Editorial

A variety of views and personalities: JCP at Phudd in 1933, writing for a theosophical magazine about sitting by a river; Malcolm Elwin, biographer of Llewelyn and publisher of John Cowper, one of the unsung heroes – or 'mediums' as JCP called him – of our literature; and a foretaste of the Conference at Sherborne with Louis MacNeice calling up his old headmaster Littleton as an angelic English archetype, inhabitant of the 'Kingdom'. Sherborne also relates to our planned discussion in June on *Wolf Solent,* which should back up our double fact/fiction view of the town and its role in Powys life.

Arnold Shaw's letterheading (with thanks to Greg Shaw and Paul Roberts)
top row: 3rd, John Cowper Powys; 5th, Arnold Shaw
bottom row: 3rd, Marian Powys; 4th, Llewelyn Powys

ON OTHER PAGES

Committee News

The Committee met on 21st February 2004 in Shelagh Hancox's house in Cheltenham. This was a long discussion taking decisions on several important points.

Richard Graves began as usual with a reading, this time from the 'His Idea' chapter in that mine of wisdom *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, ending 'the fear of looking a fool has cost the world more good lives than it wots of ...' It was welcome news that, should no one else step forward, he will stay as chairman for another year. He then presented his view of the future of The Powys Society in terms of the necessary balance between income and expenses: subscriptions ought to cover *Journal*, *Newsletter* and administration; the Conference should be self-financing; other income should go towards publications and exceptional items. The first of these needs to be addressed now. The adjustments will have to include an eventual increase in subscription and (for the time being) a *Journal* of 150 rather than 250 pages; also an enquiry into reducing printing costs (acknowledging the contribution of Stephen Powys Marks's editing work). Membership (now about 275 paying) has had some gains as well as natural losses, but membership is the crucial point. If everyone could convince one more .... Local reading groups and literary festivals offer opportunities, and we will rejoin the Alliance of Literary Societies which now has a valuable Internet presence at www.sndc.demon.co.uk.

The Chairman's letter explaining the situation to the *Journal* editor was read: Larry Mitchell agreeing to a 150-page *Journal* (there have been previous *Journals* of this size), and suggesting some income sources as used by other literary societies (such as on-line option).

Other subjects covered were conference plans, insurance, updating the Powys Checklist, more contact with the North American Society, the Advisory Board of the *Journal*, the Collection at Dorchester Museum, the Secretary's workload (in view of Peter Foss retiring); the problem of Data Protection if members would like a list of addresses as in the past; and another informal one-day event to discuss a designated text, probably in early June and in Cheltenham (*see leaflet*).

KK

Nominations and Elections

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

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

Nominations are to reach the Hon. Secretary Peter J. Foss at 82 Linden Road, Gloucester, GL1 5HD, not later than **30 June 2004.**

Honorary Officers

The present Honorary Officers are:

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

The one-year term of all these Officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 29 August 2004, and therefore nominations are sought for all four officers. The officers have indicated their willingness to serve for a further year, with the exception of David Goodway and Peter J. Foss. Nominations are therefore sought for a **Vice-Chairman** and an **Hon. Secretary**.

Members of the Committee

Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner and John Powys have two years to run of their three-year term of office. David Gervais and Timothy Hyman have come to the end of their three-year term of office, and are eligible for re-election. Both have indicated their willingness to be re-elected. Accordingly, nominations are sought for **4 members of the committee**.

In accordance with the Constitution, all nominations should be proposed as above and submitted to the Hon. Sec. by 30 June 2004.

PJF

A New Secretary

Peter Foss has done invaluable work for the Society during the past three years, but is now stepping down in order to concentrate on building up a new business venture.

The new Secretary's principal duties will consist of maintaining the membership list (in association with the Treasurer); completing an annual return for the Charity Commisioners (also in association with the Treasurer); arranging for elections – if any – in association with the entire committee; drawing up and sending out agendas and minutes of meetings (in association with the Chairman and the member of the Committee who takes the minutes); arranging for the annual Conference (in association with the Chairman and the Conference Organiser); and dealing with occasional membership queries.

We would welcome volunteers, or suggestions about who might be approached. Previous committee experience is not necessary. The new Secretary will be made to feel very welcome, and the outgoing Secretary has kindly signified that he will be ready and willing to give the new Secretary the benefit of his advice as and when requested. **RPG**

The Powys Society Conference
Sherborne School, Friday 27th to Sunday 29th August 2004
'Childhood and the Sherborne Influence'

This year's Conference will be held at Sherborne School with the kind co-operation of Peter Tait, Headmaster of Sherborne 'Prep'. Speakers will include Jeremy Hooker, John Williams and A. N. Wilson. Peter Tait will talk about his predecessor Littleton Powys. There will be a Discussion on 'Creative Schooldays', and another Entertainment devised by Chris Wilkinson, of Dramatic Readings based on Powys experiences of the school (especially Llewelyn's). There will be a free afternoon for excursions. Sherborne is of course one of the main settings for *Wolf Solent*. Montacute is nearby, and many other Powys-connected sites within reach.

The facilities are up-to-date (some members will recall an earlier conference at Sherborne when they were more spartan). There are double and single rooms, all with washbasins. Rooms are on first and second floors with an easy staircase; conference and book-room, dining-room and bar are all close together at ground level. Sherborne school is not far from the railway station. The Website gives travel routes, and more detail in the July *Newsletter*. In the meantime please see the enclosed LEAFLET, and let us know as soon as possible whether you can be there.

Discussion Meeting — Wolf Solent

Following last year's very enjoyable one-day informal meeting to discuss TFP's *Fables* (see *Newsletter* 49), this year's proposed subject is chapter 5, 'The Blackbird's Song', from *Wolf Solent*. The group would meet on Saturday 12th June, in the library of Shelagh (Powys) Hancox's house, 36 Gratton Road, Cheltenham. We would hope to meet between 11 and noon, adjourn for an early lunch and hold the discussion in the afternoon, with tea available. The long evening could allow for more discussion or a local visit.

If you would be interested in joining in this event, please fill in the form and contact the Secretary, Peter Foss, as soon as possible. Details will be confirmed later, with a map.

David Gervais has again agreed to guide the discussion, which would focus on JCP's treatment of characters and places. Those taking part would be expected to have re-read the chapter, and ideally be familiar with *Wolf Solent* as a whole. (That book will have special interest for the Conference at Sherborne in August.)

Cheltenham is easily accessible by car (M40/ A40 via Oxford, M4 exit 15/ A417 or M5 exit 11a), train or long-distance bus (2–2½ hrs from London).

Gratton road is on the Leckhampton (south-west) side of the town below the Cotswold escarpment, a short taxi-ride from the station, in walking distance from the town centre. The late Alan Hancox, a well-known book collector and dealer, specialised in Powys literature, and for many years was host to writers at the Cheltenham literary festival, which he directed. Shelagh (Powys) Hancox is a cousin of the family.

News and Notes

On **April 30th** at 6pm in the DCM, as part of the Dorchester Festival, Judith Stinton will be giving readings from ***Chaldon Herring: Writers in a Dorset Landscape***. This is a new enlarged book incorporating her *Chaldon Herring: the Powys Circle in a Dorset Village* (Boydell, 1988). The new book will be published on April 30th by Black Dog Books (104 Trinity Street, Norwich, Norfolk): *please see the leaflet*. Admission to the event is £4, to include a glass of wine.

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Judith Stinton's new book ***A Dorset Utopia**: the Little Commonwealth and Homer Lane*, is to be published in June by Agre Books, Nettlecombe, Dorset.

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Information on **the Conference in August at Sherborne,** with a picture of the historic school building, can be found under 'News and Events' on the Powys Society website. Sherborne is of course the 'Ramsgard' of *Wolf Solent*. We hope to discuss this book (concentrating on the 'A Blackbird's Song' chapter) at another discussion meeting on June 12th (*see earlier*).

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Rob Stepney's 2002 Walcot edition of ***Owen Glendower*** has been handsomely reprinted in America by The Overlook Press (Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc.). Contact for sales is their office at: One Overlook Drive, Woodstock, NY 12498, USA <www.overlookpress.com> (*see page 32*). It has been pointed out that there are more books by JCP available at present than there have been since the days of the Village Press. *A Glastonbury Romance, Maiden Castle, Weymouth Sands* and now *Owen Glendower* are on the Overlook list, with (we hear) a new *Porius* to come. *Wolf Solent* and *Weymouth Sands* are still in print here. In other languages, Zweitausendeins in Germany has published many of the non-fiction books in the last few years and they are said to be selling well. There are a number of titles available in French, and a new one in Swedish (*see next*).

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A Philosophy of Solitude has finally appeared in the Swedish translation by Sven-Erik Täckmark and Gunnar Lundin, with an afterword by Lars Gustaf Andersson. It is published by Ariel with the Swedish JCP Society, and is hoped to be the first of a series of JCP's books. (*See Gunnar Lundin's letter on page 24.*)

The March issue of the ***Dorset Magazine*** contains an article with the title 'Dorset Walks: East Chaldon: **In the Footsteps of Llewelyn Powys**'.

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Three **essays on JCP** have been printed in the *Western Humanities Review,* a mainline journal sponsored by the University of Utah and the Utah Arts Council that appears twice a year. They are 'Supernatural Narration, *A Glastonbury Romance*, Modernity, and the Novel' by **Ian Duncan** (a helpful analysis of JCP's weaving of different kinds of narrative); 'Politics and Sex in *A Glastonbury Romance'* by **Robert Caserio** (a complex argument that politics=violence=eroticism=romance, or 'the sadism of romance'); and 'Two Canons: On the Meaning of Powys's Relation to Scott and His Turn to Historical Fiction' (on the influence on Powys of Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel,* and 'child-like' narratives) by **Richard Maxwell**.

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The next ***Lettre powysienne*** will be devoted to Rabelais and Powys's *Rabelais*; also including Jean-Paul de Waegenaere's notes on plants in Powys and a memoir of Dominique Aury, one of JCP's most enlightened admirers and promoters. Jacqueline Peltier's lecture on JCP for a Moscow audience was read in December (*see below*).

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Greg Shaw, Arnold's grandson, has been in touch with Jacqueline Peltier and Paul Roberts who has sent on the 1924 letterhead of the Lecture Bureau reproduced on the front page. Some more gaps may now be filled in the story of the 'Ideal Ringmaster' (Paul Roberts's biographical sketch of Arnold Shaw, published by The Powys Society in 1996, is still available).

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A request has been sent for a collection of **literary Pubs** – it is hoped that members will suggest British pubs or hostelries in Powys writings (or lives) that may have actual counterparts to be researched. (*See page 30*)

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Bernie O'Neill — Jacqueline Peltier asks if anyone can give information on the whereabouts of letters between the Powyses and their friend Bernie O'Neill, or about his life, since we hear little about him after 1934 and JCP's *Autobiography* (apart from the sad scene described by Oliver Wilkinson in *Letters to Frances).*

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A collection of Powys papers was due to be sold in March at the **Bloomsbury Book Auctions**. These include letters from JCP to **Mrs Meech** who typed so much of his work. We will hope for more news of the sale for the next *Newsletter.*

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Wessex Memories was accorded a full-page review in the *TLS*, by Anthony Head, under the title 'Love with Bees' (9 January 2004). It concluded that Powys 'needs to be taken up by a major publisher' to do him justice. The review brought a continuing flurry of new orders for the book.

Powys in York

On January 14th, a cold evening, our Vice-Chairman Dr David Goodway gave a talk to the York Bibliographical Society entitled *The One Powys and the Many: John Cowper Powys and his Siblings.* Since 1986, the York Bibliographical Society has met monthly during the winter to hear an eclectic series of lectures. In the last five years topics as diverse as *Private Press Books, Christopher Wren's Library Buildings, John Piper, Early New Testament Manuscripts, Alphabet Books, The Georgian Book Trade in York* and *Pevsner's Buildings of England* have been discussed. Somewhat surprisingly, there have been few talks on mainstream British authors, so David's talk on the Powyses, whilst not totally breaking new ground, was certainly a stimulating change for the Society.

David began by summarising what he saw as the two main challenges facing champions of the Powyses. Firstly, large claims are made by their admirers for the three principal brothers, for which it is impossible to gain general assent (particularly in terms of sales and the willingness of publishers to publish). Secondly, outsiders have difficulty in distinguishing the three brothers from one another and, indeed, from the other brothers and sisters who published. To support his first assertion David drew attention to Anthony Head's recent review in the TLS (9th January 2004) of Llewelyn's *Wessex Memories* (recently published by the Society) and then, for the benefit of the audience, went on to unscramble the lesser Powyses (Marian, Philippa, Albert Reginald, Littleton and Llewelyn, an influential writer in his day, especially for freethinkers and those wishing to lead a more natural life, but in David's view a much lesser figure than either JCP or TFP). David also mentioned TFP's son, Francis, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Laurence Powys', two literary spouses (Elizabeth Myers and Alyse Gregory) and the central role played by Phyllis Playter in the literary development of JCP.

David then went on to deal with his two main subjects, JCP and TFP, in greater detail. He saw TFP as an important, though second-rank writer (rating him on a par with, say, Graham Greene) but, nevertheless, he was worthy of being much more widely read than he was. Uncontroversially, David identified *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* as TFP's best known novel, but he went on to say that TFP also produced several superb novellas (for example, *The Left Leg)* and was a natural short-story writer. David suggested *Fables* (also published as *No Painted Plumage)* in which animals, as well as humans and the inanimate, think, feel and speak in a brutal rural world, as especially brilliant and worth reading. For those contemplating starting on TFP, David strongly recommended the collection of stories published in 1947, *God's Eyes A-Twinkle.*

Turning to JCP, David outlined his life and career and quoted Henry Miller to support the widely held view of the mesmerising quality of JCP's lecturing. He pointed out that although JCP was a prolific all-round man of letters, publishing

poetry, literary appreciation and many philosophical books, his reputation as a major writer had to rest on his major novels, on his autobiography, his diaries and his marvellous letters. To set the scene for discussion, David named JCP's six principal novels and also some of his more prominent advocates, including J. B. Priestley, Henry Miller, G. Wilson Knight, Angus Wilson, Iris Murdoch and George Steiner. It was virtually impossible to convey the nature of JCP's distinctive fiction, he said, but the uninitiated might do worse than to attempt to imagine an amalgam of D. H. Lawrence and Dickens, Hardy and Dostoyevsky, Proust and Scott and, perhaps above all, of Wordsworth and Blake. In an attempt to give some flavour of JCP's work (a task which he, himself, admitted was impossible), David concluded by reading some extracts from *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Weymouth Sands* and two on 'ecstasies' from *In Spite Of* (1953) and *The Art of Happiness* (1923 – there is a second work with this name from 1935).

The success of David's talk could be judged from the very lively discussion that followed. As is all too familiar, the audience (which included at least one member of The Powys Society who had come along especially, having seen the announcement of the talk in the November *Newsletter)* divided itself into the *JCP is a major, if not THE major, author of the twentieth century* and the *JCP is unreadable* camps. In the course of the discussion, several people from the latter camp, including a Professor of English (the York Bibliographical Society seems, at times, to be an extra-mural extension of the English Department at the University) did commit themselves to giving JCP *another go.* Given the deep-seated antipathy in some peoples' minds to the work of the Powys brothers, particularly of JCP, David (and the Society) can, perhaps, regard this as a notable achievement from a one-hour talk.

MF

Powys in Russia

An International Conference with the title 'The Dialogue Between Two Epochs: British Literature of the 19th and 20th centuries' was held in **Moscow** on 15th-16th December 2003, at the Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Subjects of lectures included *The Tradition of In Memoriam Genre*; *'Man' / 'Ape' semantic opposition pre- and post-Darwin*; *Narrative Consciousness in 'Dual Setting' British Fiction* by S. M. Dunning – and two talks on J. C. Powys: *J. C. Powys's Place in English Literature: Between Modernism and Tradition* by Jacqueline Peltier (read in her absence); and *Literary Autobiography: A. Trollope and J. C. Powys* by L. B. Karayeva. Olga Markova reported that both these lectures were 'as provocative and full of unusual twists and turns as J. C. Powys's prose itself. J.Peltier examined Powys in a wide context of world literature, inferring that his work does not seem to fit any canon.' The second talk contrasted

Trollope's reticent Autobiography devoted to the novelist's work, to Powys's description of his own life 'with a characteristic blend of (sometimes shocking) candour.' The Gorki Institute will print the talks in their bulletin, in due course.

Jacqueline Peltier's Moscow talk began with the corpse at the start of *Glastonbury*, followed by an outline of the changes in English novels from Victorian to mid-twentieth-century times, with a short account of JCP's life and work. She quotes Carlos Fuentes, that 'the novel is like the ghost of a world the writer is the only one to see. His task, therefore, is to say what has not yet been written ...' – hence 'the world as seen by Powys is his own ... painfully won out of battles with his own complex personality and its varied layers of manias, fears, frustrations, his challenge to fate and to what he called "the First Cause"...' Powys is not concerned with formal perfection, he was a writer by inner necessity. His descriptions, of nature particularly, are enthralling, but 'his true dimension was that of a preacher, conscious of having a message to deliver, a druid or a shaman close to primitivism ... to make us aware of the power of our imagination which can be trained, and enables us to "escape" (a word he often uses) by self-reliant stoicism, "to sink into our souls" as he says, to find happiness by merging with the elemental world.'

Quoting Glen Cavaliero, that JCP's output (like Lawrence's) is 'the varied expression of a single point of view ... urgently related to the pressures endured by the individual in modern society', she runs through the nature of JCP's themes of sexuality and the English social environment shown through his range of characters. 'They reflect the destiny of people as seen by a twentieth-century sensitivity, but described in a late-nineteenth-century style'. Wolf Solent at the start of the novel is quoted as an example of JCP's heroes, or rather anti-heroes, 'closely resembling their creator ... lonely entities relying on their private mythology to survive' who through crises in their lives, shocks and humiliations, somehow 'must prove to themselves that their deepest convictions remain valid ... that their self-assertion remains intact.' JCP's techniques are oblique, often deflating tragic scenes in favour of peripheral moments, describing thoughts more than actions, recording everything however apparantly irrelevant. 'As in all true "romances", the reader is never sure how the characters are going to evolve. Powys's vision is on the whole open, optimistic, and invites the reader to join him.' Memory (as for Proust) is supremely important, and concentration on humble things can produce 'unearthly exaltation'. However, JCP uses 'epiphanies' 'in a less mystical manner ... he holds that this ecstasy can be called up and is not subject to pure chance.' A long quotation from *In Defence of Sensuality* illustrates this.

Moving on to JCP's influences, Joseph Brodsky ('your great poet') is quoted: 'One of the purposes of a work of art is to create dependents; the paradox is that the more indebted the artist, the richer he is.' JCP's inheritance, of course, included virtually all classical and available European literature; of English

writers perhaps most from Wordsworth's 'lonely integrity' and Hardy's compassion for simple lives and the clash beween human beings and implacable forces (quoting the 'man on the Waterloo steps', again from *Wolf Solent)*.

Powys lectured on many Russian writers, with Dostoievsky high in his pantheon. Peltier quotes from *Pleasures of Literature*, mentioning JCP's book on Dostoeivsky and his stage adaptation of *The Idiot*. JCP's characters often resemble Dostoievsky's, notably in their unpredictability; but she considers that 'he has gone beyond his illustrious predecessors by the depth of analysis of his characters' in their freedom to move round the edges of the story, and relate with other non-human aspects of the world. With JCP 'confluences' might be a better word than 'influences'. He incorporated the substance of what he read and 'what came out of his pen came mostly from the alchemy of his brain, as lava comes out of an erupting volcano ...'

JCP's vision of the layers of reality as (William James's term) 'multiverse' differs from 'universe' in that where nothing is settled, all action matters, and our own strength or will may affect what happens. He was a philosophical anarchist, interested like William James in the varieties of religious experience; and not hesitating to pray to different Gods; indissolubly integrating 'his own esoteric life-way with that of his creative life'.

Peltier's conclusion is that just as JCP's freedom of spirit liberates him from the past, the uniqueness of his life and his books and their inseparability from the wisdom he found, make him unlikely to have a literary posterity. 'His place is perhaps rather "on the border", on the margin outside the classical canon. The metaphysical vision of the world he held was his own, as well as the golden rule he propounded: "*Enjoy, defy, forget!*"' The lecture ended with the well-known inspiring final paragraphs of *Autobiography*.

KK from JP, with thanks

John Cowper Powys: The Magic of Detachment
from The Aryan Path, *October 1933*

Real Detachment begins when we think of our soul as a wayfarer from a far-off country, lodged for a while, "hospes comesque corporis — guest and companion of the body," among the tribes of men and upon this satellite of the voyaging sun.

In the spirit of a visitor to this whole Cosmos we thus think of the " I am I " within us, in large measure alien, though not unsympathetic to the traditions of this astronomical Hostelry of our temporary sojourn; in large measure alien, though not hostile, to the customs, ways, habits, mythologies, of the human race into which, by some cosmic chance or cosmic law, we have come to be born.

Scrutinizing its planetary surroundings it grows aware of the possibility of a

certain illuminated happiness, of a certain ecstasy even, that it can reach, and help other sentiencies to reach, by various detached ways of handling all these things. It soon indeed arrives at the conclusion that one of the chief causes of personal unhappiness in this world is the soul's lack of the power of detachment.

At any given moment of night or day there are qualities, essences, emanations, adhering to the chemistry of the primordial elements around us, calculated to fill us with a thrilling ecstasy. But it is only by detaching ourselves from almost all of the idols of the market-place that we can be thus transported.

These qualities, inherent in the various substances around us, need not reveal what is loosely and popularly known as *beauty,* unless you are prepared to take that word in a very comprehensive sense. It is enough that they are what they are, in a perfectly ordinary, natural, normal way. Thus for instance it is not necessary that the section of road, or mountain, or desert over which we may chance to be travelling as we experience this mysterious ecstasy, should be in any particular fashion remarkable. If when we look down at our feet we see dust or sand or gravel or earth-mould, it is entirely unnecessary that it should be beautiful dust, beautiful sand, beautiful gravel, beautiful earth-mould! The " I am I," inhabiting its clothed-upon skeleton, in contact through its senses with dust, sand, gravel, earth-mould, air, fire, water, if it uses its mind in a certain particular way can feel from the mere ouch of these primeval things an incredible vibration of mystical happiness.

It may indeed be said that the first step in our approach to the only secret of happiness that does not fail us as we get older, is not an ascending step, but a descending step. And Detachment is necessary from the very start in this descent which is also an ascent; yes! we have to detach our soul from everything that exists in order to learn the art of creating existence and of dispensing with existence. And we have to begin with our own body. Only by detaching ourselves from our bodies can the magnetic currents of life-to-life that reach us from these inanimate things be saved from troubling hindrances and gross impediments.

By detaching the soul from the body I do not mean leaving the body. The detachment I speak of consists in a motion of the mind by which the mind feels itself to be independent of the body even while, like a hand in a well-fitting glove, it is still intimately and inseparably wearing the body. And just as the mind, to get the full effluence of the life-to-life flowing into the soul from earth, air and water, must make the interior motion of freeing itself from the body while it still wears the body, so the particular phenomenon of earth and rock and sand and water and vapour and fire that we are contemplating at the moment must be detached from its claim to form part of any pattern of beauty, and must be regarded in its integral texture, colour, smell, sound and taste as a unique essence, itself, *itself alone,* just as our own soul is a self alone!

To give a practical and concrete illustration of what I am hinting at, in this first

step to the art of detachment, consider for the moment that you are sitting on a large stone by a rapid stream, with your feet on the margin of a slope of smaller stones, past which the water flows. And now what are the present hindrances to any calm happiness of contemplation offered by your existing circumstances ? Your body is a little uncomfortable. Well! if you have not acquired the trick of detaching your mind from a slight discomfort of your body, you are certainly handicapped at the start. Then you are teased by the fact that the water that flows before you where you are seated is not beautifully checkered by sun-splashes or sun-flakes falling through overhanging foliage, as are the same river's waters a little way below.

In the other direction too — so you now begin teasing yourself with aggravating comparisons — there are much more comfortable stones to sit upon, and these smaller stones by the water's edge are sprinkled by exquisite moss or interspersed by delicate grass. The restless craving for beauty of the poet in us would be driving us on, up the stream, down the stream, ever in search of lovelier spots, of more perfect natural pictures. But a Being who is beginning to understand the secret of Detachment remains where the accident of his wayfaring has led him to rest. Enough for him is the mere primal fact that water — that miracle of miracles — flows by, at his feet, clear and fast, that the stones beneath it gleam with the broken lights, darken in the shadows, gather about them the mysterious suffusion of the aqueous twilight, have the impenetrable aloofness simply of being what they are, fragments of the sub-structure of our earthly home, parts and parcels of the primordial virginity of matter.

Suppose the sun to be setting as we sit alone by this flowing water and by these naked stones, the sensuous exigency of the poet would be fretting for the clouds to be touched with some especial glory; but the soul in us that is acquiring the secret of Detachment would find in the pure fire of the great orb itself a living fountain of that life-to-life, that breath of the "inanimate" going out to the "animate", and vice-versa, which is the ultimate reciprocity of our present world.

The beginning of the art of Detachment is the isolation of the central identity within us. It matters not how you name this inner self. Call it the soul; call it the breath of life ; call it the mind, the consciousness, the " I am I " of our inmost being. The name is nothing. "Feeling", as Goethe says, "is all in all. The name is sound and smoke, obscuring heaven's clear glow."

But once arrived at the feeling of of the detached "I am I," it matters nothing whether you call this feeling "Soul," "Self," "Mind," " Consciousness". To use it, to practise with it, to train it, to discipline it is the essential thing. It grows more and more of an integral entity — whatever it is and wherever it comes from — as you concentrate upon it or as, if you will, it concentrates upon itself. To use it, to work it, is the thing! It grows in the practice thereof. Its reality lies in its interior motion.

The grand advantage, from the viewpoint of personal happiness, of this art of

Detachment, lies in the escape from restlessness and from unfulfilled desire which it offers. In the simple instance I have given above, of a living man crouching on a naked stone above flowing water, and detaching his mind from any fretting,chafing desire to change a position thus given him by the accident of the way, it can be seen how the soul can enjoy the material world around it by a process of austere simplification.

Let it not be supposed that I am advocating any self-punishing puritanism in all this, or any auto-cruelty, or asceticism for the sake of asceticism. The natural test of all these tricks of the mind is the test of great creative Nature herself — namely the simple feeling of happiness. If the Detachment I am describing does not, very soon after the tension of the initial effort, bring you a flood of happiness, you may be sure that something is wrong and that you are on the wrong path. Such happiness cannot infallibly or invariably be procured; but by the art of Detachment and by a drastic simplification of the relations between the Self and the Not-Self it can be procured in a constantly increasing measure.

Returning for a moment to my imaginary man or woman seated on the stone by the water, suppose as you contemplate this water, feel this stone, and gaze at the great orb of flame going down in the West you are aware of no answering flood of happiness — what then ? But are you at the end of your resources ? That is the whole point. Not until you have exerted your *will*, or what used to be called "will", to the utmost of your strength, have you a right to cry out in the popular American slang, " Nothing Doing! "

All mortal creatures, men and women along with the lower animals, experience moods, under certain conditions, of exultant, flowing, luminous, thrilling happiness. Such happiness — what Wordsworth calls "the pleasure which there is in Life itself" — is surely the most wonderful and desirable thing in the world! Put anything else, out of all mortal experience, in the scales against it, and it will outweigh all. When such happiness flows through you, transforming, illuminating, inspiring your whole being, you feel at once that you, are in touch with an "absolute", with something absolute anyway, if not with *the* absolute.

Now the whole and sole purpose of the art of Detachment is to supply a practical technique for the attaining of this rare mood.

The great thing is to begin with the deliberate isolation of the soul without teasing ourselves to prove the soul's "existence". To "exist," to be "real", to be "true" adhere like varying tones and colours and odours to the soul's creative life; but the soul's life has many aspects, and among those which are nearest the centre of its revolutions are certain magical powers that though they only "exist" in the imagination are more precious and more alive than "reality". All these logical conceptions of solid, outward, unmalleable, inflexible, unporous objects, "marching", as Walt Whitman says, "triumphantly onwards", are conceptions from which it is necessary for the soul to detach itself.

But it is in relation to individual human beings that Detachment is most necessary of all. The wise man spends his life running away. But luckily he can run away without moving a step. We are all — men and women alike — teased by the blue-bottle flies who want to lay their eggs. These are the people who have never learnt and never could learn the art of detachment. They are blue-bottle flies — as my sister Philippa says — and they want to lay their eggs; and they can only lay their eggs in carrion. Not one of us but has carrion in him, carrion in her; and the buzzing blue-bottles, among our fellows, smell this afar off, and fly towards it, and would fain settle upon it and lay their eggs.

Here indeed, here most of all is it necessary to exercise the very magic of Detachment, that magic that makes it possible for you to be in one place — like the man seated on the naked stone by the flowing water — and yet to be in the heart of the flaming sun and at the circumference of the divine ether. For if you fail to exercise the magic of Detachment upon the blue-bottle flies who infest your road, they will really lay their eggs — the eggs of the maggots of civilization — in your soul. And then you will believe in the justifiability of vivisection; in the sacrosanct importance of private property; in the virtue of patriotic war; in slaughter-houses, in brothels, in slavery, and in the great, noble, scientific, gregarious, loving, human, un-detached art of — Advertisement. Rousseau was right. It is only by detaching yourself from human civilization that you can live a life worthy of a living soul.

The Aryan Path *editors' introduction to this essay begins: 'Everybody has been talking about* ***John Cowper Powys*** *because of his new book, an extraordinary novel —* A Glastonbury Romance. *Critics are much puzzled as to the meaning and the purpose of such a piece of writing. Perhaps one kind of clue may be found in this essay founded on Mr Powys's ideals and his endeavour to practise them ...'*

Despite affinities with other traditions, and like Whitman 'containing multitudes', JCP's angle of world-view, both visionary and practical, is surely very European. The Aryan *editors' puzzlement might have been a difficulty in taking* Glastonbury *at its face value?*

In December JCP wrote another article, 'Egotism and Impersonality', commissioned by the Aryan Path: 'The Great White Lodge ... are they superhuman spirits? ... The T.T. has resolved to type my rather specious and plausible & over scholastic article ... which I think they may refuse in Bombay but which I think they will pay for in New York. We shall see ...'

The river past Phudd — its sunlit glitter, its golden underwater stones, its rocks, its droughts, its floods, its ice, its fish — runs freely through JCP's life Upstate.

4th June 1933 (Whitsunday)
Then O my unknown Reader! when I reached the stream where last night I had

left that wretched pool full of fish & could only rescue one of them & those white fowls like Vultures hovering round & that wild crying yellowish Meadow-Lark or Kill-Deer screaming above for their death — behold and lo! This heavenly Rain had filled the river so that it had reached that wretched Pool! Shantih! Shantih! Shantih! as the "Wasteland" ends! All therefore is well. It reached the Pool & only stopped a few yards below it! Went on to Alders River & here I sat down on the grey stones by the willow the little willow & that expanse of shallow muddy but never drying up water where the stream flows broadest & calmest. Here still sitting for the Great Spirit —The [*pneuma hagon*] —The Holy Ghost — gives not a fig no! not a fart! whether you worship Him the Third Person of the Great Trinity sitting standing sneezing sleeping dunging pissing coughing, fucking, running, walking, hopping, skipping, or in any other activity or meditation or posture — All is Equal as long as you worship the Spirit. But and And the Sin against the Spirit is [to] limit its Power and its Virtue and its Inspiration to any Shape or Form or Pharasaic Rite or meticulous Ritual — Thus I, the arch-Pharisee & super-Ritualist worshipped on White Sunday, sitting hunched up by that muddy water! And the inspiration did flow through Petrushka! ... Had a lovely lesson. And read aloud standing Hoc Est Corpus Meus! [*their recent morning reading had included St Matthew and Dante's Inferno*]

7th June. ... Went upstairs to work & began with a good deal of grinding of ropes & hawling [*sic*] of pulleys my $75 article on "Detachment" for that Aryan Bombay paper of "the Great White Lodge"! ... 12th June. ... I want the T.T. to buy herself a new dress out of my Aryan Path. White Dress? Which Dress? which Dress ???? ... 13th June. She cannot decide on her New Dress — shall it be the Athletic costume or the Garden Party costume ...

19th June. ... still no Rain — Not a drop of water from the sky ... I stood in ecstasy by our rocks where there is water flowing still a little [...] I could see lovely reflections in it & a tiny trickle of melodious water came over the Rocks. And a great mass of Golden Buttercups looked so wondrous against the grey stones The grey stones the grey stones where the flood carried and deposited them. That is what I like so much in this country. I do like so very well the actual strata The sub-soil The soil, the rocks, the stones. To like the Soil of a place is most important — only Second to the Air of a place. And I have real fondness for these grey stones these slaty stones with white quartz in them. Had our Lesson — Homer, St Mark, Dante, Peter denying Christ and Virgil terrified at the ramparts of Dis ...

Talking or listening?

A sidelight from ***Marianne Moore*** *(1887–1972), poet and last editor (1925–29) of* The Dial

Padraic Colum's clemency and afflatus were not confined to the printed page, and upon his visits to the office, routine atmosphere was transformed into one of discovery. And John Cowper Powys, inalienable verbalist and student of strangeness, inventor of the term 'fairy cardinal' for Padraic Colum, seemed himself a supernatural being; so good a Samaritan, any other phase of endowment was almost an overplus. As Mrs Watson [*wife of* The Dial*'s company president*] said of his conversation, 'He is so intense, you don't know whether he's talking or listening'.

And his brother Llewelyn's dislike of 'a naturalist with an umbrella', of shams and pickthank science, come back to one in connection with his gift for metaphor; also, to one who has known the shallows of a tree-bordered stream, his phrase 'the cider-coloured reaches of the Stour'. And though suicidally kind to victims of injustice, he was as aloof from the world of non-books as a fish without eyes.

from 'The Dial: *A Retrospect', published in* Partisan Review, *January–February, 1942; collected in* Predilections *(Faber and Faber, 1956), pages 112–13. A new edition of Moore's poems was published recently.*

Patchin Place now

Readers of the *New York Times* on Christmas Day last year will have seen in it a splendid colour photograph of Patchin Place in the snow, with its fire escapes and ailanthus trees, and the Jefferson Market tower in the background, looking little changed from the 1920s when John Cowper and Llewelyn Powys resided there. The photo accompanies an article which bears the headline 'A Bastion of Literature Is a Bulwark for Therapy' and the sub-head 'The Evolving Life of a Greenwich Village Street'.

The article, by David Koeppel, begins predictably by rehearsing the names of some of the 'literary legends' who once lived there: 'E .E. Cummings, Theodore Dreiser and Djuna Barnes.' Equally predictably, neither John Cowper nor Llewelyn is mentioned. They might have raised an eyebrow to see their friend Dreiser invoked as a former resident, since he only stayed there for a short while in 1895, when he was an unknown journalist, more than 20 years before indoor plumbing and electricity were introduced (though perhaps there is some sort of pun at work here in the use of the word 'Bulwark' in the headline). But given what

we know from Boyne Grainger's memoir *We Lived in Patchin Place* (Powys Heritage Series No 7) about some of the characters who did inhabit the alley in their own day, perhaps they would not have been too surprised by the article's main revelation: Patchin Place is now home to the offices of 15 psychotherapists. About 35 residents still live in the alley's 10 narrow row houses. The influx of therapists, though, apparently began around the end of the 1980s, and Patchin is now one of the places to go to for counselling for trauma or treatment for sex disorders. It's amusing to note that the book John Cowper had published just a few weeks before moving into Patchin Place was *Psychoanalysis and Morality.*

Koeppel claims that the alley 'began its ascent into bohemian legend when E. E. Cummings moved to 4 Patchin Place in 1923', but as Grainger makes clear the legend seems to have had little to do with Cummings, who tended to keep himself to himself, at least during the Powys Brothers' residence which began the same year. Cummings merely lived there for 40 years, as did the equally reclusive Djuna Barnes, so it's hardly surprising, however, that his presence overshadows those of all others when it comes to literary anecdotage. (He was in the habit of calling out to his unseen neighbour, 'Are you still alive, Djuna?') Patchin Place, the article says, is a stop on Greenwich Village walking tours. One wonders how many of the tourists or their guides may be better informed than Mr Koeppel, and if the names of John Cowper Powys, Llewelyn Powys or, indeed, Alyse Gregory or Gamel Woolsey ever fall from their lips.

Anthony Head

Photo KK (1991).

We Lived In Patchin Place *by Boyne Grainger (edited by Anthony Head) is one of the Powys Heritage booklets published by Cecil Woolf (1 Mornington Place, London NW1 7RP).*

Malcolm Elwin

Malcolm Elwin (1903–73), described in an obituary as 'a complete and dedicated man of letters', was well known as a literary biographer from the 1930s on, and was a Powys pioneer to whom we owe a very great deal. His biography of Llewelyn (Bodley Head, 1946) was a strong seller. At Alyse's request it was discreet about Llewelyn's private life, and this was eventually supplemented by *So Wild a Thing*, Llewelyn's letters to Gamel Woolsey edited by Malcolm Elwin (Ark Press 1973). His edition of the *Letters* of JCP to LlP (a selection from typescripts made by Alyse) was finally published by Village Press, in 1975 and 1982. (Most of the original letters are now in Texas.)

Meanwhile, as editor and literary adviser for Macdonald's, his contribution to the life and work of JCP was crucial. As described in his lucid and informative 'John Cowper Powys and his Publishers' (*Essays on JCP*, ed. Belinda Humfrey, 1972), he corresponded intensively with JCP for the LlP biography, and commissioned the prefaces to Sterne in the Macdonald Illustrated Classics series (for which JCP was paid double). It was these, with Elwin's unconditionally enthusiastic report on *Porius* (*'gigantic in conception and achievement ... profound scholar*

Malcolm Elwin, 1953.

ship ... dramatic vitality ... great genius ...'), that convinced Eric Harvey (the managing director) and led to Macdonald's publishing all Powys's books from then on.

Both Eric Harvey and the Elwins came to see JCP in Wales. JCP wrote to Louis Wilkinson on July 22nd 1955: *I am so incredibly lucky in my Publisher. He and his wife came to spend half a day with us here and he has been of the utmost help to me in the actual naming, dividing & arranging of chapters & scenes in my Roger Bacon book. O yes! and we had a perfectly charming and thrilling visit from Malcolm and his Eve. Malcolm is a nice man and an honest man. I felt and so did Phyllis real affection and feeling for him. He's an "honest cod" if you like and I noted on another earlier occasion when they first came to Corwen how Eve Elwin actually wept when they talked of Lulu* ....

Elwin's admiration for JCP did not stop him from feeling doubtful about JCP's *Letters to Louis* which he encouraged Louis to edit, and which were published in 1958 by Macdonald's. Louis's *Letters of Llewelyn Powys*, with an introduction by Alyse Gregory, had come out in 1943 with Bodley Head. (The only selection of JCP's letters to different people, so far, has been in French: *Esprits-Frères*, José Corti, 2001).

Writing to Louis Wilkinson on 9th May 1956, Malcom Elwin mentions a letter of Sylvia Townend Warner's to Katie Powys, presumably appreciating JCP's letter-writing style, which he qualifies by his own opinion that though always characteristic, JCP was a very uneven letter-writer and his judgments often so crazy that they were unjust to himself as well as to the subjects he was discussing. There was also his way of putting on an act for each correspondent – with Louis, his 'old Louis' act, which might be amusing in an actual letter but could become tedious in a whole book – like a biography of an actor that dealt only with one of his parts. The charm of Louis's collection of Llewelyn's letters was in the many angles the reader saw the writer from – both Llewelyn and John suited their mood to their correspondent, but John 'playing up' in his desire to please and conciliate often comes close to a kind of insincerity that he would be incapable of in himself. (JCP explains this in his autobiography, when he envies Llewelyn's ease in talking with country people, something his own striving to please would prevent him achieving.) Elwin acknowledges what Miss Warner says, that generations to come will read and argue and write about John – though he predicts that in the future, as then, this will be a precious small number in each generation ....

Malcolm Elwin's last contribution to the Powyses' work was an introduction to the reissue of *Confessions of Two Brothers* (USA, 1916; Sinclair Browne, 1982 – the first English edition). He contrasts the different approaches of the brothers in their 'confessions' – JCP warning his readers that they must follow him furtively, on the lookout for betrayals and unmaskings, while there is never any mistaking Llewelyn's meaning, since knowing he might have little time to spare he learned early to write lucidly and with power.

Writing at the end of his life, Elwin, a generation younger than the Powyses, judges that along with Aldous Huxley and D. H. Lawrence, the two Powys brothers have meant more to him than any other of his contemporaries. When his 1946 biography of Llewelyn sold so well, he had thought that the six years of wartime misery had opened people's hearts and minds to recognise that the true purpose of life is not utilitarian activity and acquisitiveness but the achievement of happiness; since then, however, disillusionment with unprincipled politicians and industrialists have made him feel that with our hopes dashed we are now rushing downhill like a herd of swine into cynical materialism. He ends sadly, but nevertheless with some hope at the bottom, like the saying from Rabelais both these brothers often quoted (*'Bon Espoir Y Gist Au Fond*). The young at least still have the chance to leap into the habit of thought of these two great thinkers, and to learn to look inward in search of the good (or God) within themselves.

Malcolm Elwin: A Memory

by Bryant Fell

On the first of July 1945, a dreary, wet, Liverpool day, two things had happened. At the age of eleven I had finished circumnavigating the world, and for the second time in my life, had arrived back in England the land of my birth. I was with my mother and sister, and we were going to stay with my aunt and uncle, Eve and Malcolm Elwin.

We had been living in America, and I can remember thinking how small the English train was, and how green the fields were. Our destination, Barnstaple, arrived all too soon, bringing the first view of my new relatives. Eve was not unlike my mother, not surprising as they were sisters – and Malcolm, at six foot three and a half inches, and weighing seventeen stone, exuded benign confidence, and massive good will. His Nottinghamshire accent, although only slight, contrasted with my American twang.

We joined the Elwins in a small bungalow at Woody Bay, and when my two cousins returned for the school holidays, to what was their home, we all felt very squashed. I slept on a camp bed in the corridor, with the constant rattle of Malcolm's typewriter keeping me company. Because there was no space or privacy during the day, he had to work at night, and sleep when the rest of the family were awake. Always a meticulous writer, Malcolm's handwriting was dreadful, but using only two fingers, he was a highly efficient and accurate typist.

Included amongst Malcolm's visitors at this time, was a fascinating man called Louis Wilkinson. He taught me how to swim, and he and Malcolm used to have long conversations about the Powys family.

In 1946 we moved to a larger house at Westward Ho! We had to: with my two cousins, sister, mother, aunt, Malcolm and myself, there were seven of us to accommodate, and we needed more space. The new house suited Malcolm, and now that he had his own study and bedroom, he was able to sleep at night again, and work throughout the day. It was a happy time. Malcolm was planning to turn his field into a cricket pitch, and although he never did, as he used to play for Oxfordshire before the war, it was not long before he was bowling for Devon.

Henry Williamson, who made us all laugh with his jokes and songs, was a frequent visitor. He used to arrive in a two-seater Aston Martin, wanting Malcolm's advice. I particularly remember the day I played my first game of cricket at Lynton, after which Henry gave me a lift back to Westward Ho! in his car. He talked non-stop throughout the journey, telling me what a great man Hitler was, and that one day history would recognise that fact. I listened but said nothing. It didn't make sense to me, but how could a twelve-year-old understand all that?

Malcolm's devoted companion in those days was an enormous bull mastiff named Jonny. He was a gentle, good-humoured, and patient dog, who once showed his devotion to his master at a cricket match. He had been tied to a white picket fence which was fixed around the pavilion, and when Malcolm led his team out to play, they were followed by Jonny, and the picket fence.

I was sent away to boarding school, and when I returned home, the names of Valentine Ackland, Sylvia Townsend Warner, JCP, Llewelyn and T. F. Powys, were mentioned more and more. Visitors included cricketers from Malcolm's club, and from the *West Country Magazine*, of which Malcolm was the editor.

At this time Malcolm was not only writing his own books, but had become Literary Adviser to Macdonald's and [its managing director] Eric Harvey. Malcolm's *Life of Llewelyn Powys* came out in 1946, and as *Old Gods Falling*, *de Quincey*, *Charles Reade*, *Victorian Wallflowers*, *Landor*, and *Thackeray* had already been published, he felt justified in persuading Eric Harvey to republish the Powys brothers. To his credit Eric did.

Malcolm used to read aloud during winter evenings, and *God's Eyes A-Twinkle*, *England their England*, and *The Diary of a Nobody* were greeted with gales of laughter from the family. Malcolm always encouraged me to read for myself. Surrounded by so many books I rarely went to the library, but when I asked him – viewing his 25,000 books – what I ought to read, his answer was simple: "Anything you want."

In 1950 Malcolm moved to Putsborough [N. Devon] – he always wanted to be in sight and sound of the sea. Lord Lytton had asked him to use the Lovelace Papers to write four books on Byron and his family. He completed two books before he died, and the third, not quite finished, was edited from Malcolm's typescript by Professor Peter Thomson of Exeter University. Although I am not qualified to judge, it was probably at Putsborough that his best work was written.

It was there I remember a young Colin Wilson, sitting on the sofa in the lounge, telling Malcolm how to write; and I also remember spending an entire afternoon with Negley Farson – who lived next door – trying to switch his half-full bottle of gin with an empty one I'd hidden behind my back.

The long process of publishing Henry Williamson's *Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* had started; and Malcolm, as well as working on the Lovelace Papers, was still championing the cause of the Powys brothers. Visitors abounded.

What kind of man was Malcolm Elwin? I found him gentle and innocent, but perhaps anecdotal evidence might help the reader to make up his mind. He loved cricket. The formation of the South Oxfordshire Amateurs brought together a great many disparate characters, who played and enjoyed the game under his benevolent gaze. Dame Clara Butt died holding his hand; he helped Daphne du Maurier with her spelling; supported James Hanley; and edited the Macdonald Classics and the Rider Haggard books. To everyone's amusement at home, he would hold long conversations while walking around the house, with the entirely fictitious Jones family, and a mysterious lady called Eunice Flagg.

From a personal point of view he was a kindly but reticent man: I never had heart to heart talks with him, but he made me a member of The Wine Society, and The Author's Club, and to some extent, as my parents were divorced, acted as a surrogate father to me. He knew in 1958 that I had Multiple Sclerosis, although I didn't find out myself until 1988! He introduced me to Alyse Gregory, whom I thought was a lovely person – as well as to the wonders of the written word. I remember him coming into breakfast one day with a letter, and the report he had written on a manuscript for Macdonald's. He told us he had advised them that although the author's books were not well-written, if they wished to make a great deal of money they should publish her. Macdonald's ignored his advice, and Catherine Cookson moved elsewhere.

When we were at Westward Ho! I remember, as far back as 1946, that I would collect Malcolm's cigarettes for him. He smoked 1000 Passing Cloud each week. When Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer, put the price up, he cut his intake to 500, but that was too late: it was of course smoking that killed him.

Literature and cricket both owe a debt to Malcolm Elwin, but he kept his innocence throughout his life. As Stanton said about Lincoln: 'Now he belongs to the ages.' As a postscript, Malcolm kept all his letters, and copies of his replies. J. B. Priestley once said to him: 'They don't make our kind any more.' It is a sign of Malcolm's reputation, that in 1946, in the first two issues of the *West Country Magazine* the following contributors were included: Henry Williamson, Llewelyn Powys, T. F. Powys, Valentine Ackland, Louis Marlow, J. C. Trewin, and Ronald Duncan.

Bryant Fell now lives in Anglesey.

'The Kingdom'

***Louis MacNeice**'s description of Littleton Powys, his old headmaster, as 'Owen' in* Autumn Sequel *(1952) is well known. Less firmly identified with Littleton, but surely with some of his character, is the unnamed portrait in MacNeice's* 'The Kingdom' *(1945, parts of section II below). Typescripts of both the poems are in the Bissell collection, together with notes by Littleton on MacNeice's work.*

The 'Kingdom' is perhaps both England and a kind of commonwealth: 'a Kingdom of individuals ... Equal in difference, interchangeably sovereign ... members of a Kingdom / Which has no king except each subject ...'

Take this old man with the soldierly straight back
Dressed in tweeds like a squire but he has not a squire's presumption,
His hands are gentle with wild flowers, his memory
Latticed with dialect and anecdotes
And wisps of nature poetry; he is of the Kingdom,
A country-lover and very English, the cadence
Of Christmas bells in his voice, his face like Cotswold stone
Severe but warm, a sureness in his walk
And his blood attuned to the seasons — whether it is the glyptic
Winter turning feathered twigs to stone
And making the Old Bill pollards monuments
Beside the dyke of Lethe — or if it is the frantic
Calf-love and early oratory of spring —
Or peony-time with the midges dancing — or later, sweeter,
That two-in-one of clarity and mist,
Of maidenlight and ripeness, which is autumn:
Every case is new and yet he knows the answers
For he is of the Kingdom. Through the serene and chequered
Fields that he knows he walks like a fallen angel
Whose fall has made him a man ...

Being mature and yet naive, a lover
Of what is not himself — but it becomes himself
And he repays it interest, so has had
A happy life and will die happy; more —
Belongs, though he never knew it, to the Kingdom.

Alone in company ... a note on JCP

In one of his books John Cowper Powys states that in most families there exists an intellectual person, inquisitive and endowed with a certain sensitiveness, who to some extent requires a *modus vivendi* different from the other family members. To these individuals he dedicates his work.

But remember, this doesn't apply to Powys himself; indeed far from it. He grew up in a circle of siblings who all more or less had this special disposition; most of them were, like himself, to become writers or artists. Hence he experienced life and the blows of society from a basis of intimate communication with like-minded souls, a rare circumstance, and this is the background for his search for solitude; reinforced maybe by the instinct of children who grow up with many siblings to find their own time and space. It is important to be aware of this different starting-point, to make one receptive to the inspiration of his works.

Many with similar inclinations have, on the contrary, experienced desolation and loneliness, and it is to such persons Powys directs his writings, at least his philosophical writings. Once you become conscious of this paradox, the passionate and humorous vein in his work opens up to you in a new way. He has sought solitude while you sought company, but there is a common reason for it, uneasiness in conventional culture – and his search for solitude becomes a way to be in contact with yourself in society.

We all have to deal with existing conditions, and being spoiled, as Powys was, by finding at an early age a level of communication which could be maintained and expanded throughout life, did not protect him from life's sufferings and enjoyments. It just made his approach different: cultivating from the start (as he did, being an almost automatically reading and writing individual) a sort of literary response to social events. To be open to an author depends on if you know who you are, and who he is.

Gunnar Lundin

Dear Gunnar (you asked for a reply): Congratulations to you and Sven-Erik on Solitude *– at last. It is interesting (and not only I guess from what translations are available) that it is the non-fiction, philosophical JCP who especially appeals in Sweden. Solitude – nature – adult education: subjects written about in the* NYHETSBREV *('newsletter', I take it – which I've enjoyed reading now it is bilingual). His humanist values, his 'natural (or nature-) religion', his approach to an almost oriental way of thinking. (What did you think of 'The Ridge'?) Several essays on JCP and Dostoievsky, I see. I'm not sure whether his descriptions of nature, so detailed, appeal to you because they are familiar or unfamiliar scenes. We imagine wide solitary Scandinavian landscapes – perhaps quite wrongly, and you have hedgerows like ours.*

In any case, it's mental solitude that concerns you here. It certainly would be bad luck

to grow up without meeting any sympathetic person – even with books in your life. Was it because JCP was aware of his luck in this way, that made him so aware of its opposite?

Of course, there are disadvantages to large sympathetic families as well as advantages. It's often said that 'encouraging' families make it harder to discover who you are (though not many Victorian families would be encouraging enough!) On the other hand, it's likely there'll be one or two siblings conventional enough by nature to keep the parents happy, and free the rest to be different.

There are sympathetic brothers in the novels, but most of the men in them seem to be solitary? What's remarkable is how JCP, so expert at being alone – so fortunate in being able to be 'alone a deux' *– worked to keep up the luck he had with all his responsive siblings, and with his chosen friends, through letters and in his life.*

KK

Sidelight: Best Novels

I almost took an interest in the recent BBC stunt to find the nation's favourite novel. However, the long list was so uninspiring that I was dissuaded, and the short list seemed to have been chosen from the most mediocre. The three novels I regard as the finest in the English language – *Ulysses*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *Wolf Solent* – were nowhere.

Simon Heffer in *Spectator* Diary, 3 Jan 04

Sidelight: 'Primate Research'

Anthony O'Hear in *The Times* 'Thunderer' column (28th January 2004) deplores the blackmailing by animal rights activists causing Cambridge University to abandon its planned new laboratory for primate research. 'This decision strikes at academic freedom itself and so at the heart of what a university is. ... **As an admirer of the novelist John Cowper Powys, an implacable enemy of vivisection, I have some sympathy with the protesters Some, but not much** ... Like 99 per cent of my species, I am what animal rights theorists call a species-ist, holding that there are circumstances in which benefit to human beings must trump the interest even of higher primates ...'

Ho hum. There are weasel words in this column ('conventional pieties', 'free enquiry even if', 'however unpopular', 'benefits which research promises'), and not all scientists are like JCP's sadistic doctors. Vivisection remains a true clash of philosophies. Implacable principles like JCP's (there are some things we don't do) may be the only valid answer. KK

Powys PUBS

A letter from **Terry Townsend** *asks whether Powys Society members can help him with his researches into English pubs, inns and hotels with literary connections. He would like to know about any actual hostelries featured in their books, either in their own name or disguised – also whether any of the Powyses visited or stayed in inns which were later used as background in their fiction.*

I have already discovered and visited the following inns. And would be grateful if you could comment, or add to the list?

From *Mr. Weston's Good Wine:*
The King's Arms, Dorchester. From the opening sequence when Mr Weston waits in his van in the high street while his assistant Michael takes refreshment in the inn.
The Sailor's Return, Chaldon Herring. The 'Folly Down' village local where a great deal of the action takes place.

From *A Glastonbury Romance:*
Northwold Arms (or New Inn), Norfolk. The Crown in Northwold fits the description and has been identified by Julian Earwaker and Kathleen Becker in their book on Literary Norfolk.
Pilgrim's Inn, Glastonbury. The famous George & Pilgrims Inn in High Street Glastonbury is a meeting and dining place for a number of the characters throughout the story.
St Michael's Inn, Glastonbury. This perfectly matches the description of the seventeenth-century 'Rifleman's Arms' at number 4 Chilkwell Street, about halfway between the Abbey Barn Rural Life Museum and the Chalice Well Gardens of St Michael. The dim lighting and low ceilings in the ancient inn help convey the very real impression of antiquity. A central doorway from the bar leads through to a small back room which still contains an old kitchen range where 'Red Robinson ... found himself, as a matter of fact, extremely comfortable in the little, seldom-used inn-parlour with half a bottle of gin unfinished on the table and a good fire in the grate ...'
Dickery Cantle's Tavern, Glastonbury. I have not yet been able to identify this 'smaller tavern ...' which is described as being both 'at the Cattle Market' and 'near the Cattle Market' and where Philip Crow (looking through field glasses from the summit of Wirral Hill) could see 'a large crowd of people on the roof' seeking refuge from the flood.
Zoyland Arms, Wookey Hole. 'a little wayside inn ... close to the entrance to Wookey Hole Cave' where Philip Crow 'and Barter had their own particular bedrooms'. This must be the present day Wookey Hole Inn, where a significant part of the action takes place.

The Green Pheasant, Taunton. Where Persephone Spear and Philip Crow spend the night. Before being widened to create an inner relief road, Mary Street, was 'a back street of that ancient town. And the 'little out-of-the-way tavern' called the 'Green Pheasant' is now home to Selwoods' antique furniture shop. From an old print in the library, everything matches the description of the view from the upstairs room of the 'two (factory) chimneys' and 'the great Taunton Church Towers'. This fascinating building, whose fabric is virtually unchanged since Powys's time, was formerly 'The Bird in Hand' inn and brewery. The present proprietor has created a small museum in one of the upstairs rooms complete with four-poster bed and crammed with turn-of-the-century artifacts.

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Please share your discoveries with the Newsletter*! Some more suggestions:—*

In *Wolf Solent*, chapter 8, **'The Three Peewits'**: Wolf makes his way from Malakite's bookshop to this inn in 'Blacksod', where he has supper beneath a picture of Queen Victoria. A long scene with many characters then takes place in the 'little inner parlour'. There is a little counter with an aperture in the wall through which drinks are served. It reads like a real place, and a member reports some years ago visiting the **Three Choughs** in **Yeovil**, which would correspond. In *Maiden Castle* (chapter 1) Dud Noman, intent on pursuing Wizzie, thinks of taking the train to Yeovil and spending the day at the **Three Choughs**. The **Antelope** hotel **Dorchester** — friendly and old, nearly at the top of South Street — also plays a part (the lunch party in chapter 5) as it did in JCP's real life (see *The Dorset Year*).

In *Weymouth Sands* chapter 8, **'The Sea-Serpent'** is by Chesil Beach, on the way from Weymouth to Portland: 'the curious Inn known as The Sea-Serpent's Head, or just briefly, The Head, on the seaward side of the hamlet of Weston'. Crucial scenes take place there, including the end of the book.

Returning to Northwold, we are told that the beer at the **Northwold Arms** is 'Patteson's best ale and brewed at Norwich' (*A Glastonbury Romance*, 12). JCP's great-grandfather on his mother's side, John Staniforth Patteson of Cringleford in Norfolk, was a partner in the brewery in Norwich founded by **his** father.


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