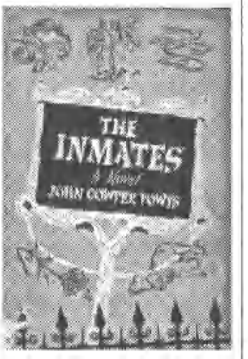


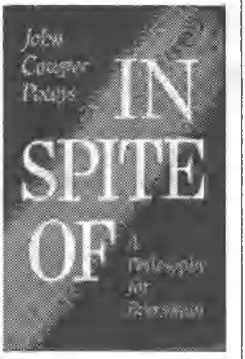


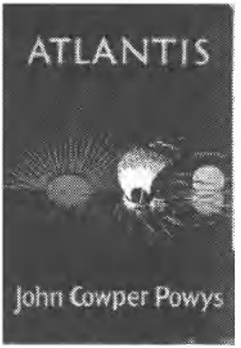


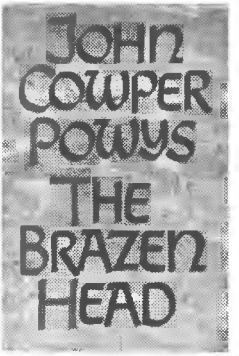


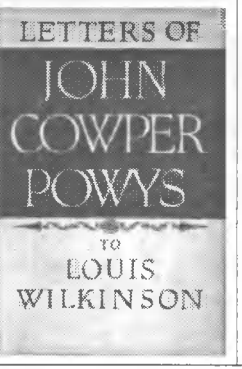












THE CORWEN BOOKS 1935 TO 1955

The Corwen Books

The books from the Corwen years seem to run in parallel pairs. Leaving aside Maiden Castle, *begun before the move to Wales, and* Pleasures of Literature *as a special case, there are the two great historical novels* Owen Glendower *and* Porius; Mortal Strife *pairing with* The Art of Growing Old *as personal views on the times he found himself in;* Morwyn *and* The Inmates *might be called disguised autobiography;* Dostoievsky *and* Rabelais *as interpretations of himself through the medium of his two literary heroes; 'My Philosophy' from* Obstinate Cymric *and* In Spite Of *as later re-takes of his life-strategies.*

JCP's life in Corwen has been plentifully described in print (in books and Powys Society periodicals): by friends and neighbours and in his own words through many letters – to his longterm and family correspondents (Llewelyn, Louis, Katie, Littleton, Theodore), to old and new friends (Nicholas Ross, Gerard Casey, Benson Roberts, Huw Menai, Henry Miller, Ichiro Hara, Wilson Knight), and to the many young people, mostly in difficult circumstances, he felt it his pleasure and privilege as 'a secular clergyman' to help (Sven-Erik Täckmark, Kenneth Hopkins, Ron Hall, among others). Meanwhile the diaries continued the spirals of his daily life with Phyllis, with The Old, with his Greek Lexicon and Welsh Bible, with the Berwyn hills and the Vale of Edeyrnion. Selections from the diaries of the earlier Corwen years are in Petrushka and the Dancer.

Some of the essays on 'Corwen' books in past Reviews *and* Journals *(still available) are listed below, followed by a variety of reviews and views of some of the books.*

KK

Maiden Castle (written 1935–36) NY 1936 (S&S), London 1937 (Cassell).

Review 17 (1985): **Roland Mathias,** 'John Cowper Powys and "Wales"' (a revision of an earlier paper, tracing JCP's use of the 'Bran' myth in *Maiden Castle* and *Owen Glendower*).

Review 22 (1988): **Robin L. Wood,** 'John Cowper Powys's Welsh Mythology – Gods and Manias' deals with most of this period.

Morwyn (written 1936–37), London 1937 (Cassell) [see below]

The Pleasures of Literature (written 1936/37) NY 1938 [*Enjoyment*] (S&S), London 1938 (Cassell).

Review 3 (1978): **Barbara Dennis,** 'Two Views of Matthew Arnold, A Note on John Cowper Powys's Place as a Literary Critic' (referring to JCP's essay, one of the most effective in *Pleasures of Literaure*).

Review 4 (1978/9): **Peter Easingwood,** 'John Cowper Powys and the Pleasures of Literature' (analysing JCP's non-academic approach, both in nineteenth-century tradition and modern; also referring to *Rabelais*).

Review 8 (1980/81): **Ben Jones,** 'John Cowper Powys's Literary Criticism: Continuity and Context' (in relation to his contemporaries).

Journal IX (1999): **W. J. Keith,** 'The Literary Criticism of a Bookworm' (comparing JCP's with other critics' of his time; 'He sees the critic's function as, simply, to help readers to derive more emotional and intellectual satisfaction from the books they read ... What teacher ... can hope to achieve more? Powys was on the side of the angels, and he wanted his fellow book-worms to be on the same side.') [and see below]

Owen Glendower (written April 1937–December 1939) NY 1940 (Simon & Schuster), London 1941 (Bodley Head).

Review 18 (1986): **Meirion Pennar**, 'In Search of the Real Glendower' (notes the historical hints that justify JCP's imagining).

Review 23 (1989) **H. W. Fawkner**, 'Love at the Margins of Being'.

Review 29/30: **Peter G. Christensen**, 'The Role of Fate in History – *Owen Glendower* as Epic Historical Novel'.

Journal III (1993): **Janina Nordius**, 'Prince and Outlaw: Visible and Invisible Solitudes in *Owen Glendower*'.

Journal V (1995): **Robin Wood**, 'Powys's Faustian Prince'.

Mortal Strife (written 1940) London 1942 (Jonathan Cape).

Review 5 (1979): **G. Wilson Knight**, preface to Ichiro Hara's Japanese translation.

Review 7 (1980): **Cedric Hentschel**, 'The Improbable Belligerent, The Role of John Cowper Powys in Two World Wars'.

Review 15 (1984/5): **David Goodway**, 'The Politics of John Cowper Powys' (notably on his anarchism and friendship with Emma Goldman, and the Spanish Civil War, with references to *Mortal Strife)*.

Review 16 (1985): **Paul Roberts**, 'Becoming Mr Nobody: Personality and the Philosophy of John Cowper Powys' (on the evolution of JCP's ideas, from *Confessions of Two Brothers* to *Mortal Strife* and the later non-fiction – 'these magnificent and much-neglected books ...')

[and see below]

[***Edeyrnion*** begun 1940–41, given up in favour of *Porius*.
Sections of ***Edeyrnion*** are in *Journal* I, II, and III, introduced by **Peter Foss**.]

The Art of Growing Old (written 1941–42) London 1944 (Jonathan Cape).

Review 7 (1980): **Ichiro Hara** in 'John Cowper Powys and Zen' refers especially to *In Spite Of, Mortal Strife*, 'My Philosophy' and *The Art of Growing Old;* and to the change in JCP's attitude from *The Meaning of Culture in* 1929 – from the 'Homeric zest for life' to his increasing sympathy with Buddhist attitudes, while remaining a staunch Humanist; and to his eventual 'cosmic humanism'.

[and see below]

Dostoievsky (written 1942–3) London 1946 (Bodley Head).

Review 4 (1978/9): **Timothy Hyman**, 'John Cowper Powys and Religion: Dostoievsky as the type of the Prophetic Artist'.

Review 4: **J. M. Turner**, 'Life Illusion and Stupid Being' (on JCP, religion, and Dostoeivsky).

(JCP's stage version of *The Idiot* was produced in New York in 1923.)

Obstinate Cymric (essays 1935–47, 'Finnegan's Wake' written 1942, 'My Philosophy' written end 1946) Carmarthen 1947 (Druid Press).

Review 3: **Belinda Humfrey's** Editorial is on JCP as 'Anglo-Welsh', referring to essays in *Obstinate Cymric* and to Matthew Arnold's *Study of Celtic Literature.*

Review 4 (1978/9): **Ned Thomas**, 'Obstinate Cymric' (on the Welsh essays, writing as a Welsh nationalist on 'uneven spatial development', but not unsympathetically)

Review 7: **Ichiro Hara** in 'JCP and Zen' and **Cicely Hill** in 'JCP and the Chuang-Tze Legacy' both refer to the essay 'My Philosophy Up-to-date As Influenced by Living in Wales'

Rabelais (written 1943–44) London 1948 (Bodley Head), NY 1951 (Philosophical Library) [see below]

Porius (written 1941–47, cut in 1950), London 1951 (Macdonald), US 1952 (Philosophi-

cal Library)

Review 8 (1980/81): **John Hodgson,** 'On Reading Porius'. ('In presenting mythical material in a history-less past, Powys is attempting a novel about eternal aspects of the world... Powys's novels deal less with good and evil in action than they explore the potentialities for good and evil in the imagination and cast of mind of the individual.)

Review 19 (1986): **Michael Ballin,** 'John Cowper Powys's *Porius* and the Dialectic of History' (a long and detailed analysis of JCP's use of past and present to express his historical philosophy, 'a dialectical opposition of fact and fable through which he reveals the power of the prophetic instinct to create history through the operations of the imagination').

Review 21(1987/88) **Patricia V. Dawson,** Etchings and Sculptures suggested by scenes from *Porius*.

Review 25 (1990): **Mark Patterson,** 'The origins of John Cowper Powys's Myrddin Wyllt'.

Review 25: **Peter Christensen,** 'The Marriage of Myth and History in JCP's *Porius*' (as among other things, 'an epic written in response to the Nazi threat').

Review 31/32: **Joe Boulter,** 'John Cowper Powys's [De]construction of Welsh Identity in *Porius*' ('Powys identifies his ambivalence with his Welshness ... the metanarrative of incredulity')

Journal VIII (1998): **Robert Kunkel,** 'A Partial Glossary of Proper Names in *Porius*', with **Stephen Powys Marks,** 'Some Notes on Welsh and Names in *Porius*'.

The Inmates (written 1951) London 1952 (Macdonald), US 1952 (Philosophical Libr.)

Review 26 (1991): **Susan Rands,** 'John Cowper Powys's *The Inmates*, an Allegory' (of daemonic possession, cosmic imagery, symbolic action, magical causation, ambivalent theme — also its intertextuality with Powys books and other literature).

Review 29/30: **Geoffrey Gunther,** 'John Cowper Powys's Most Puzzling Novel' ('forcing the reader to participate in the irational with all its dangers and joys').

Journal VII (1997): **Joe Boulter,** '*The Inmates*, Deleuze/ Guattari, Foucault, and Madness' ('Powys's support for the madman's world version, like that of the postmoderns, stems from an underlying pragmatism.')

[and see below]

In Spite Of (written 1951–2) London 1953 (Macdonald), NY 1953 (Philosophical Libr.)

Review 2: **T. J. Diffey,** 'John Cowper Powys and Philosophy' (with special reference to *Morwyn* and *In Spite Of*).

Atlantis (written 1953) London 1954 (Macdonald)

Review 3 *(1978):* **John Toft,** 'John Cowper Powys's *Atlantis*' (exploring its myth and psychology)

[and see below]

The Brazen Head (written 1954–55), London 1956 (Macdonald)

Review 4: Illustrations by **Patricia V. Dawson.**

Review 21 (1987/88): **Peter Christiansen,** 'Wessex 1272 – History in John Cowper Powys's *The Brazen Head*'.

Journal XII (2002): **Peter Christensen,** 'Frustrated Narrative in *The Brazen Head*'.

Letters to Louis Wilkinson 1935–56, published 1958 (Macdonald)

'How on earth, between old Louis's heroic editing – he is much more unselfish than I am; for I couldn't go to all this trouble he has gone to – and my kindly publisher's help, my Letters to him will be published as a Book I can't think, a Real Book that people will read as everybody used to read Cowper's letters. Poor unhappy Cowper! ...' *(JCP to Philippa, March 31st 1958)*

Various Views of JCP

William C. Derry on *The Enjoyment of Literature*

(from John Cowper Powys, An Interpretation, *Boston, 1938)*

This book is written for those people—and there are many of them—who are curious about the work and thought of John Cowper Powys ['that arresting name'] , but who for one reason or another cannot read his books ...

Mr Powys is a rare, clever, imaginative, but unbalanced person. That he has had insight into truth is undeniable. But it has been sporadic, and his writing has been in consequence full of lapses and unevennesses. He has succeeded, however, in creating provocation and controversy, as well as gathering to himself a good following, and unfortunately—though most humanly—making some enemies.

But no man can put aside and ignore his true personality, and expect to succeed; he must accept himself for what he is. Mr Powys long ago accepted all his irascibilities and peculiarities. In fact, he embraced them and made the very best of them. Numbers of people have turned against him for this very thing, for it has not made of him a particularly likeable or attractive person, yet it has been the chief factor contributing to his success first as a lecturer and later as a writer ...

This book is meant to be an interpretation of Mr Powys's writings, not of his personality. By this work I hope to succed in giving my readers a good account of the literary endeavours of John Cowper Powys, to draw them to look with compassion and regret on some portions of it, and to make them admire other portions of his writings as I do. *(Mr Derry questions the effects of some of JCP's moral attitudes, but considers* Autobiography *'Mr Powys's greatest piece of work'.)*

He may write more novels and make more contributions to belles-lettres but nevertheless, his literary star is descending ... Yet, even as we write these words we have before us in galley proof a new book he has written called ***The Enjoyment of Literature***. Perhaps no contemporary author is better equipped to write upon this subject ... Mr Powys, assuming his proper place as patriarch of letters, calls all lovers of world-writers to his side and speaks to them with wisdom and sympathy of the great personalities and books closest to his heart and—he hopes—to theirs ...

Learning is such a natural counterpart of Mr Powys's pen that even the modestly educated reader is not made to feel out of place or embarrassed in its presence. The shadow of that mystic key, symbol of scholarship, does not fall across his pages marring them with boastfulness and thus obscuring his meanings ...

In a world too deeply infected with the diseases of war, war-scares, armament manufacturing and the tools of conquest, where individuals wander lost in the fogs and quagmires of economic distress, and labor under the feeling that they are unwanted people, Mr Powys has placed this brilliant study of world literary

figures of a day that is past; in doing so he has performed an eminent service to all who are wise enough to pick up his distinguished book and read carefully its winnowed meditations.

(Mr Derry approves of JCP's treatment of the Bible, and reluctantly admires his presentation of Proust.) All through its pages "The Enjoyment of Literature" is a fascinating book; it indicates the approach of age in its author, yet it is full of intellectual vigor and beauty of phrase; it is not vulgar, it is a clean book that may well be studied by either saint or sinner ...

We have good grounds to hope that, from the residue of unique qualities left in his work after the levelling effects of time have worn down the sharp and unpleasant edges, the cult of Powysian "Elementalism" may attain the goal of a genuinely new outlook on life, through the efforts of eager followers who may succeed in gaining recognition and distinction by embellishing and ramifying those original and unique features in Mr Powys's ideas into a compete system of philosophy.

At any rate it is good that there should have been a John Cowper Powys to make these inimitable pronunciamentos on literature and life ... Let us hope that he will write many more volumes, for there is always some rewarding beauty, some intriguing appeal to the imagination in his winged words.

Stevie Smith on *Atlantis*

(World Review, London, August 1952)

Why is John Cowper Powys not thought more of? He is such a fleering-jeering, false-humble erudite old genius, so much a master of all the worlds of consciousness, so humane and so tough. Perhaps it is because he demands a good deal of his readers. They, too, must be as wise as serpents, and they must not be in a hurry.

Odysseus is the hero of *Atlantis*, he has come home now and all is not well in his island kingdom of Ithaca. Telemachus is caught up with a doctrinaire Dionysic priest whose thin-lipped mysteries are inimical to life. But Odysseus has many allies. There is the old lady dryad in her tree, and the princely boy Nisos, and Zeuks the rough farmer .... In between these warring parties slip highly-strung ladies (Mr Powys has the most tender teasing deep knowledge of females). And all around "this unusual group of human souls" are the chattering natural forces, the insects, animals and objects. Palace pillars jig in the news the winds bring—that Atlantis is new-drowned this morning; the war-won club of Herakles houses the flibberty girl-moth Pyraust and her lover the house-fly Myos, whose conversations, often of inspired idiocy, run chorus-wise.

Above the grave of Atlantis in stormy seas Odysseus and his friends sail for the New World, having left behind them in splinters the death-dealing ones, the cruel know-alls of science and religion that nip the spirits of men. There is something of Rabelais and Dostoevsky in the hilarity and nervousness of this weird book. And

something of Mr Powys himself, in the superb man Odysseus, with all of his lordliness, his cunning and his laughter.

The Inmates: Two reviews

A Strange Love Story by ***George H Bushnell,*** *Librarian to the University of St Andrews. Syndicated in Scottish papers (1952).*

Compared with such works as *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Porius*, Mr John Cowper Powys's latest book, *The Inmates*, might well be held to be straightforward and simple. But readers may remember that it is written of *Porius* that "before such a work, standards of measurement are confounded".

We found it difficult to write reviews of that work, yet we find it almost as difficult to review this straightforward story of *The Inmates*. The fact is, of course, that nothing John Cowper Powys writes is really simple, or straightforward, when one tries to analyse it. We had better make it clear to begin with, that this latest work bears not the slightest resemblence in subject matter or period to *Porius*, and only those who have carefully studied Mr Powys's writing would recognise anything similar in style to his earlier work.

The Inmates is true Powys none the less. Take for example Tenna's thoughts on page 59: with very slight alteration those thoughts of a maniac could be transferred to *Porius*. The story is that of the inmates of an imaginary mental home — a subject which repelled us at first as unlikely to be anything but morbid and unpleasant. But in Powys's powerful hands the wholly different inmates come to life, assume their peculiarities with complete naturalness, and awake the reader's interest and attention until he is held inextricably and inexorably in the fantasy which Mr Powys has weaved.

Here is one of the strange love-stories in fiction, and here is a revolt of asylum inmates; but here, too, is a deep insight into the peculiar which is as intriguing as it is unusual.

'R.K.' in **Punch,** *20th August 1952*

Mr John Cowper Powys long ago set up residence far from the busy, over-crowded main road of contemporary fiction. For many his particular mansion has been difficult to reach, since the traveller has to struggle to get there; and his new novel, *The Inmates*, which describes an imaginary lunatic asylum and its guests with quite appalling power and inventiveness, will be found a hair-raising experience.

But anyone who wishes to understand what lies beyond the veils of so-called sanity must spend a few hours in the precincts of "Glint Hall". John Hush, with his mania for cutting off a lock of hair from the head of every girl he meets, Antenna Shear who killed her father, the ambivalent Mr Lordy, may all be mad as far as the outside world is concerned, yet they seem to inhabit worlds far richer in

fantasy, colour and poetry than the sane.

And, set beside them, the sane members of Glint Hall—the doctor in charge who experiments on live dogs which are flung in a pit to die, or Father Toby with his frustrations—seem no more psychologically sound than their "guests". Decidedly, *The Inmates* will make people think long and hard and, perhaps, change their minds about what goes on in such institutions.

Rabelais

Catherine Lieutenant's *French edition of JCP's* Rabelais *is a work of homage to JCP and still more to Rabelais himself. She compares JCP's attitude favorably against traditional French evasions and dogmatism and takes a fairly strong political line. Here, she talks of the effects of repeatedly rereading the original while trying to trace JCP's quotations. A long-time admirer of JCP's essays on French literature, especially on Rousseau,*

the great surprise for me was to discover his *Rabelais* ... my enthusiasm led to the point of publishing him. ... He may very understandably have 'imposed' himself on the father of our literature, but I owe him an everlasting debt. I've realised,

Portrait of JCP writing Rabelais.

This photograph of the painting (now in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff) was given by Gertrude to Katie: on the back is written, 'To dearest Katie/ my portrait of Jack/ painted on Oct 1944 at/ 7 Cae Coed/ Corwen N. Wales/ Gertrude M. Powys'

thanks to JCP himself, that he was mistaken; that he mistook Rabelais for someone else, that he failed to recognise—how I'd love to resurrect him and tell him so!—a secret agent, one of the two greatest of French lawyers—in short, the father of our Revolution. To think that he died without knowing that behind the nondescript curé of Meudon and the kind physician that good people have liked to see, there was hiding a giant who had it in his power to turn the world upside down ...

My wish for all readers ... and I hope many of them, is to dive and dive again into J. C. Powys's *Rabelais*, and to read and reread (whatever he may have said against it), a little at a time, the superb translation of Urquhart ...' *(from* La lettre powysienne *1, 2001, tr. KK)*

The Art of Growing Old

The Art of Growing Old (how inviting his titles are!) seems to be one of the least read of JCP's books, judging by the lack of comment on it. It might appear more dated than most, written during darkest World War Two and knowing that much of JCPs experience of English 'ordinary people' dates from forty years earlier, when he travelled around as an extension lecturer, often put up in the homes of the organisers – a world of footstools and painted coal-scuttles, kettles on the fire, lifetime jobs and lifetime marriages, duty-bound unmarried daughters, lending libraries, and Latin Primers (for boys). But JCP's 'self-help' books do their job. He doesn't go into what might be called 'negative ageing' (disappointment, regret), still less into 'staying young', but the book does fulfil its stated intention to help elderly readers to enjoy and endure. Reading *The Art of Growing Old* at about the age JCP wrote it, sixty years later, it is surprisingly convincing.

The Art of Growing Old is JCP at his most unbuttoned – repetitive, conversational, revolving his slow spirals of thought like a cow chewing – ('self-indulgent', that creepy word often used of him,* tells more about the critic using it than about the book itself). There are nice glimpses of his own old-age life: the heavy Greek dictionary; the pattern on bathroom lino provoking worry about prostate trouble; the consolations of twilight. He allows himself a lot of space for long quotations (from Cranmer and Sir Thomas Browne) and disquisitions (on the evil of vivisection), but takes trouble to give them relevance in their contexts. As with all his books, he's better taken a chapter at a time.

And his advice is undoubtedly good. The well-known Powysian watchwords (as in *Mortal Strife* written shortly before) – Kindness, Humour, Humility – are given extra point as realistic goals, and not always for want of better ones, for old (at least for older) people.

He argues convincingly for the philosophical humanist world-view (human

* 'invented by the most cunningly and craftily *wicked* of all human emotions, the emotion of envy masquerading as virtue!' (*In Spite Of*, 57)

creative mind-power *versus* the tyranny of 'the Absolute' – making restrained analogies to Democracy *vs.* Hitler) as being one that the old, with more time and the advantage of *second thoughts,* are especially suited to serve.

He recommends crafty and practical tricks (reading *universal* books, taking books slowly) to combat the lesser gods of Chance and Pain for whom the old provide easy prey; also to counteract the isolation of old age from the young (cultivate listening, make yourself a Character, encourage their curiosity about what you know and they don't).

Even his observations on male/female differences, though in some ways obsolete, are (at least to this reader) still recognisable; and, of course, *reading* is offered 'to both the sexes indiscriminately, the grand modern escape of the bi-sexual soul of *homo sapiens* ...' The more obviously dated subjects such as 'Science' can often transfer to later times: on totalitarianism, for instance, or on scientific *vs.* human morality.

JCP's helpfulness – his Pelagian *optimism* (if these are effectively the same?) – his belief in *goodness* as the supreme product of Evolution – lies in his conviction that (1) it is possible, within the small-scale limits of one human fate, for the mind to take charge and make the best of what is possible; (2) we can share human experiences (through books) and so enlarge our own (evolved with the help of 'those immemorial guides, Religion and Philosophy'); and (3) there is always an element of mystery beyond what we know we know.

He ends as an agnostic/sceptic, but always as a believer in the power and variousness of *life.* Whatever is (except cruelty) is right – because it *is,* and our special task is to notice it – everyone's task, but the old may be better at it.

KK

Obstinate Cymric: 'My Philosophy Up to Date'
(from *Powys to Sea-Eagle)*

(December 1946) ... I have just finished the most dramatic & daring *anti-religious & anti-christian* piece of furious heathenry going even further in blasphemy than Lulu to be among the Welsh Essays to be soon published in *Carmarthen Merlin's town*! ...

(November 1947) ... I hug you hard for the Proud Humility for my own secret philosophy says that all the greatest happiness as well as all the greatest wisdom comes from — (yes I really do hold this)—comes from Humility! You'll see how I *do* really not only think this but say it too; for you'll find it in the beginning of the Best Thing I've ever written ... that is to say the last essay in *Obstinate Cymric* ... I *aim at it* too! not for unselfish or Christian reasons but purely and solely and simply in order to get the greatest amount of enjoyment out of being alive for we all know the misery—the aches, the shocks, the hurts, the hidden furies, the deep-rooted angers, the biting gnaws that come from *the opposite of humility*!

Mind or Kind?

Alyse Gregory on Mortal Strife

...Yes, I felt as you did about John's book [*Mortal Strife* had been published in February]. It irritated me in some ways more than any book of his I had read. I wearied to nausea with the 'common and garden man'. He is a figment of John's mind that he creates in order to propitiate. I think it is sheer intellectual snobbery, to go on as he does. He attacks the Christian values and sneaks them in by a back entrance. He cares only to stop pain and give people something to console them for their misery. I wrote him almost the words you used about that 'we'. His attack on the intellect, philosophy, art and science all anger me. Think of his saying that artists do not go to nature for their inspiration. All great artists always have. It is a careless flighty book, sometimes brilliant, sometimes inspired—it is foam at the top of his brain, he uses his nerves and his imagination and the rest of the time he is sound asleep. I despise his formula—the will to enjoy, humility and kindness. Kindness is a meaningless word. It is his own formula—it is a confession of defeat or else a place in which to hide. I prefer Santayana's 'the courage to enjoy and endure and mock them as they come' or Lulu's which you wrote down—passion, curiosity, compassion, pride. Humility is all right, but one has to be ground to dust to be honestly humble. Dispassionate, detached, these I understand better. I thought that was a fine passage at the end and there were some beautiful sentences and some acute observations and original metaphors. But John does not respect the human mind and I do, he does not honour fearlessness of thought regardless of where it leads and I do ... And how specious that dragging in of Shakespeare, Rabelais, etc., etc.—to prove his propaganda. Who are these intellectuals and philosophers he is always girding at?... One is simply tumbled about in his wizard's mind, and yet is an exciting and original book ...

(from a letter to Louis Wilkinson, April 21st 1942)

Morwyn, or The Vengeance of God

The Dennis Wheatley Library of the Occult

The classic novel of a terrifying journey into Hell *

Introduction by Dennis Wheatley

After the First World War there was an extraordinary upsurge of literary talent. Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, E. M. Foster, Graham Greene, Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, Rebecca West, Violet Sackville West, Ernest Hemmingway and the Sitwells were among that galaxy of stars that rose above the horizon to delight book lovers.

With them emerged the Powys brothers—Theodore, Llewellyn [*sic*] and John Cowper. Their first editions are now all collector's pieces, and I am happy to think

* See back cover.

that I have no less than thirty-one of them, nearly all autographed, on my shelves.

John Cowper's major works were three very long novels, all of which he took several years to write: *Ducdame*, first published in 1925; *A Glastonbury Romance*, 1933; and *Morwyn* in 1937.

Morwyn consists mainly of a description of Hell in a letter written by a middle-aged man to his son. Since his name is not given we must refer to him as 'the writer'.

The story opens in mountainous Welsh countryside. The writer lives there and his neighbour is a well-known scientist, whose name is not given either. The scientist has a twenty-year-old, exceptionally beautiful, daughter called Morwyn. For her the writer has a most desperate passion in which idolatry is blended with lust. She responds, at least to the extent of welcoming his companionship, and they frequently go for walks together, accompanied by their dogs. Hers is named Bessie; his, a spaniel, Black Peter. ...

[*A summary of the plot follows, with special attention to the portrayal of spirits* 'who have transparent flesh but are wearing solid garments ... although they cannot speak aloud they can convey thoughts to one another in a language common to them all ...'.]

During a long series of strange adventures they meet the spirits of Torquemada, infamous for the part he played in the Spanish Inquisition, the Marquis de Sade, the Emperor Nero, Calvin, Gilles de Rais and many other historically prominent personalities. From another part of this vast underground world Socrates appears. His face suggests only faintly that he is a ghost and he discourses on numerous philosophies. In the course of a trial before the immortal judge, Rhadamanthus of Crete, the great Athenian opposes a vivisectionist who argues that inflicting pain on animals is justified in the search for knowledge.

Clearly the author is a fanatical anti-vivisectionist. But the book is, nevertheless, a great imaginative *tour de force* and his contention that cruelty, whether inflicted on religious grounds or by the scientist's knife, is the greatest of all sins cannot be lightly put aside.

'The Old'.

Louis and *Morwyn*

Morwyn, or the Vengeance of God – *described by JCP to his sister Philippa as his 'savage anti-Vivisection story – the Best story – the Best book perhaps – I have ever written from my own secret point of view and private opinion ... a prose Dante ... a poetical* Candide *... a lurid* Gulliver's Travels *... in certain ways a tiny bit in its humour ... like the heathen humour of Anatole France ... a romantic Welshified vein as well!' – was written in 1936 (published 1937) and pleased almost nobody. The exception was Louis Wilkinson, then engaged on a biography of the Elizabethan poet Thomas Sackville. JCP's grateful replies are printed in* Letters to Louis Wilkinson. *Louis (Marlow)'s* Sackville of Drayton *was published in 1948. (From Christopher Wilkinson.)*

Louis Wilkinson to John Cowper Powys

Drayton House, Lowick, Kettering (as from: 5 Lancaster Street, W.2.)
3rd October 1937

Well! The first effect of 'Morwyn' was to plunge me straight into the arms of Aleister Crowley! I bought the book, got on to a 'bus, read the first few pages, alighted and there on the pavement was Crowley waiting to receive me. An odd chance. You may indeed count on *him* as one devoted—indeed 'dedicated'—reader of your book. Last night, after this chance Crowley encounter, I continued reading 'Morwyn' in the Tapestry Chamber of this monstrous great Drayton Castle (how inordinately *English* to call it a 'House'! Imagine such a place named 'Maison' in France or 'Haus' in Germany or 'Casa' in Italy). Each shadow in that bedchamber of ancient guests seemed to quiver in response to those writhing agitations of the nerves of the torturers in Hell. Dead wicked voices seemed to whisper: 'No matter! We shall win!' A rare place to read 'Morwyn' in! If the Marquis visited England—perhaps he did—he might well have slept in that very room as the guest of the Second Duke of Dorset with whom he was, I think, contemporary & whose sympathies he would not have found entirely defective.

'What have I done with that riding whip?' is the grave question that has more than once posed itself since I began to read your book. I must make a serious search for it when I get back. I can't think that 'Morwyn' will exactly *discourage* the devotees of your preoccupation. But I have not finished it—though I have read enough to know that I am held by it much more closely & excitingly—oh, yes, *much* more!—than by any of your other works! I think the description [*page 48*] of 'what they travel on'—the infernal vehicle of black snow—& all that journey—is extraordinarily good—evocative in a really startling & coercive way.

I must now look up some of the letters in this Sackville Library. What a work this Sackville book is—but I have actually written these long chapters & vow not to let myself be too much fussed by detail. It is by the detail of this 'house' that I

am fussed just now. There are at least a dozen ways of going wrong from any one room to any other—& you know what I am about finding my way. I make for the dining room & arrive in the Crypt—intend to visit my bedroom and am, instead, in some turret chamber disused since the reign of Anne. The Library table is strewn with bats' shit—very small, each piece looking like a tiny black louse.

I relished your letter—I wish we could meet—There is much that I could already say about 'Morwyn'—too much to write—& doubtless there will be more when I have finished it. *Where*, I wonder, have I put that little riding whip?

Love—as ever—Louis

John Cowper Powys to Louis Wilkinson

Corwen, Merionethshire, October 5th 1937

I was delighted, my dear, I can *assure* you, with your most welcome praise of 'Morwyn'—the only single good word I've had of it (printed or otherwise) from a grown-up person! All the reviews I've seen have been contemptuous & carelessly indifferent. I suppose that we were all—"our Circle" as I used to say—brought up in houses where our parents had books on their shelves allowed like Ruskin & Swift & Carlyle or forbidden like 'Candide' & Petronius & Rabelais—but at any rate *there*—& spoken of constantly either in our fathers' studies or in our "stick-house privies" of revolt from our fathers' studies. But I suppose most of the young reviewers of the day—*our* sons' generation as you might say! ... have nothing to revolt from, nothing to attack, nothing to satirize, and in their lack of relish for anything positive, even for the positive in criticism, are left with nothing to do but to sigh, in airy fairy, that there is nothing in anything at all—& *then*, by that inevitable summers-sault by which great positive Nature entertains herself on the q.t. (with her wailful choirs of small gnats) upside down they go and repeat the extremes of positives, with fists clenched in the Stalin salute, or fists open in the style of the other marching lads ... You & Theodore & Bernie & "the Catholic" & old Tom [Jones] (Our little Circle)—why, all day we were reading Petronius—'the Symposium'—'the Golden Ass', 'Candide', 'A Modest Proposal', 'A Night in the Luxemburg', 'Thus spake Zarathustra', etc. etc. But our sons don't read these books. I don't suppose Theodore's Francis or my Littleton Alfred or your Oliver have ever read 'the Apology of Socrates' or Rabelais or 'Candide' or the 'Tale of a Tub'? So that when I talk of the Circle (that big Circle) "whose centre is" etc. etc. the young editors & reviewers think I'm just inventing silly nonsense out of the crack of the fusty hat on my own crazy head.

But aye how your letter did cheer me up! & how we enjoyed your description of that amazing Sackville "house"—Phyllis discoursed on the dramatic zest for life that you, my Whip-top, have—& your power of '*Sacred Astonishment*', the highest virtue of mortal man, as illustrated in your meeting with Aleister Crowley, as you descended the bus, with 'Morwyn' under your arm ... Do you suppose that our

young generation could possibly even so much as *catch* that huge Dutch-Giant Chat such as Gargantua impinged upon—preceded by his little dog—"Remain seated, Gentlemen! & let me learn the matter of your discourse."

Well! You perfect Aryan, Aryan, Aryan! 'God 'ield you!'

Your J.

Louis Wilkinson to JCP

21st October, 1937

I have, my dear, read all of "Morwyn" now, but this won't be an attempt to write to you about it. When I wrote to you last I said I knew there would be far too much to say, and that is even more evidently so now that I've finished the book. A whole long day, of talk to and fro, would be the least we should need. Next spring, next summer, at latest, we must have that—or maybe you will be in London earlier? I hope you will, and, if you are, that you won't slip off so scurvily as you did last time, never giving a thought to your poor little neglected Esmeralda, but just dashing on without even a glance round the corner on your way to Paddington station and then making some talk of dentists or the Catholic's sisters or what I know not!

Why I thing you are right in viewing "Morwyn" as your best book is that you compel the reader (I mean, of course, "me,") to enter your circle and to stay there—that you do this more surely and strongly than you have ever done before. In reading, all the time, I accepted, under the unforced stress of this quite naturally diffused persuasion, your sentiments, your vision, your loves and abhorrences, your manias—the whole circumstances and conditioning or whatever one might call it, of the creation. In the face of this, criticism of detail recedes and becomes insignificant: in fact, when this has been said, this one thing, all has been said that matters most. I confess that I did sometimes grow a little restive under the good captain's masochistic self-abasement at Morwyn's feet, under this too too protracted cerebralities and "sublimations" (She didn't want that of course she didn't. No wonder she left him!), and I felt a pang of acute disappointment when, in one phase of their philosophic-poetic-semi-demi-sensual love-making—and that a phase that struck me as the most "encouraging" I had yet come to—well! when, after all that on page 173, I reached the words, at the bottom of that page, "ended at last" and thought "Ah! Now we have it!" and, turning the page in richly excited hope, saw the words "deep and prolonged" and thought "That's all right, then!" and then, Christ! It wasn't a "deep and prolonged f - - -," nothing of the kind, just SLEEP! May it be long indeed before such "natural enough" "endings" seem natural to me!

Thomas Sackville—whom, to my amazement, you have never read—wrote lines that might have stood on the fore-page of "Morwyn". Some of them I must now quote for you. How you could have missed this Sackville of the 16th century I can't imagine—I think you said that you had never even heard of him. This is

from his "Induction to the Mirrour for Magistrates." (He was also part-author of the first English Tragedy, "Gorboduc.")

"Thence come we to the horror and the hell,
The large great kingdoms and the dreadful reign
Of Pluto in his throne where he did dwell,
The wide waste places and the hugy plain,
The wailings, shrieks, and sundry sorts of pain,
The sighs, the sobs, the deep and deadly groan,
Earth, air, and all, resounding plaint and moan ...

[*more verses and history of the Sackville family follow*]

... Drayton House has been in Sackville hands only since the 18th century, and that gives the Knole Sackvilles a sense of superiority. "This house," I told its present owner, "is a reward for adultery," (the house passed in the 18th century to a lady's lover—to the adulterer, not the husband, then to Lord George Sackville) and he seemed rather taken aback by that, but said, "Well, I suppose it is. And why shouldn't adultery be sometimes rewarded?" "It is its own reward," I insisted gravely, and we drank more wine and were gayer and bawdier, bawdier and gayer, the evening through. It is extraordinary that a house that possesses a sort of age-memory can exert a sort of gradually working power on the people in it: it is like your book—the same kind of compulsion within a circle—so that gaiety and bawdry become toned by these age-influences, and so does drinking. All is, in an odd way, "communicated." And you yourself, and your companion, become "mediums."

I could as well, you might think, have filled what is now so long a letter by recording impressions of "Morwyn" as by debouching in this way to Drayton House on the cue of Thomas Sackville and your misapprehension about "Sackville-West." But really and truly my satisfaction in talking with you about the book would be so much greater—hearing your replies, replying on their suggestions, and so on and on again—that I feel very reluctant to write. I think your hand wavers now and then—you forget what you've already said and repeat it or even contradict it—but this is nothing, or hardly anything at all. And, of course, as you well know, when I'm back outside the circle you've drawn, I'm in a very different "state of being", back in my own camp once more (but my vote is, was, & will be unhesitatingly anti-vivisection), though I'm damned if it's so bloody Aryan a one as you seem to think. Still, it isn't yours, and that makes it all the more a tribute to your book that it compelled me as it did . Oh, one touch I liked very much—Morwyn's "not really minding" those three kisses of the phantom's (Of course she liked it! Hurray!) and the ironic contrast of the f - - - ing (the non-f - - -ing) old fool of a Captain's thoughts of how she would feel about it. What an admirable "showing up" of that aged error, that aged male-romantic-chivalrous error! As our friend Crowley well knows... He, I may tell you, is now engineering a scheme to get thousands of dollars from an American who is

"working his (Crowley's) racket" in California, using his rituals, aping his magic, zanying the very Temple of the Master! And I really believe Crowley may succeed—although he will get no money from me, for all his flattery. He told me that I am what Meredith ought to have been—"what, in my more indulgent moments, I try to believe that Meredith was."

Much love from Louis.

"All the Powyses put together," Crowley writes to me, "aren't worth a page of Mr. Amberthwaite" [*by Louis Marlow, 1928*]. I had to tell him, diffidently, that this was really going a little too far.

[Added in the margins:]

Joyce Gill, ('Mistress Joyce' you called her) when a girl at Birmingham University, broke into the 'Science labs' at night & set free all the dogs, rabbits, guinea pigs who were 'waiting their turn'. Every one of them she 'turned loose'! Except the guinea pigs, who would have been somewhat at a loss. Those she gave to children the next day.

I hope you are wrong about prostate gland trouble in the future. However, I am told it can now be easily cured. Tell me when your new essays are to appear.

JCP to Louis (October 23rd 1937)

Louis, old friend, your praise of 'Morwyn' is the most exciting praise, considering you, as the young girls always so touchingly say, "*being you*" (underlined) & me (what a difference between a stark Miltonic "I" and these darling little Missy-"*Me*"s!) *being "me"* (underlined). [*Sketch of himself and Louis*]

"I" is simply the flinty point of the cosmic Neolithic coulter! "One" is a different kind of bird altogether—the mincing-proper, "keep your distance from one's pure personality, O subject! O base poor forlorn drab of a subject! Subject upon which (now & then) in one's leisure moments one condescends to unbend." [...]

No, but seriously I am really extremely elated by your praise of 'Morwyn'; especially as I'm so poverty-stricken just now that I can't send anybody a free copy [...]

... & we both send a Gossamer-Wisp of the most complicated affection that ever went thro' the Air —

yr *Sion* (That is the Welsh for John)

Listen! I beg you to convey my Extreme Praise to Mistress Joyce for Storming the Bastille & setting its Prisoners free!

Louis to Llewelyn (28th October 1937)

I wrote a long letter to Jack about "Morwyn" and he writes back. I think he liked my praise of the book, and I did most honestly praise it. As propaganda, however, I doubt its effectiveness. It is the mad tumult of it, the mania of all that

phantasmagoria, that makes it so very remarkable. But he protests too much against vivisectionists. It is like a Puritan declaring that painters use their models for nothing but lust: I don't believe vivisectionists are sadists, except rarely and accidentally, though I am anti-vivisection. Shaw's single sentence "If you cannot get knowledge without torturing dogs, you must do without knowledge" is more cogent, as propaganda, than all "Morwyn".

JCP, April 6, 1941, in ***Letters to Nicholas Ross***
... my old friend and family-crony and Powys-biographer, LOUIS WILKINSON alias Louis Marlow, who has been lecturing at Southport and making 'Dee Bank' (that nice old house of our neighbours the Misses Hughes) his base pro-tem. And I walk with him and then Phyllis gets tea for him ... he is a wise, massive, calm, satiric, boyish, Rabelaisian good friend of about sixty ...

Rose Macaulay and Hamilton

When he was in Boston John Cowper enjoyed visiting his first cousin, Father John Hamilton Cowper Johnson of the [Anglo-Catholic] Society of St John the Evangelist, at the monastic church of St John in Bowdoin Street. 'I could not wish', he writes, 'for any more penetrating champion of my ambiguous character before the jury of the saints than this more than blood-relation.'[1] The obituary of Father Johnson tells us that he was 'a great believer in reading good novels ... He found that they kept him in touch with ordinary and extraordinary people. Through them he was better able to understand the difficulties of those who came to him for counsel.'[2] Moreover he 'spent many hours in the old church into which all sorts of men, women and children wandered; for example, two women tightrope-dancers from the old Howard theatre, 'not a very reputable place of entertainment', became through Father Johnson very devout communicants.[3]

It was through this unusual priest that the Powyses were brought to the attention of the eminent novelist Rose Macaulay. During the early years of the First World War when he was attached to St Edward's, Westminster, the headquarters of the Cowley Fathers, Hamilton Johnson had occasionally been Rose Macaulay's confessor, but they never met again after he went to Boston in 1916. Soon afterwards Rose Macaulay left the Church when her long and secret affair with Gerald O'Donovan [an ex-priest] began; he died in 1941 and she grieved for many years. In 1950 she received the unexpected letter from Father Johnson which began the correspondence which was 'to guide her gradually back into the church and lead to the inner transformation of her life.'[4]

On 6th December 1951 she wrote to Father Johnson:

I have now got hold of J. C. Powys, his autobiography, and am reading it with great interest. What an extraordinary character he has — or is it only an extraordinary view of himself? I read the part about you (p.599) with much appreciation and pleasure. I note that he says you think better of him than he does of himself — or that your God does. I expect you are more nearly right. He must be a very loveable person, and with a tremendous sense of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil — perhaps that inherited sense of it that clergy families are apt to have, indeed can scarcely avoid, whatever their personal beliefs. He has a very busy conscience, obviously. And beautifully keen sensuous perceptions. I like the feelings he had about the type of picture he loves, and that I love too — the 18th century Italian landscape with trees, ruins, distant water, light in the sky, a bridge; he describes it so well, and I too feel like that — a kind of sensuous joy in such pictures.[5]

However, she had more difficulty with *Porius*. On 19th January 1952 she wrote:

I wonder how you will get on with Porius. Slowly, I guess. It is very long and doesn't grip the attention; perhaps too remote from us. If ever I meet the author over here, I shall be much interested to talk to him. He is a good deal respected as a writer, deservedly.[6]

(She was evidently unaware that Powys had not been in America since 1934.) Would John Cowper have been interested to meet Rose Macaulay ... ?

Susan Rands

1 J. C. Powys, *Autobiography* (1934), Picador edition, 599.
2 *The Cowley Evangelist*, May 1961, 88. 3 *Ibid.*, 86.
4 Rose Macaulay, *Letters to a Friend, 1950–52*, ed. Constance Babington Smith (Collins 1961). Fontana edition, 20. 5 *Ibid.*, 225. 6 *Ibid.*, 251.

Subscriptions

The annual subscription to the Powys Society, due on 1st January, has remained unchanged since 1994 at:

U.K. £13.50 International £16.00 Student £6.00

We are very grateful to the 260 members who have already paid their subscriptions for 2003. I hope that those members who have not paid their subscription for 2003 will forward it to me as soon as possible (address on inside front cover). Those whose subscriptions remain unpaid at the end of August will **not** receive volume XIII of *The Powys Journal* which will be ready for distribution at the AGM.

Michael J. French

The Powyses and *The Dial*

The American literary journal *The Dial* had been founded in 1880 in Chicago, but moved to New York in 1918; it was bought the following year by Scofield Thayer and J. S. Watson, about whom Llewelyn Powys writes in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose.* During the 1920s it built up a distinguished reputation for publishing the best contemporary writers in prose and verse, including e.e.cummings, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Marianne Moore (who became editor in 1925), Ezra Pound, Bertrand Russell, George Santayana, William Carlos Williams, and W. B. Yeats. Also among its contributors were John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys.

All this is fairly well known, but it seems as if the extent of the Powys contributions was greater than is usually thought. In 1971 Nicholas Joost and Alvin Sullivan published a somewhat obscure compilation entitled *The Dial ... Two Author Indexes ... Anonymous & Pseudonymous Contributors; Contributors in Clipsheets* (Carbondale: Libraries, Southern Illinois University). By consulting *Dial* papers in the Beinecke Library of Yale University, they were able to identify the authors of a considerable number of short reviews (seldom exceeding 150 words) which appeared anonymously in a section entitled 'Briefer Mention.' Documentation for these reviews exists for the issues from April 1924 until the last appearance of the magazine in June 1929. They also record that contributors of 'Briefer Mentions' received 'about five dollars for each title published'. Among these listings one finds no less than 79 attributed to John Cowper Powys, 83 to Llewelyn, and – perhaps most surprising of all – 5 to Theodore.

Paul Roberts lists 14 'Briefer Mentions' from an unidentified 'late index' in his 'Forgotten Works' (*Newsletter* 19, 1993, 40–44), but I can recall no other mention of these items in any Powys criticism that I have read. John Cowper reviews are not mentioned in Dante Thomas's *Bibliography of the Writings of John Cowper Powys* (1971), while Peter John Foss's bibliography at the end of his *Study of Llewelyn Powys* (1991) specifically excludes reviews.*

John Cowper covered a broad range in these short reviews. Of special interest is the fact that he reviewed two of Theodore's novels, *Mark Only* and *Mr. Tasker's Gods,* and Llewelyn's *Skin for Skin.* He also reviewed titles by his friends Edgar Lee Masters (*The New Spoon River* and *Jack Kelso*) and Theodore Dreiser (*Twelve Men* and *Moods, Cadenced and Declaimed*), and Sylvia Townsend Warner's *The Importuned.* Given his admiration for Hardy, it is also interesting to note his verdict on two controversial contributions to Hardy studies by Ernest Brennecke, Jr., the edition of Hardy's non-fiction prose items published as *Life and Art*

* *Peter Foss tells me that all the 'Briefer Mentions' reviews ascribed to Llewelyn are fully documented and indexed in his forthcoming* Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys, *together with the 8 other full-page, signed, reviews which Llewelyn Powys contributed to* The Dial *during this period. This is in addition to Llewelyn's 10 essays published there.* **KK**

(favourable) and his unauthorized biography (unfavourable). Other titles covered include T. E. Hulme's *Speculations,* Aldous Huxley's *Those Barren Leaves,* and books by James Branch Cabell, John Galsworthy, Maxim Gorki, Wyndham Lewis, Katherine Mansfield, H. L. Mencken, Edwin Muir, Liam O'Flaherty, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Rabindranath Tagore, and many of lesser note. Needless to say, he was generous to his brothers and friends, though the reviews of Masters and Dreiser are not without occasional qualifications. In general, his reviews are informative, crisply written, and often incisive.

Llewelyn reviewed his friends Padraic Colum (*The Island of the Mighty*), Arthur Davison Ficke (*Selected Poems*), Richard Le Gallienne (*The Le Gallienne Anthology of American Verse*) and Edna St Vincent Millay (*Three Plays*), and wrote a decidedly negative review of *Essays on Poetry* by J. C. Squire, who had sometimes accepted his work in England but often showed little interest. He also covered books by Sherwood Anderson, Hilaire Belloc, John Masefield, Arthur Waugh, and Leonard Woolf, among others. A number of the books either assigned to him or chosen by him were devoted to travel, especially in Africa, but he too ranged widely. Several of these reviews contain objections to vulgarity of word-choice, and are therefore reminiscent of his habitual stylistic fastidiousness.

The reviews ascribed to Theodore, on the other hand, are surprising because so uncharacteristic. They consist of a biography of Madame Recamier, some essays on Shakespeare, *Irish Memories* by Somerville and Ross, two plays about the Hebrides, and a volume of Victorian social reminiscences. These do not sound like books that would interest Theodore, and I can detect no hint of his attitudes and style.

The crucial link between the Powyses and *The Dial* was, of course, Alyse Gregory (herself a frequent contributor to 'Briefer Mentions'), who served as managing editor of the magazine from early 1924 until the spring of 1925, when, after her marriage to Llewelyn, she left with him for England. She did not meet Theodore until May 1926, by which time his reviews, concentrated between April and August of that year, had either appeared or were about to appear. It is, however, possible that she invited him to contribute on the recommendation of his brothers. Is there, one wonders, any connection between a two-year gap in John Cowper's contributions (between October 1925 and May 1928) and Alyse's resignation and move to England? Llewelyn and Alyse returned briefly to New York in November 1927, just before John Cowper's reviews began again. This gap is all the more surprising since Marianne Moore took over at about the time when John Cowper's reviews break off, and Nicholas Joost, in *Scofield Thayer and The Dial* (1964), records that she listed John Cowper and Alyse Gregory among the writers of 'Briefer Mentions' that were 'liked best'. Llewelyn's contributions continued during the period when he and Alyse were in England.

To complicate matters still further, in 1975 Barbara Zingman published *The*

Dial: an Author Index (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Company), where she announces her own identifications of this material as if they constituted an original discovery. Her attributions are by no means identical to those of Joost and Sullivan. For example, four items claimed by her as John Cowper's are assigned by Joost and Sullivan to Llewelyn, and thirty of Llewelyn's contributions do not appear on her list. One of her other attributions to John Cowper (of a book by Max Beerbohm) is not accepted by Joost and Sullivan. Elsewhere, various errors and omissions suggest carelessness throughout the compilation. The Joost and Sullivan listings seem far more reliable.

A few additional items of Powysiana emerge from an examination of this new evidence, not the least interesting being the fact that one 'Briefer Mention' (as well as a translation) was contributed by Phyllis Playter. The Powyses' own books were regularly noticed in these columns: John Cowper's *Psychoanalysis and Religion* by Gorharn Munson, Llewelyn's *Thirteen Worthies* by Eva Goldbeck and *Black Laughter* by Henry McBride (whom Llewelyn describes as a 'celebrated critic' in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose),* and Theodore's *The House with the Echo* by Lisle Bell. Moreover, Marianne Moore, as editor, duly sampled the work of her contributors by herself writing reviews (anonymously, of course) of John Cowper's *Ducdame* (May 1925), of *The Verdict of Bridlegoose* (July 1926), and of Theodore's *Innocent Birds* (October 1926). Her response to *Ducdame* was generally positive, though she had some reservations about Llewelyn's book. However, she thoroughly disliked Theodore's novel – which, if he was indeed a contributor, may explain why he did not continue as a reviewer.

These reviews may not be particularly significant in themselves – many of them are of now totally forgotten books – but their existence is valuable because it gives us additional and unexpected knowledge about the reading of the Powys brothers during a crucial period in their development as writers. I thought it worthwhile to raise the matter here in case there are members of the Society who can throw further light upon it, and in case there are others who will find the information useful.

W. J. Keith

The Journal

Volume XIII of *The Powys Journal* is now with the printer. Copies will be ready to give out to paid-up menbers attending the Conference in Wales at the end of August; others will get theirs by post soon afterwards. This volume, the third to be edited by Larry Mitchell in Texas with much use of the Internet, is the largest yet, making up for the thinness of last year's, with a fascinating assembly of articles.

Daily Express, *Friday August 7, 1925*

AMONG THE NEW BOOKS

LITERARY FAMILIES: A GLOOMY NOVEL: A BOOKMAN'S NOTEBOOK

Our publishers will soon be able to use the dairymen's phrase: "Families supplied." We have Sir Philip Gibbs and Anthony Gibbs, his son, both writing novels; there are the Sitwells, writing all sorts of things; and now I beg to introduce to the British reading public no less remarkable a literary family than the "three black Powys."

T. F. Powys has distinguished himself lately with several books that profess to record Dorsetshire life in all its natural nastiness: evil-living clergymen, naughty dairymaids, and scandalous landladies abound in his pages, and even nature, as he sees it, is warped and wicked in all its manifestations.

Not to be outdone, his brother, Llewelyn Powys, has written a couple of volumes of African sketches redolent of a subtler but unmistakeable decadence. I have reviewed these authors' books on their appearance and now comes a third brother, John Cowper Powys, with a novel — a first novel, I believe — that outdoes them both in sombre pessimism. "Ducdame" (*7s. 6d.*) is his contribution to the family shelf. It only remains for the fourth Mr Powys, who has hitherto confined his pen to the more technical business of criticising architecture, to write a decadent novel to make the "four black Powys" a more significant factor in modern letters than the "three supercilious Sitwells."

"Ducdame" is as gloomy a novel as I have ever read. The hero, Rook Ashover, is the scion of an old Dorsetshire family of distinguished local history. He suffers from the family trait of promiscuity, and, instead of taking a wife and perpetuating his race, he brings a strange girl into his mother's house. They have no children — for a reason explained in the text — and we are asked to believe that this is displeasing to all the other Ashovers, dead and alive, and to their numerous illegitimate relations who people the neighbourhood. Finally, Rook seduces his cousin, and marries her. He is then murdered by a mad clergyman with whose wife he and his brother have dallied, but he dies aware that a son will be born to carry on the family.

Mr. Powys writes a curious style of English for one who has won fame in America, as a lecturer on literature. This, for instance, is his way of saying that it is a quarter to twelve on New Year's Eve:

"The clock on the mantelpiece had now reached a point indicative of there being only fifteen minutes left of the year that was sinking into the gulf."

There are enough improper words in the book to furnish a street arab's vocabulary; but, for all this, it is powerful enough in its decadent way ...

Review

Less Simple Measures*: Poems by Cedric Hentschel.*

Garratt Publishing, Berkeley, Glos. GL13 9BH, ISBN 0 9533201 2 X, £10.

Cedric Hentschel is a quiet man of many talents. I met him first at the spring and autumn meetings of the Powys Society that were held at the Hampstead Friends Meeting House, and then at summer conferences. At one of these, in Weymouth, he gave two brilliantly informative and witty lectures on JCP in World Wars I and II. Now, at ninety, he has published a collection of poems written since he was eighty, containing many biographical insights.

Born of a German father and a Polish mother, he grew up in London in the straitened circumstances of an immigrant. Being very bright, he fulfilled his academic potential through the recently much maligned grammar school, and went on to London University, the BBC, the British Council and University College London.

Less Simple Measures begins with a biographical foreword followed by poems that embellish or probe the information he has given us. At eighty, he creates a poem called 'Identity Crisis' – *To unify the layers/ Of my awkward palimpsest.* The inherent insecurity of one born into an immigrant family is well brought out in 'The Lucky One' — *When the Titanic struck that iceberg/ I know precisely where I was ... Lapped by amniotic waters,/ With six months still to wait/ Before eviction onto dry land ... I sense my mother scanning the news/ And wonder if those screaming headlines/ Left upon my nascent brain-cells/ The imprint of a world awry ....* Although nowadays we hear so much about immigration we still understand little of the tug of blood and land that must draw people back to their roots especially when they are old. Phyllis Playter brought this home to me when she spoke of the U.S. and found it hard to face the unlikelihood of her seeing it again before she died.

A moving poem 'Queen of the Castle' describes Hentschel's wife, born in Hungary, creating gardens in England and a 'sanctuary' in Italy – *Giving birth to books and babies was not enough.* There are the inevitable tender obituaries of friends. One, 'Henry Harvey, Redivivus', describes the experience (real or imagined?) of seeing the man six years after his death, crossing the forecourt of Euston Station – *in a coded gesture vast in meaning.* A more flirtatious nostalgia, with a Betjemanesque ring, is in 'Remembering the Merengue' – *Daphne, with her hair in curlers/ Shed a warm and fragrant glow/ When we two danced in Jamaica/ Long, so long ago ....* I suspect that there is material waiting to be turned into more poems from his experiences in neutral Sweden in WWII – or is it too hush-hush, as we used to say?

The book is illustrated with three photographs: of Hentschel as a young man, of a powerfully sculpted bust by his daughter Barbara, and a charming picture of his grandmother with his father as a young man, both in delightful broad-

brimmed hats, accompanied by an old-fashioned photo-conscious dog. This is printed opposite 'Family Album', imagining those faces (possibly) continuing – *Indelible in triumphant genes.* In 'Trouble Ahead', preparing to bequeath to that uncertain thing, History, *My body, books, the lore of ninety years,/ Some well-worn suits and worn-out attitudes/ The utter mystery we call a life* ... he gets a dusty answer *– Clio views my gifts dismissively./ 'Anything special to declare?' she asks ... 'Pooh! such bagatelles are two a penny./ Now, if you'd brought along some Beatles souvenirs ... .*

An Afterword takes the form of a poem by his son Anthony, clearly the best assurance, if he needs one, and straight from the horse's mouth, that he has not lived, loved, or worked in vain.

Patricia Dawson

Cedric Hentschel was Chairman of The Powys Society from 1983 to 1986. 'The Improbable Belligerent: The Role of John Cowper Powys in Two World Wars' is reprinted in The Powys Review *7 (Winter 1980). His essay 'Self-Portraiture in Borrow and the Powys Brothers' is in the latest* La lettre powysienne *(no 5, bilingual).*

Cedric Hentschel: Two Poems

'Sunufatarungo' is the subject of the 'Letter' from his son referred to above. (The word is a rare much-discussed example of Old High German, thought to mean approximately 'of the supporters of the son and of the father' – i.e. the fatal clash of generations, which the poem hopes can be replaced by 'civil dialogue'). Its serio-comic, urbanely undercutting but confidingly personal tone, long view and wide references, could represent the whole collection; while 'Walking Stick' is surely in the JCP tradition.

S u n u f a t a r u n g o

All things interconnect:
A truism teeming with insights,
Where patterns seemingly haphazard,
Networks neurally linked,
Spurning blind alleys,
Suggest a purposive quest.

From theory to illustration:
I'm reading a Michael Innes thriller
Called *The Journeying Boy,*
A title culled from a poem by Hardy
Which I find anthologised

By Kenneth Hopkins, who saw
Poetry in railways and worshipped
The Powys brothers, and John the eldest
Beheld a symbolic face at Waterloo Station
And later lived at *'1 Waterloo'* in Wales.

Railways hold meaning for that journeying boy
Setting out from Euston for Belfast
At a time darkened by atomic bombs.
I'm thus reminded of Werner Heisenberg
(Who more certain of Uncertainty?)
Since I once wrote of the Two Cultures
For his symposium on Humboldt
(Alexander, the scientist, not Wilhelm)
Long after Werner had failed to harness
Nuclear fission to Hitler's war machine
And was grilled in '45 by Frederick Norman,
Professor at King's College, London,
A medievalist learned in Old High German
Who spoke with passion of the *Hildebrandslied,*

Where the curious can ponder
That arcane and resonant compound
Sunufatarungo, strange father-son symbiosis,
There portending epic strife,
The curse of warring generations,
But in these gentler days
Gentrified as honest disputation,
Harmony of civil dialogue,
Perhaps achieving a melodious duet;
Pursuing twin tracks of youth and age
Which become a single circuit,
Resolving Tannhäuser's false dilemma
In a synthesis of conflict
Where fragments of Truth emerge,
Floating like specks of gold
In a draft of Danzig firewater.

Walking Stick

Tottering to the bathroom at night,
I lean on my much-loved Mexican stick,
Fashioned over fifty years ago
By a peon I'd like to have met.
For only a pittance he took pride in his craft.

Lorenzo, strolling the streets of Oaxaca,
May have flaunted a similar staff,
Bright, with flashes of red and green.
Here, amid twining patterns of beasts and leaves,
The snake and eagle, carved in shallow relief,
Pursue their symbolic conflict.

No warrior, I shall not take sword
And shield as props for the after-life;
But this trusty stick could shout from the grave:
I've travelled far in my season!

Valle Crucis, view of the ruins.