Editorial

Some of the Powys sightings here might be called extended 'sidelights' – Theodore as baby-care adviser, Llewelyn bivouacking on a New York roof, JCP enduring the Waterloo station tea room – but (given the wealth of Powys material we have) it's hoped that focussing sidelights may help to build up the hologram. We have tributes to Gerald Pollinger of the famous firm of literary agents that managed Powys estates for many years; and a tribute to Marian Powys from Theodora Scutt. The 1935 Foyles Literary Luncheon is seen from a variety of viewpoints.

Pursuing the Heads of JCP, the two sculptors who made portraits of him in his last years were both also writers, and left lively descriptions of the experience. Jonah Jones (whose 1957 Head is in the National Library of Wales) has recently died; Oloff de Wet's 1963 Head (late of the Village Bookshop) is on the cover.

The Conference at Llangollen in 2003 was an undoubted success, and we look forward to repeating it – even if such good weather could hardly be expected to strike twice. Meanwhile, Dorchester at midsummer is always a pleasant experience, if you are thinking of joining the TFP discussion group on June 4th. *Please complete the forms as soon as possible .....*

ON OTHER PAGES

Nominations and Elections

Nominations are required for all the Honorary Officers of the Society 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 Lazare at 25 Mansfield Road, Taunton, TA1 3NJ **not later than 30th June 2005.**

Honorary Officers

The present Honorary Officers are as follows:

Chairman	Richard Perceval Graves
Vice-Chairman	David Gervais
Hon. Treasurer	Michael J. French
Hon. Secretary	Peter Lazare

The one-year term of all these Officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 21 August 2005. The Vice-Chairman, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary have indicated their willingness to serve for a further year; but our Chairman Richard Perceval Graves wishes to depart to the back benches, from where he has promised to continue to work on the Society's Web site.

Members of the Committee

David Gervais, Timothy Hyman, David Goodway, Lorna Burns and Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe have two years to run of their three-year term of office. Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner and John Powys have one year to run of their three-year term of office. There are therefore no committee vacancies this year, but the Secretary would be glad to hear from anyone who would like to serve on the Committee in future.

PL

The Powys Society Conference 2005

at The Hand Hotel, Bridge Street, Llangollen LL20 8PL
Friday 19th August – Sunday 21st August

The 33rd Powys Society Conference will take place as in 2003 at the **Hand Hotel, Llangollen**. The **provisional order** of the programme of speakers begins at 7.30 on Friday, with Professor Charles Lock, Professor of English Literature at the University of Copenhagen. This will follow our usual informal reception and dinner. The first talk on Saturday will be given by Richard Maxwell, who lectures in Comparative Literature and English at the University of Yale; the second talk

at 11.30 will be by Barbara Ozieblo of the University of Malaga, who will be speaking on 'The friendship of women: Alyse Gregory and Gamel Woolsey'. Saturday afternoon will be free for walks, excursions and leisure, and after dinner there will be a dramatised **entertainment** of readings. On Sunday morning there will be a talk by a fourth speaker, and after the AGM at 11.00 we will follow the pattern of previous years with a Members' **Discussion**. A theme for the conference ('The Centre and the Circle') will be how the Powyses made self-sufficient worlds for themselves in the outlying places where most of them chose to live. Further details of all events will be in the next (July) *Newsletter*.

The **Hand Hotel** stands above the River Dee close to the centre of Llangollen, one of Wales's prettiest towns surrounded by scenic beauty and historic interest. Dinas Brân with its hilltop castle and the ruins of Valle Crucis abbey are within easy distance, as is JCP's Corwen. Once an important coaching inn, this popular hotel combines its old world charms with modern amenities. All rooms are within the Hotel, all have private bathrooms and most have interesting views. The dining room looks across the river to Dinas Brân, and we will have a special room for lectures. See *Newsletters* 47 (page 6) and 50 (pages 10–19) for impressions of Llangollen and our very enjoyable conference at the Hand Hotel in 2003. More details about the Hand Hotel, transport etc. are on our Web site at www.powys-society.org

Please return the booking form as soon as possible. We need to know numbers and have a non-refundable deposit of £25. Bookings will be made on a first-come, first-served basis as places are limited. If you wish you can pay the full amount at this stage. Otherwise, we will be in touch nearer the time with further details and a request for the remaining fee. Please indicate your preference among the four options and any special requirements.

Our **Conference Organisers** on the day will again be Peter Foss and Louise de Bruin, to whom you should address any queries. Louise can be contacted on 01258–817825, or written to at 600 Mappowder, Sturminster Newton, Dorset DT10 2EH. Peter can be telephoned on 01452–304539 or e-mailed at pifoss@supanet.com

RPG / KK

List of Members

We would like to make an updated List of Members which would be available to Members only. **If you do not wish to be included** please let the Hon. Secretary know.

T. F. Powys Discussion Meeting
at the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester
Saturday 4th June 2005

Professor John Williams has agreed to lead a one-day discussion, concentrating on one of T. F. Powys's most powerful stories, 'John Pardy and the Waves'. Those taking part will be expected to be familiar with this story, and ideally with other stories by TFP. A photocopy can be sent on request.

The meeting will take place on Saturday, 4th June at the Dorset County Museum, where of course our Powys Collection is housed. (We will hope to include a visit to the Powys Room.) As before, we will aim to meet at the Museum between 11 and 12 a.m., adjourn for an early lunch at a pub and hold the discussion in the afternoon, with tea available. The long evening would allow for a visit to a Powys site.

If you would be interested in joining in this event, **PLEASE CONTACT** the Secretary, Peter Lazare, as soon as possible (address inside front cover).

Obituary
Gerald Pollinger *(1925–2005)*

The President writes:

Gerald Pollinger will be vividly remembered by long-standing attenders at Conference weekends for his visits in his capacity as Literary Agent for the estates of John Cowper and Theodore Powys. He would keep us abreast with current and prospective plans for re-publication, and with regard to possible adaptations of their work for radio and television. He could be both sanguine and pungent on those occasions, and was generous in waiving copyright fees for Society publications. His exuberant personality delighted in exercising gastronomic hospitality to his clients, as Kenneth Hopkins and I could testify. Gerald was also a member of the Magician's Circle, so I understand, a role that seems appropriate in one so closely involved in the promotion of the work of John Cowper Powys.

***An obituary notice in* The Bookseller** *(by David Hale, February 11th 2005) tells us also that Gerald Pollinger joined the literary agency founded by his father Laurence after a war spent in the RAF. He dealt with the American side of the business, with a*

special interest in the 'military service' authors with whom he felt affinities, as well as with D. H. Lawrence and the Powys family, two of the literary estates handled by the company. The Pollingers founded their own separate company in 1958; among other authors Gerald handled were John Wyndham, H. E. Bates, John Masters and Graham Greene. Other interests, on which he compiled books, were aviation history and model railways. Gerald Pollinger died on 5th January and Jean, his wife of 53 years, survived him by only two weeks; both having recently suffered serious accidents.

Gerald Pollinger – A Personal Appreciation

It was with great sadness, and not a little shock (because of the manner of it), that I heard of the death of Gerald Pollinger, at the age of 79, in January this year. As someone who came quite late to the Pollinger fold, I recalled what a remarkable impression he made on anyone who came within his orbit. In 1982 I wrote to him out of the blue on an enquiry about a copyright issue with regard to the publication, then in the offing, of my *History of Market Bosworth* (1983). It was the merest matter – just a few lines quoted from Elwin's initial dip into the Byron papers, *The Noels and the Milbankes* (1978). Gerald was, as always, prompt and helpful, and put my mind at rest as to where I stood.

From then on, with various projects that I weaved in and out of – the country essays of Llewelyn Powys, a film of the Battle of Bosworth, my Bibliography, a projected Biography of Llewelyn – in all these schemes, some of which have come to fruition, others not – he was in turns encouraging, provocative, and straight-talking. But above all I remember his sheer kindness and affability, and the willingness to see me any time when I was in London, and take me to lunch! Not every literary agent would do that for a mere fry, and certainly not one who had on his books some of the great names in modern literature. He always seemed to have time for you.

Those lunches were the stuff of legend! They would last three hours, would include everything expensive on the menu, and wine galore, and all of this was just down the stairs in one of the many restaurants in Maddox Street. The office in Maddox Street was straight out of a more leisurely, literary world. It had the air of Dickensian ledgers, lots of panelling, as I remember, and walls lined with small studio portraits of writers who were familiar (though many now supposedly 'forgotten') from the 40s and 50s. The outer office seemed to be crowded, but Gerald's room was spacious. He usually sat behind a vast table, ebullient and expansive, wearing a Kwintner waistcoat (called 'a Pollinger'), and carpet slippers. He was awesome and loveable at the same time.

And then, what was most remarkable, was that he took such interest in the Powys brothers and their circle. He personally negotiated all the publications in the 70s, 80s and 90s. He had an impressive library of Powys books in his inner sanctum at Maddox Street. And he and his wife Jean were often to be seen at the Conferences. In later days he would address the members with a résumé of the

publications situation. His father, Laurence Pollinger, had been a true friend to John Cowper; and he felt personally hurt that the Powys estates were taken away from his charge. It was, I felt, regrettable that the importance of this connection was not appreciated, and as Secretary I hoped that some amends for this low moment in the Society's history would be made by the reinstatement of his Honorary Life Membership. There can be very few literary agents who take such a personal interest in their authors as he did, and we were privileged to have him for that time as the agent for the estates of John Cowper and Theodore. (The Llewelyn Powys estate remains with the firm still.)

Gerald Pollinger was a 'larger-than-life' figure, and will be missed by all who knew him.

Peter Foss

With thanks to Jeff Kwintner for this portrait. For Jeff, ***Gerald Pollinger*** *was everything a literary man of the older generation could be, generous-spirited, hospitable and unfailingly helpful. His enthusiasm and support for the Powys cause smoothed the way for the Village Press and later publications, notably the 1930–31 JCP Diaries.*

Obituary

John Philip (Jack) Rushby (21st April 1921 – 14th December 2004)

It is with sadness that we record the passing after a long illness of former Powys Society stalwart and original founder member Jack Rushby, who died in Liverpool on December 14th 2004, aged 83 years. Many within the society will remember Jack with special fondness as a gentleman with an insatiable appetite for correspondence – and in this respect he was truly a 'man of letters' – in similar fashion to his literary hero, John Cowper Powys! At early Powys gatherings during the sixties and seventies Jack formed many rewarding friendships which he valued immensely throughout the remainder of his life, counting the likes of Frances Powys, Lucy Penny, Gerard Casey, Bill Lander, Kenneth Hopkins, Alyse Gregory and many others amongst his friends and correspondents.

Born in Liverpool on April 21st 1921, Jack joined the Royal Navy in 1938 as a seventeen year-old Ordinary Seaman based at Rosyth in Scotland and saw active service in the North Atlantic during the war, running the gauntlet by escorting food convoys between Scotland and Russia. A dyed-in-the-wool lifelong socialist, he often described himself as 'a bit of a rebel' and indeed, amongst his most endearing qualities was a natural tendency towards militancy and insubordination – which saw him reduced to the ranks on several occasions during his eight years of naval service: thus he was an Ordinary Seaman when he left the navy in 1946. He met Dunfermline-born Kathleen whilst on active service and they married in Scotland on June 7th 1943, moving back to Liverpool to raise a family when the war ended in 1945. Jack joined in the reconstruction of the heavily bombed city by becoming a bricklayer with MacAlpines, and a staunch Trade Unionist, and over the next forty years worked on a number of major building projects in Liverpool including the University, the docks, and both Anglican & Catholic Cathedrals. Ill health forced him into early retirement at the age of 64, and he sadly became a widower following the early death of wife Kathleen from cancer in 1986.

A true artisan, but with a love of literature and the temperament and appreciation of the artist, Jack became a confirmed bibliophile and spent the remainder of his life surrounded by the books he loved, and corresponding with those who shared his passion. His eclectic tastes were mirrored amongst his substantial literary collection, and along with hundreds of letters could be found diverse books by authors like Shaw, Balzac, Dostoievsky, Rabelais, Hobbes and Arthur Machen, as well as prized first editions of his favourite Powys authors, JCP and TFP and many others. He enjoyed several trips to America to visit daughter Andrea and his grandchildren, but his final years were beset by a serious heart condition which required by-pass surgery and lengthy periods of hospitalization. Nevertheless, although seriously disabled, he managed to retain his zest for letter writing and maintained a dwindling correspondence to the end.

A service attended by family and friends was held at Springwood Crematorium, Liverpool on December 23rd and floral tributes included a four feet high tableau in the shape of a pint of Guinness 'from his friends at The Grange Hotel'. Pre-deceased by wife Kathleen and sons Raymond and John, he leaves a son Colin, daughter Andrea, and two grandchildren. Jack Rushby also leaves behind many friends within The Powys Society who share fond memories of a loyal friend, a devoted correspondent, and a truly gentle man of Liverpool. He will be sadly missed.

Neil Lee

Neil Lee's 'Interview with Alyse Gregory', composed from letters from her to Jack Rushby written in 1965–66, is in Newsletter *24 (page 44).*

News and Notes

The planned **Discussion Group** at Dorchester on 4th June *(see BOX on page 4)* should be a very enjoyable day as were the previous two (*see Newsletters* 49 and 52). The idea is to take a particular Powys work with time to examine it closely. The subject would again be **T. F. Powys,** and the group led by John Williams who has often spoken on TF at our conferences, with many contributions to the *Review* and *Journal.* TFP's story 'John Pardy and the Waves' is suggested for special consideration; this is in the Selected TF stories curiously entitled *God's Eyes A-Twinkle*, but photocopies of the story will be available in advance to those interested. See *Newsletter* 47 for Peter Redgrove's introduction to a proposed reprint in 1984; and the last *Newsletter* (53) for William Empson's views on TFP in the 1930s. The **video** made of the 2003 discussion on TFP, with David Gervais, is still available (@ £5+p&p, please ask the Secretary).

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Two volunteers at the **Dorset County Museum,** Mel Crowther and Jasmine Metcalfe, have been working with Morine Krissdóttir for two days a month since last September at the **Powys Collection,** helping with the continuing sorting and cataloguing. Requests to see the Collection should for the time being be addressed as before to the Museum director, Judy Lindsay.

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Judith Stinton's book ***A Dorset Utopia****: the Little Commonwealth and Homer Lane*, on the unique 1913–18 experiment in rehabilitation for troubled children, will be published in May by Black Dog Books (104 Trinity St, Norwich, tel. 01603 623771, email: blackdogbooks@waitrose.com). Her *Chaldon Herring* is still available from the same publisher.

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Peter Foss's **Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys** has been accepted for publica-

tion by the British Library, and may be ready by the time of the Conference.

His 1988 study of the Battle of Bosworth (1485) has had media coverage recently, with subsequent historians favouring the Foss hypothesis on the battle site, which is currently being investigated with Lottery funding. An *Independent* article (Jan. 21st) accepts his claim, and he has pride of place in Leicester County Council's brochure to the battlefield's Visitor Centre and exhibition, and in coverage by local papers of the planned archaeological study.

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Joan Stevens brings to our attention a cause which JCP would undoubtedly have supported. It is '**Compassion in World Farming** – campaigning for farm animals'. A conference on Animal Sentience held in London on 17th-18th March had the title 'From Darwin to Dawkins'. The contact address is at Charles House, 5A Charles St, Petersfield, Hants, GU32 3EH.

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Nick Birns (formerly secretary of the PSNA) reports that there is a **chapter on JCP** in a new academic book published in the US , Jed Esty's *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton UP 2004). The chapter 'A Little Nucleus of Eternity' analyses *Glastonbury* in light of the anthropological turn in modern British literature and the revival of national, as opposed to imperial, tradition. He will write more on this.

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A new biography of **Theodore Dreiser**, *The Last Titan*, by Jerome Loving, is published by the University of California Press. It is said to contain 'some mentions' of JCP.

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Who was William Williams?

Meic Stephens (Professor of Welsh Writing in English, University of Glamorgan) has found a cutting from a Corwen-district newspaper, of an elegy by JCP for someone of that name. The cutting was in an anthology of Welsh verse that previously belonged to JCP, Huw Menai (Williams), and Glyn Hughes. More about this in the next newsletter as we again approach Wales. Meanwhile, can anyone identify William Williams as a friend of JCP?

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JCP's Heads

Facts about earlier Heads continue to be elusive. For those readers who don't already know them, two accounts are reprinted on pages 27–34 by the two sculptors who made portraits of JCP in his last years: **Jonah Jones**, who has recently died, in 1957, and **Oloff de Wet** in 1963.

Nobody has vouchsafed any more information on how the 'Miriam Bryans' Head that was on the last newsletter cover got to **Sherborne**. Derek Langridge describes it (in his appendix to *Essays on JCP*, p.354) as 'a head of Powys as a young man' which the printers mysteriously removed from the cover of his 'Record of Achievement', replacing it with a portrait of Erasmus (JCP was restored).

Another earlier Head, the one by **Joachim Karsch** (made in 1938 according to *Powys Review* 7) does not seem very life-like, and was probably taken from a photograph. But a diary extract for 1st January 1953 says *'We have this morn received from Berlin from Florian Karsch a Book of the statues and Drawings of Joachim Karsch with whom I used to correspond & here is a perfectly beautiful statue of his wife Elspeth – aye! so perfectly natural & tho' we never saw her so perfectly like her ... they died together to escape the Russians at his birth-place Breslau.'* (thanks to MK for this and other information).

The PSNA's *Powys Notes* (9/1, 1993–4) cites a poem by Marcia Masters, daughter of Edgar Lee Masters, mentioning a 'statue' in her father's room of JCP. JCP told Jonah Jones in 1957 that there was already one portrait bust of him – 'somewhere in America I suppose. The last I saw of it was Theodore Dreiser walking down a New York street with it under his arm!' – in which case it is likely to be the Head with **Dreiser** in the photograph (which belonged to Peter Powys Grey) in *Review* 6. (I am convinced I saw the name of the sculptor mentioned in that *Review*, but am unable to find it again).

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Richard Burleigh reports on the **sale of Powys books** including many belonging to the late Bernard Jones at Crewkerne in January ***(see below)***.

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Following the Crewkerne sale, Julian Nangle of the bookshop **Words Etcetera** (2, Cornhill, Dorchester, Dorset, telephone 01305 251919) now has a substantial quantity of individually priced Powys and Powys-related books for sale, including limited signed editions. He would be glad to answer queries from anyone interested. (*See leaflet*)

Powys Books at Auction

Included in the Fine Art Sale at the Auctioneers Lawrence's at Crewkerne in Somerset on Thursday, 20th January 2005, there was a range of books from the extensive collection of the late Dr Bernard Jones. Together with books by and about Williain Barnes and Thomas Hardy, and the West Country in general (all three of which categories sold very well), there was a significant amount of Powys material. This was divided into ten lots (Nos. 811–820) and amounted in total to some 350 volumes.

The first of these ten lots comprised nine A. R. Powys titles (including *Repair of Ancient Buildings*, 1929, with SPAB reprints of this, and duplicate copies of the original Benn's Sixpenny Library booklet, *The English House*). Together these fetched the grand sum of £40. The next three lots were made up of various editions of JCP's works (136 volumes in all) and raised the total of £360. These

were followed by two lots of books by and about Llewelyn (58 volumes), which together made £210. A total of 52 books by Theodore (including six signed, Limited Edition, copies) realised £260. Lastly, some 90 books forming two lots, made up of duplicates of some of the books in previous lots, and biographical and other studies, were sold for £160 in all. Thus, the total sum realised in the Sale for the Powys material was just over £1,000, everything having sold.

While the bulk lotting of such material might be seen as a deterrent to private buyers, in practical terms there is probably little or no alternative. Almost certainly all the purchases were made by book traders and, modest though the overall sum that was raised might seem, the prices paid (*pace* that for the first lot) were probably realistic. Quite how much prospective private buyers might subsequently be asked to pay for individual items is, of course, another matter.

Richard Burleigh

Richard Burleigh edits the Newsletter *of the Barnes Society.*

Theodore to Louis 1914–16

(from Louis Wilkinson's transcription)

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson [1]

East Chaldon [Summer 1914]
[*envelope missing and letter undated*]

My dear Louis,

I was delighted to see your handwriting. What a fierce old fellow on the stamp! He looks like the King of Siam in the poem that you rejoiced your heart in at Eaton House. I have sent your postcard to Mrs Stracey. She knows the book, we have not got it, and she will send the postcard on to the bookseller which will save time. It is most important for you to have the right book, it is the diet that makes the difference. You dont want a big babe. A little Babe does the best afterwards. We have talked about the harm that might be done to the child by the intercourse of the parents during pregnancy. I think you agreed. I am delighted at the news. Frances need not be in the least nervous, by being careful NOW the danger will be very little and nearly every Babe is born strong and well, it is their stupid mothers that kill them. We all send our love to you and Frances. No parcel or postcard came from Frances to Dicky at Christmas, it must have been lost. We thank Frances very much for thinking of us, and damn the post for not taking more care. I don't want to bother Frances but if she has those typed stories of mine, could she let you bring them to England in September, and then you could send them to me. It was good of her to try to get them sold. I did not think there was much chance.

Much love to you both and to your Mother,

Yours ever Theodore.
I shall rejoice to see your old face at the summer's end.

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson
[at White Hall, 23 & 22 Coram Street, Russell Square, London W.C.]
East Chaldon, Saturday [*Postmark 20 Feb 1915*]
How delightful to have a letter from you. The War at least has not turned you into a Butcher, a B——, or a Madman. I was going to run off to Dorchester to join the ranks and to serve MY country, only I happened to see a Corporal by the sea shore who arrested me for Bathing with my family. Such a Corporal! God! I would like to see him prod his little stick into your belly. Anyhow I have kept at home ever since and leave the country to serve itself. I was going to be a Special Constable only someone made a silly joke about the beginning of the word that prevented me. One morning when I stood by the corner of a field I thought you stood beside me, and you drew in the sea air as of old you used to. It would be indeed a pleasure if we could meet, but I cant get away because a people called Germans may be coming any day. What they want God only knows. Anyhow I cant get away, and if I could I havent the money—but I would not go away if I had. It would be glory to us all if you could come here for a few days. We would rejoice in your presence.

O Excellent Father of a thrice blessed child ... Why do you talk like an old Country Squire when you say, "We must get our troops across." These honest Germans will do nothing till you go, they are keeping a fat torpedo stuffed with crackers and when they see you upon deck
[*Sketch of ship blown in two on the sea*]
[*3 words illegible*]
My love Theodore.
The little boys had measles 6 weeks ago, will you be afraid of it.

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson
[c/o Arnold Shaw, New York]
East Chaldon, Feb 3 1916

My dear Louis,

What a dialogue! And the texture—Yes, too thick—and paper so much dearer! Will this knocking of Jack's head against mine produce gold? Will you accept my thanks? and what else? Love, dear Louis,—old crony—love. I tell you what, I would give a great deal to have you beside me and a bottle between—Do you believe me, when I say that I do long to see you again. Frances is not down on me now, is she? Dont let her be? I love both her and gallant Oliver—a noble Babe. (I know it, Master). Will you undertake Mr Tasker, you can cut out chapters, pages. It only wants a little sorting out to be made a decent picture of human life, of life in the country. Will you consult with Arnold. I will pay something—I will pay you

something—afterwards. Ask and it shall be given you. All the chapters ought to be at Arnold's office by the middle or end of March.
Much love, Old Crony—
yours ever Theodore.

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson
[c/o Arnold Shaw, New York]

East Chaldon, Oct 20th 1916

My dear Louis,

Yes, please allow the MSS of Mr Tasker to remain in Jack's flat, it will be quite safe. If Mr ~~Knopf~~ does take Mr Tasker—I think it quite likely that it will scare him—I hope he wont want Jack to go out of his way to advertise it, because I am very anxious that Jack should have no worrys of this kind, and the Americans may regard Mr Tasker as worse than ten Buffoons though it includes no portrait of a great lecturer.[2] I am terrified lest Jack should run any risks on my behalf. Don't let him. I daresay Mr ~~Knopf~~ wants watching, as most business men do. He may be very well when he can gain plenty. I would sooner have Mr Tasker read by Germans than be any worry to you or to Jack. I fear for Jack—this God damned summer has been no good for him. I pray that Arnold will not work him too hard. I am afraid that he does make him go too far and do too much sometimes. I am

T. F. Powys from a family photograph, c.1910.

very sorry about your cold, you should be very careful about your throat, and spend what time you can by the sea with Frances and Oliver. I have heard about that Baby disease, Frances is wise to go away. Well, you certainly cool my desire for America, or indeed for any change, for after all in the fields even the Devils bite softly and pains are easier borne. Goodbye. How good of you to consider so carefully my matters and affairs.

Yours ever Theodore

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson
[c/o Arnold Shaw, New York]

East Chaldon, Nov 30th 1916

I send very much love, to you, to Frances and to Oliver, may he dance with the happy frost fairies when they come. He will not mind their white cold hands as I do, I even prefer the small thin rain and the mud. I expect Mr xxxx [Knopf] may be afraid of Mr Tasker, it is rather perhaps too much out of the ordinary, I fear, to please these publishers. I am very glad your cold is gone, I am always a little anxious about your colds because of your throat. You could not be in a better place than by the sea, the sea always takes the sting out of the winter. There was really nothing to tell about that man with the swollen parts, he was simply there and was accepted, I think. They talk now of looking over everyone again and raising the age. Yes, Devils have tails, that is quite true. When God—I don't think I have spoken of him yet in this letter—when God created Germans he really did want them to be good little boys and not bite their elder brother, but the mistake of it was that he gave them teeth, and with their teeth they have a great desire to ravish everyone. I look forward with an immense delight to seeing you again. I hope that day will come quickly, I don't think I have really laughed since I saw you last time.

With much love Ever yours Theodore

It gave me great joy to receive your letter.

Theodore Powys to Louis Wilkinson
[c/o Arnold Shaw, New York]

East Chaldon, December 16th 1916

My dear Louis

Is 'Mr Tasker' really such a very terrible book? It seems to be rather a worry to poor Mr [Knopf]. I am afraid too it may be rather a worry to you too. I hope not, you know that you have my free permission to alter and to leave out whatever you choose. Shorten it, shorten it, cut out the frolics of the clergy if you like, cut out all long paragraphs. But the Devil! Will not your neat typed copy look a little bitten and teased, but perhaps you can simply take out the bad pages. What didn't the good man like? I thought the story was extremely modest and innocent, but I have no Scientific opinions about anything. I regard Mr xxxxx's words as hopeful only

I do not want either you or Jack to be troubled over Mr Tasker. Amos Lear is not so good, I have cut out nearly half, the rest will make only a short book. I am copying it out for the last time, and shall put it away in a drawer until Jack returns. When I have got Amos Lear off my mind, I shall begin a Vol of short stories.

I can understand, my dear, a person having an objection to being prosecuted and losing money too. What did that foolish woman dislike in the 'Buffoon', I wonder. Its a very good book, a most honest book I call it. No doubt that worthy bookseller picked it up, dusted it and sold it again. It is the language, the English language that must have pleased the professors at Dartmouth College, you dont make one mistake, there never was a more careful person in the world than you about commas. Well, I wish you were here, I have one of these colds and its snowing, and there was no sugar for breakfast, it all goes to make sweets for the ladies, we are only allowed two pounds a week. Give very much love to Frances and Oliver, how he grows and laughs, may his happiness be eternal. This cold perhaps has got rather into me, that is why I have a tendency to write nonsense. But I love you and Frances and Oliver, and I was glad that Jack is better.[3] That was good news.

Yours ever Theodore.

Letters from the Wilkinson archive; thanks again to Chris Wilkinson.

[1] *Oliver Wilkinson (a first child) was born in January 1915. The sons of Theodore and Violet were born in 1906 and 1908.*

[2] The Buffoon *by 'Louis Marlow' (1916) contained several caricatures, notably of JCP.*

[3] *JCP's operation for duodenal ulcers finally took place in autumn 1917.*

The New York Evening Post

November 30th, 1920

Even Owls, Sometimes, Come to City Roofs

by Llewellyn [sic] *Powys*

For many years, it has been my custom to sleep out of doors, so that now when I find a roof over my head I feel stifled and caged in and find it practically impossible to relax my spirit, or close my eyes. This was the reason why, when I settled in New York three months ago, nothing would do but I must, on the very first night, climb through a small trap door and arrange my camp bed on the roof of my dwelling. And I have done this ever since, each evening and morning carrying my blankets up and down.

A roof top in New York is different enough from the kinds of places where I have been accustomed to sleep. It is not like an English garden, heavy with scents of flowers. It is not like Africa, tremulous and alive with strange noises. But for all

that the actual sky is above my head, and also the constellations that I have come to know so well in other far distant continents.

Now, last night I saw what seemed to me an extraordinary thing. I had waked for some reason and was lying drowsy and half-conscious, when suddenly I became aware that I was watching the flight of two owls, which were, with the soft, undulating flight which is their characteristic, fluttering about over the chimneys. They presently actually settled on the ridge of the roof over my head.

I live in Twenty-first Street, not far from the ferry, and I am told that they must have come over from the Jersey woods in search of the mice and rats which no doubt are plentiful in the little backyards of these ramshackle, old-fashioned houses.

But think of there being owls in the roof tops of New York! Owls above our heads as we walk or drive along these glaring, noisy avenues; owls above our heads as we sit chatting at our linen-laid tables! Owls of the forests; owls of hollow trees; "bakers' daughters", as Shakespeare called them, floating silently about on their own business, or settling upon our roof tops and there brooding and dreaming their eternal dreams, with the clamour of our hectic life far down below them!

Can you wonder, after this, at my mania for escaping for at least some hours of each day to a place where moonlight and starlight are realities, and where one can feel one's self separated from the fret and worry and pell-mell of everyday life, and where one has a chance of seeing creatures which themselves are so suggestive of the peace and repose of the most secluded places in nature.

May 2nd, 1922

Life and Times of William Warner, A Wicked Man

by Llewelyn Powys

Old William Warner was certainly a character. He was like Falstaff or a Silenus, one of those huge, round-paunched men, with attitude to life corresponding. He had a face like the rising sun, a great red face, pitted and uneven, with a nose in its centre like a fiery torch. He was always jesting, and the more obscene his jests the more he liked them.

He was as familiar a figure in the village streets as the Church tower. He could be seen any hour of the day going to the public house, coming from the public house. He had made his money as a building contractor in London. He had put up innumerable small houses in the suburbs, jerrybuilt erections of brick and mortar of the kind that begin to fall to bits as soon as they are finished. His father had been a hedger, and it was Mr Warner's custom to mystify his city friends by asserting that he was the son of a man "who had worn gloves," referring to the rough leather coverings that protect the hands of one whose occupation is ditching.

He lived in a square stone house called Sunny Bank. It was surrounded by an orchard which he had planted with choice apple trees and where he kept some

fowls and one or two fat pigs. He was extremely generous with his money. He would give to every subscription that was got up in the village, even to the temperance society. At Easter, when the laborers had their holiday, he would buy two or three barrels of whiskey and, conveying them to the allotments, try his best to make the men as drunk as flies. It was the time when they planted their potatoes, and in the intervals of placing these round roots in the earth they would sit about on the moist upturned mould and fill themselves full. On these occasions old Warner would make a point ot remaining sober so as to get full satisfaction out of the scene.

He had one brother, Jimmy Actor as he was called, and he especially enjoyed making him drunk. Jimmy Actor was older than himself and very jealous of his success—a rough fellow who could not read or write, albeit with something of William's wit, which he would manifest by beating his wife, Jane, for infidelity, though the poor woman's hair was gray as a badger's.

Well, it happened that a new vicar came to the village—a devout-minded man, who took grave exception to William Warner's behavior. He would reprove him both in the open and in private and do all that he could to alter the old rogue's way of living. He was one of those young evangelical clergymen who have neither tact nor intelligence, and it seemed to him inconceivable that anybody could resist his influence and continue to live a godless life under his very nose.

He would go so far sometimes as to stop William in the open street when that old sack of alcohol was bowling along like a frigate in full sail on a stormy sea. It used to be a ridiculous spectacle, the small black-coated individual accosting that vast mass of ribald imperturbable matter. William Warner always attended church. However drunk he had been the night before he would always be there sitting in his seat, winking at the clerk and trying to get the boys and girls to laugh as they went up the aisle.

This went on all through the summer. The new vicar preached sermons against him, but they were of no avail. In the tavern, in the allotments, in the hay field, in the harvest fields, his great rotund figure might be seen drinking and making merry. Winter came and he grew more than ever profligate, and then one dark evening as he went swaying back to his house from the King's Arms he put his foot on a rolling stone, fell down, and burst an internal organ.

He was carried to Sunny Bank unconscious. There happened to be a temperance meeting the next night and the little parson could not refrain from an allusion to the "remarkable judgment that had overtaken one in our village." It seemed impossible that William could ever recover. Jimmy Actor spent much time at his bedside; "I wouldn't have had it happen, not for fifty, not for a hundred pound," he reported his brother as saying, taking himself a peculiar satisfaction in the mere mention of such vast sums.

An operation was performed, and the old man's inside was sewn up—and then to the astonishment of everybody and the consternation of the vicar, he

began making rapid way towards recovery. He must have belonged to an extraordinary hardy stock, a long line of ancestors who had worn gloves, perhaps. In a few months he was as well as ever and, quite unreformed by his adventure, began once more, day after day, filling his barrel-like body with the drink and meat he loved.

This took place six years ago, and when, on my return from Africa, I saw William Warner, he was, except for being at the moment a trifle unsteady on his legs, in perfect health. "Eh, Master," he said, " you can warrant that I mind they little pebbles of the Almighty's set down to trip a poor fellow as he comes home; but he won't catch an old bird with chaff twice," and he continued on his uncertain way, laughing as he went—a sure proof that the rulings of Providence are not always on the side of the moralists.

Thanks to Peter Foss for these pieces.

Llewelyn Powys in New York, from letterhead of Arnold Shaw's lecture bureau.

Foyles 54th Literary Luncheon
11th April 1935

JCP to Allen Lane *(of The Bodley Head)*

38 High East St, Dorchester
March 20 1935

Dear Allen Lane

Yes—all right! I'll do what you suggest & speak to Foyles April Luncheon. I haven't yet heard from Miss Foyle; but when I do I will reply in the affirmative. Since my young nephew Francis Powys is working at Foyles I have an added interest in their place.

The weather down here has been wonderful of late, day after day of perfect Spring. I trust all goes well with you, all three, & please remember me to Mr Boswell

yrs v. sincerely John Cowper Powys

March 22

Dear Allen Lane

I am suggesting to Miss Foyle that I take as my subject for that lunch-speech (of about 20 minutes) "The Difficulties of Novel-Writing" Don't you think that'll be a suitable topic?

How good of you to ask Miss P. & myself for a week-end in Gloucestershire with your parents. We'd love to come & the 5th wd. suit us well—that's just a fortnight from today. But look here; did you really mean to imply (when you spoke of transportation) that you'd be able to pick us up here on the way, & bring us back, on your return to town, on Sunday Aft.?

But what about our Familiar Spirit the Black Peter? We've no one here we could leave him with & my relatives at East Chaldon don't like dogs. But even if your people didn't mind his coming—w^{h} I fear they easily may!—would there be room in the car?

But however we deal with this difficulty—whether insurmountable or not—we both of us certainly do very greatly appreciate the invitation.

yrs v. sincerely

John Cowper Powys

March 28th

Dear Allen Lane

Listen! I've had a "touch" since I last wrote of my old gastric annoyance—so I've decided that it'll be wiser for us to come to Bristol by train as well as come back by train. But we can't catch—we're always slow in getting under way in the morning!—any earlier train than the one that leaves here at 10.46 & reaches Bristol at 1.58—So we'll get our lunch en route & if your sister would not mind getting hers rather early, so as to meet that 1.58 (practically 2 o'clock) all will be fine!

All this applies to Saturday of course and as you suggest) we'd love to stay till Monday morning.

This will enable you all to get home with no dêtour or delay on Friday night.

So it's better all the way round! So do let's leave it so—but drop us a line to confirm!

yrs as heretofore

John C. Powys

Thanks for including the Dog!

April 2nd

Dear Allen Lane

I'm so sorry! What a thing! Well, it was good of you to tell us so promptly. Yes I think we'd better, I think we must, postpone our looked-for visit for a while.

Miss Playter's been in bed for an attack of the "Flu" w^{h} is prevalent in this town.

She's up & better today but cannot yet do more than sit over the fire & I myself am a bit shaky with my old trouble. I guess her "after-Flu" state w[d] make her a bit susceptible; & anyway your John would be susceptible of catching the Flu in his convalescent state—so on the whole I am afraid, as we all a bit under a cloud, we'd better reconcile ourselves, sad though it is, to a postponement of this happy visit to your home.

Anyway Miss Playter was feeling depressed over this attack & doubtful about being equal to come—so we must let this news about John decide it. But O dear! I hope it is true that the infectious stage is past & that no one else in your circle will catch it. However, what a good thing that the patient himself is no worse. What a man he must be to carry off such a thing in that way!

Do convey to him our commiseration & also our congratulations on his getting away with it!

yrs v.sincerely
John C.Powys [1]

John Lane The Bodley Head had published the English edition of A Glastonbury Romance *in June 1933 and* Autobiography *in October 1934; in 1935 they would publish* Jobber Skald (Weymouth Sands) *in June and* The Art of Happiness *in September. They then rejected* Maiden Castle, *but* Owen Glendower *came out from a reorganised Bodley Head in February 1942. Other English editions about this time were from Jonathan Cape (*A Philosophy of Solitude, *October 1933, and* The Meaning of Culture *in several reprints before the enlarged edition in February 1940); and Cassell (*Maiden Castle, *February 1937;* Morwyn, *September 1937;* The Pleasures of Literature, *November 1938).* [2]

***JCP to Frances Gregg**, 9th April 1935*

... I'm suffering just now from a nasty spell of the old Dyspepsia ... I'll have to take my infallible cure—to go to bed, but I can't till my trip to town on Thursday, there and back in a day in one grand rush, to give a talk of 20 minutes at the Foyles Book Shop Lunch. Louis writes that he's bringing Oliver to it—so I shall see him! Hurrah! My second sight of him since he's been grown up! [3]

Oliver Wilkinson in his notes to this letter says that before Jack spoke, Louis Wilkinson had turned to his son Oliver and said, '"Jack will give a fine speech, and speak ten minutes too long" – which is what Jack more or less did ... A. J. Cronin, the novelist ... spoke, and said he had never read anything by John Cowper Powys. John Cowper Powys then spoke, and without meaning to, he obliterated A. J. Cronin as a personality.' [4]

A report appeared in the **Liverpool Daily Post** *on Friday, 12th April, 1935 (see back cover)*[5]

HOW TO WRITE A NOVEL

MR J. C. POWYS'S ADVICE TO AUTHORS

"DEAL IN THE DEEPER QUALITY"

From Our Own Correspondent.
LONDON, Thursday.

A possible deduction from the large output of novels is that the writing of one cannot be very difficult. But apparently it may be, for Mr J.C.Powys spoke, or rather orated, on the difficulties, at Foyles literary luncheon today, and when he had finished telling authors how to proceed, Dr A.J.Cronin discussed the novel's future before a gathering of enormous size.

Indeed, so many people were present that when some of the principal guests were being introduced, a spotlight was directed upon them so that those at the more distant tables might have a better chance of noting their looks. One woman even brought a pair of strong binoculars to bridge the distance between herself and the famous. This must be an innovation.

The Danger of Libel

For a long time it has been necessary to use a microphone and amplifiers at these affairs. The effect today was quite invigorating. Mr Powys is a tall broad man with a voice in proportion, and as he did nothing to adjust himself to the apparatus, his message was a positive roaring in the ears. He began lightly, but soon abandoned mirth for a message – emphasised by passionate sweeps of the arm and shakes of the head – which was full of the more or less mystical implications to be expected from the author of "In Defence of Sensuality".

He said that the initial difficulty of novel-writing, as he had learned to his cost, was the danger of libel. One way to avoid this was to make one's charactes so good that nobody could complain. Unfortunately this was the road to incredible dullness. Or, the author might cut out of his book all evidence of locality, though if he did he increased the dangers of recognition, because people in the Isle of Man or the West of Scotland might discover resemblences to themselves and pursue him with more venom than if they were his next-door neighbours. It seemed the only solution was to assure the reader that the peole described and the place of their habitation had vanished long ago from the earth.

The Great Characters

Mr Powys offered another solution, however. "Deal in the deeper quality," he cried, "not in the photographic realism which is the dullest kind, but in the reality that goes beneath the surface, reveals the secrets of nature, and expresses your own soul. His attitide should be almost childish. He must be naive. A writer should steep himself not so much in the great novels as in the great characters. His object should be to create characters out of time and space, as it were. He should not go looking for 'copy' in the journalistic sense. He should not try to be clever or 'intellectual'. He must be saturated in his subject and should limit his range to subjects in which he is saturated.

"He must have a thrilling story. If we are not interested in what is going to happen next, we might as well let the thing go. He should forget the 'unconscious' (Mr Powys meant the unconscious as interpreted by Freud and the psychoanalytical school). That is only a theory of our day. Do you realise that there may be no such thing?"

Humanitarian influences

Dr Cronin, after remarking on the anguish he suffered when he contemplated his latest novel, said Mr Powys's speech made him feel he (Dr Cronin) should write no more novels. Nevertheless, he advocated novel-reading as an imaginative escape from a life that was becoming so formidable that without some escape we should be shattered, and now was the time, beyond all others, for humanitarian impulses to get to work in literature. Dr Cronin said he made no plea for the propagandist novel, but he did think a novel written on a passionate impulse had more chances of influencing mankind than all the works of the metaphysicians.

from

The Dorset Year, The Diary of John Cowper Powys, June 1934–July 1935 [6]

Thursday 11th April

... I went off dressed in my lecture dark-blue suit with Colonel Wood's sweater under my shirt! Caught the 7.56 a.m. train for Waterloo.

Read the *Mayor of Casterbridge* & finished it ... At long intervals I pondered my speech. My grand sentence was to be—'by indirections find directions out' but I never remembered to bring this in! Damn!

On reaching Waterloo I had another pot of tea & bread and butter in the nicer of the two Buffets. Then I tried in vain to telephone to Bernie. After that I miserably went into the worse Buffet & paid for a seat with another cup of tea which I left un-drunk. Disliking my neighbours & my seat I went out & wandered like a devil seeking rest. I finally went in to the room marked Waiting Room a desolate place oblong in shape dim & bare ... Women who had apparently lost their husbands kept peeping in—looking the men over—& departing with rather distracted expressions. The husbands must have been pretty 'up against it' to come here! Then I took a taxi & drove—'twas a lovely day—thro' the Parks close past St James' Palace down Piccadilly to Park Lane where I went into Grosvenor House.

The T.T. had decided that perhaps but not for certain she would come by a later train.

I waited in the foyer after speaking to little Miss Christina Foyle who was arranging all. Finally I saw Francis—then his wife Minnie or Mea – then Oliver, then Bernie, then Louis.

And then a grey round-eyed twitching mouthed man with a tonsured head who said he knew [me]. I did not know him. But he confessed his name and it was no other than the famous & notorious magician Aleister Crowley his wone self! I gave him my place & treated him to a bottle of wine w^{h} he very specifically named. I looked at the lines in his very small hands—and measured my own by them! Maude Adams [*a celebrated American actress*] spoke to me.

Bernie came to the station and there was the T.T.

Friday 12th April

Up at 6.30 felt very very tired tho' I had come to bed at Nine while the T.T. wrote Twenty Pages about her London experiences to her Mother. She spoke last night to me Oh so eloquently about London which is her favourite city in the World ... London is her inexhaustible Paradise ...

She was thrilled at my meeting Maude Adams & so was I—but all disrupted & distracted at that moment by meeting also 'Marjorie' old Maurice Browne's girl who told me he was ill at 10 Golden Square & wanted to see me ...

Later, after Aleister Crowley had gone (after saying we must spend an evening

together!) I met the three Lane Brothers my publishers [*The Bodley Head*] & felt so greatly drawn towards them as Fellow West Country men in that pseudo-fashionable crowd. But I forgot "Dick"'s name when I introduced them—too roughly and teasingly I fear with a sort of 'elderly bonhomie', almost 'riotous archness'—to Bernie, as my old friend ...
[*back in Dorchester, that evening*]
... I had a happy walk with the Old & had no dyspepsia. *Miracle*.

It sounds a less than comfortable day for JCP (aged 62), but Oliver (aged 20), writing to his mother, left no doubt that he rose to the occasion.[7]

***Oliver Wilkinson to Frances Gregg**, 15th April 1935*

... I met Signore Jack when Babbo took me to the Foyles Lunch where 'John Cowper Powys' was billed largely as the main speaker. And he spoke well, God, he spoke well! At first, before the lunch, we saw him in the vestibule, where he was receiving, all with the same flattering and intense joy, the strings of people waiting to be introduced, or the distinguished friends, relations and acquaintances. He smiled with intense delight at every single one of these, shook some by the hand for at least five minutes till they blushed scarlet, as Bernie O'Neill did. I saw his head, first, in the distance, like some skull ancient with elemental history, dug up from a barrow in a sacred and magical circle. His close-cropped hair, his startling teeth that appeared with every friendly and placating gesture, the sincere depths of his insincerity, the touch of some simple yet fantastic other world that looked from his eyes—and then he caught sight of 'my old friend Oliver'.

He had to leave London at half past four, he said, so he couldn't come and see us this time, but he would the next.

Aleister Crowley loomed up. I had wondered who the rather distinguished if slightly dull gentleman was. Signore Jack could not think who he was. He simply could not, and was completely stuck. Babbo had to tell him. At which Signore Jack said, "Well, there you are. You are a magician, you have changed yourself and put spells about you so that I couldn't recognise you. You have metamorphosised yourself, and betrayed my eyes!" Crowley's eyes gleamed as soft as leather thongs. Like some macabre beetle, like some pernicious clown, with his yellow bald head and side tufts of hair, and small dead eyes behind his glasses, he was grave, he was academical, he had an air of righteous seriousness. He also got the place of honour next to Signore Jack by the weight of these things, and completely wrongly.

Signore Jack got up and spoke—spoke, and at once spread his elemental power through the room. He changed a vast banquet hall into a roomful of men and women. It was as though he had direct communication by some invisible wires to each one. They were rapt. His living voice, his puppet gestures, like some puppet

Don Quixote haranguing a very real universe, cast a spell. They laughed, they gasped, they were silent, and they clapped like well-earned rain on a magician's roof.

Signore Jack sat down.

The walls seemed to rush apart again ...

NOTES

[1] *Letters to Allen Lane from Reading University Library, courtesy Random House; thanks to Susan Rands for transmitting this.*

[2] *See Malcolm Elwin, 'John Cowper Powys and his Publishers' in* Essays on John Cowper Powys, *edited Belinda Humfrey (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1972), 286.*

[3] *JCP to Frances Gregg from Letter 194,* Jack and Frances, *ed. Wilkinson, vol 2, Cecil Woolf 1996.*

[4] *A. J. Cronin, the Scottish socially-realistic novelist (creator of Dr Finlay); his first best-seller* Hatter's Castle *(1931) was set in Glasgow.*

[5] *Cutting from* Liverpool Daily Post *kindly obtained by Francesca Williams.*

[6] The Dorset Year, *ed. Krissdóttir and Peers, The Powys Press 1998.*

[7] *Letter from Oliver Wilkinson from* The Tangled Tree, *letters between Oliver and Frances, as yet unpublished.*

Oliver, having left theatre school, was at this time living in Chelsea and out of work. His play Ishmael (much of it inspired by Frances's story 'White Kaffir') had won the Sybil Thorndike Trophy and as part of its prize was published this year under the name 'Oliver Marlow'. Frances was living in Essex. Oliver's note to this letter, on Aleister Crowley (whom JCP had met in the United States) is: 'Jack ... was a magician, but of a different kind, experimenting with psychic forces and with what could be called Psychological Magic. Jack dealt with the powers of Light, while Crowley preferred the Dark; the two were incompatible, but courteous to each other.' *Thanks once again to Christopher Wilkinson.*

See also 'Postscript', page 38.

A Sidelight

John Cowper Powys, Jacob Hauser, and 'Jacob Hansen'

In JCP's diary-entry for Tuesday 29th January 1935, published in *The Dorset Year* (1998), mention is made of 'a harassed young intellectual called Mr Jacob Hansen of 101 something Ave Brooklyn'. JCP agrees to 'read & write a preface for his *Physiology of Composition* a term, by the way, I loathe & detest—but in matters of this kind ... I have absolutely no aesthetic or intellectual conscience' (172). No identification of Hansen is offered by the editors – which is not surprising because the name was either misspelled by JCP or editorially mistranscribed. The man's real name was Jacob Hauser, who appears in the diary again six weeks later, along with his wife Rebecca (203). A photograph of the couple is also reproduced.

Here the editors report that the couple paid an unannounced visit to JCP and

Phyllis Playter at Corwen the following year, 'found a flat nearby, and, to the initial dismay and eventual dread of John and Phyllis, leaned heavily on them for practical advice, companionship, and critical opinion.' We are also told that JCP lost 'Hauser's *magnum opus*, a long typed poem', while Phyllis is quoted as saying that 'he should write poetry on the side and work at some job' (203).

In his bibliography of JCP (1975), Dante Thomas lists a collection of poems by Hauser entitled *Future Harvest*, glossing it as 'published by the author' and 'not examined' (104). This item is dated 1943 and is listed as containing a foreword by JCP. Otherwise, not much seems to be known about Hauser, though glimpses of him occur from time to time in JCP's correspondence. Writing to Louis Wilkinson in October 1943, he refers to

> Jacob Hausssser [*sic*!], our Ghetto poet from Brooklyn who is a Post-Man over there by Profession & who, when he got a 'Guggenheim' to come over with Rebecca had never seen (this is true, my friend, literally true—not humour, not even trying to be)
>
> a pig
> a sheep
> a goat
> a rabbit
> or
> a daisy or buttercup
> or even an American daisy or buttercup!
>
> (*Letters to Wilkinson* (1958), 126)

In a later letter he remarks wryly that this lack of rural awareness on the part of Hauser (who is there spelt 'Hausser') did not stop him from writing about Abraham (166); none the less, his interest in Hauser's work seems genuine. In 1953 he wrote to the Trovillions of 'my heroic Hebrew friend whose poems, half Rabbinical and half chinese, are in my opinion extremely original, indeed unique' (*Letters to Hal W. and Violet Trovillion* (1990), 43). A further positive comment occurs in 1955, in a letter to Ichiro Hara: 'Yes, Mr Hauser is a Poet who has lived in New York City for a long time. He paid me a visit in Wales years & years ago—I admire his work quite a lot' (*Letters to Hara* (1990), 49).

There is an interesting sequel to all this. I recently came across a slim volume on the open shelves of the University of Toronto Library (now transferred to the Fisher Rare Book Library) entitled *Green & Golden Rhyme*. Dated 1977, it is described on the cover as 'Sonnets by Jacob Hauser', and containing, moreover, 'a preface by John Cowper Powys.' The words 'Athenaeum Books Series' appears on both cover and title-page, but on the verso it is described as 'Published for the author by a division of Hub Publications Ltd.'

JCP's untitled preface reads as follows:

> I would be proud to say I was one of the first of the older writers to recognize the power and originality of Jacob Hauser's talent when at last,

as I feel sure must eventually happen, he comes into his own. For he combines intense sensuous sensitivity with a rare faculty for very subtle metaphysical, or perhaps I should say *psychological*, analysis of the fatalities of the human intelligence and there is something so free and daring and arresting about his way of expressing his ideas that I feel it is only a matter of time before many readers will be sharing my view of his gifts.

John Cowper Powys
Dorchester, England
29 January, 1935

It will be noticed that this is the date on which, in *The Dorset Year*, JCP agrees to write the preface for 'Jacob Hansen'.

The following page of *Green & Golden Rhyme* contains a statement by Hauser, arranged in exactly the same pattern as the above, with an address given as 'Miami Beach / November 1976', though the booklet is said to be printed by Mantissa Press, Keighley. Hauser blandly writes: 'These sonnets are all much more recent than January 1935. The flattering introduction by John Cowper Powys does not seem to apply to these lyrical bonbons and musical powder-puffs of verse.' The foreword is indeed totally irrelevant to this new collection of poems. Hauser airily notes that, at the time he met JCP, he was 'a serious young man, trying to solve the riddle of the universe'. The sonnets are technically accomplished but somewhat facile. Many of them form a section entitled 'Greek Memories' which reads as neither 'Rabbinical' nor 'chinese' but is filled with references to classical gods and goddesses. The book ends with a sequence of 'Snow Scenes' that seem as unrelated to Miami Beach as they are to JCP's out-of-context introduction. The appropriation of the forty-year-old preface is, of course, blatant.

Like Dante Thomas, I have not been able to locate a copy of *Future Harvest*. I cannot therefore assert confidently that the two prefaces are identical (though they can hardly be otherwise), nor can I comment on the relation of the two books to the improbably titled *Physiology of Composition*. Was the latter the manuscript that JCP lost? Presumably, since it never seems to appear again, though several further Hauser titles are listed in the U.S. National Union Catalogue. (Hauser, by the way, was unfortunate with his titles: *Physiology of Composition* sounds bizarre, *Future Harvest* displays a confidence unjustified in the event, while *Green & Golden Rhyme* seems parasitic on Dylan Thomas!)

This is as far as I have been able to go in my researches. It may all sound like a game of Powysian 'Trivial Pursuits', but there are unexplained details here which ought to be cleared up. Perhaps another investigator can take up the trail.

W. J. Keith

JCP's Heads

Late in JCP's life two sculptor-writers made portrait heads of him. By all accounts both were remarkable men. Both heads were made quickly, but both felt they had captured something of the subject's magnetic personality.

The sculptor and writer ***Jonah Jones*** *(1919–2004), who died last November, grew up in the mining community of Co. Durham but returned to his grandfather's Welsh roots after WW2. He worked in stone, marble, slate, stained glass, calligraphy and book production. An obituary by Meic Stephens tells us that 'the word, whether biblical or demotic, was the main source of his inspiration ... proof that in the human psyche there is a profound desire to make one's mark as a permanent record in a fleeting world.' He turned to portrait sculpture when tuberculosis forced him into hospitals; among his eminent subjects besides JCP were Bertrand Russell, Clough Williams-Ellis and Richard Hughes. He worked in Rome and in Ireland. His two novels, written in the 1980s, are on themes of pacifism and Zionism, drawn from his experiences during the war.*

Jonah Jones: **Athene Provides** [1]

My youth was truly coloured by the Powys family. I had not met any of them, but I knew them intimately, it seemed, from reading them widely. Each one in his different way, John, Theodore, Llewelyn and Littleton (who mirrored them all and contracted that most wondrous of marriages with Elizabeth Myers in his last years), they all made a kind of physical impact. Photographs of their vast, curly British skulls bear this out. Big, bony, strong-bred, patrician, behind them all one imagines a noble line of ancestors, all larger than life. Certainly one felt at least the presence of father and mother at Montacute, either as begetters and guardians of the unique Powysian family spirit, or as something to flee from and defy, albeit to love always. John's autobiography surely bears the greatest portrait of a father in English literature.

When John came, miraculously it seemed, to live at Corwen only 30 miles away, it was as though a sun had wandered into our orbit, yet shyness, and of course respect for another artist's time, kept me away. When he came even nearer, to Blaenau Ffestiniog, Raymond Garlick insisted that we should meet. Of course, it was on the cards that a portrait bust would ensue. John had some vague story of Theodore Dreiser stalking off through the streets of New York with the only portrait bust in existence: has anybody heard any more of it?

On the way up the narrow flight of stairs, I was always struck by a photograph of the handsomest brother of all, Willie, whom I had not known about, and who did not write but simply farmed in Kenya. John spoke of him with great tenderness.

What a sitting, when it finally came about! Ludicrous! By now, of course, John was old and rather weak, but mentally very lively indeed. Full of years, he rested

his long limbs on a sofa across the upper window of his tiny quarryman's cottage. His head lay back on the cushion, the silver locks curling in Powysian splendour over the vast cranium. The brow was Socratic, deeply furrowed but untroubled. The eyes were deep-set, piercing yet benign, and also, I remember, strangely odd, one different from the other. It was with the nose, hawklike, the nostrils wide-winged, that the Powysian spirit began. Then the great wide upper lip, cruel, ready to boom. That was John. The mouth was built for rhetoric, his greatest love, and as I worked, or tried to, the great head moved about ceaselessly as he poured forth line after line from *The Prelude* or from Tennyson's *Morte d'Arthur.* He made the latter live in a way I had not thought possible. His voice, his whole rhetorical manner, was electrifying, spell-binding. He always addressed you in a great cataract of speech, as though drunk with the sheer beauty of words. The whole effect of the head was of a falcon, of Horus the hawk-god, belying the angelic tenderness of the John who prayed daily for the deliverance of animals from the agonies of vivisection.

I never really got a sitting. I struggled up the stairs with stand, bust-peg and clay, committing a sort of sacrilege in that booklined room. He quaffed his raw egg, picked up an ancient Greek Drachma, looked eye-to-eye at the owl effigy of Athene thereon and prayed in wondrous Greek for the gods to look with favour on our joint project. And that was it. He sat fairly still, even stiff, for a minute and I opened up the sort of desultory, relaxed talk that often passes between sitter and sculptor. An artist does not want a posed sitter. And so John opened out, at once, and never stopped. My hands worked distractedly. His fluttered like birds, expressing most of all pleasure, sheer pleasure in life. He was up and down, a gangling impossible model. I could only pummel clay about. Yet I left it at that, cast it and took the thing lovingly to the foundry and it has always been my favourite bust.

Jonah Jones took part in the Welsh Home Service radio broadcast on JCP, on 27th June 1957, (transcribed in The Powys Review *24 (1989)). The above is an expanded version of his radio contribution. Another description of the occasion is in his collection* The Gallipoli Diary *(1989). On his first visit with Raymond Garlick, they both took small children with them, to JCP's delight.*

He was by now semi-invalid, but when he spoke, one sensed the subterranean energy, the growl of a far from spent volcano ... There were intimations in that face of enormous pent-up energy, even in that strong upper lip a trace of sadism... Yet he was a totally lovable man. He was the sort of man about whom you could have no reservations. I had loved him through his writings. To meet him was to be committed to him. ...

Almost perversely, I felt I had something of him in the pummelled clay as he tired himself and I stopped in mid-air. Miss Playter had warned me and I obeyed

out of love and I left him quite abruptly ... Sometimes I think it is my best portrait, probably because it was the sitter who had signalled when to stop.

Jonah Jones's bust of JCP was made in 1957. The first cast was bought by Anthony Bland, whose then wife Deirdre describes taking it to show JCP in the letter below.[2] *Another cast is now owned by the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.*

Sunday morning

When about to close this letter I suddenly realised that I have never told you of our memorable visit to John C. Powys which was a quite unforgettable occasion —We set off one afternoon, not only taking the Burns [*Mary and Michael (Micky) Burn, author of* Mary and Richard *(1988)*] but also bearing with us a wonderful bronze head of J.C.P which had just been completed by a young sculptor called Jonah Jones who is a friend of the Burns. He only had one sitting for it and it is not a meticulous portrait but with astonishing insight he has caught a flash of that compelling satanic face and something of the real essence of the man. Taking it with us was an enormous success, J.C.P absolutely adored it and kept shouting remarks to it from time to time—'Hallo alter ego' 'Hallo you old sod!' 'Oh you old darling' 'I love you! You look just the way I feel!'

It didn't seem to matter a bit that there were four of us, he has such a sense of audience, the talk just poured out and it really is remarkable at 85 to have a mind still so overflowing with words. He recited too, Yeats and Wordsworth's lines on Immortality and the latter of course starting him off on the old game of hating God and for a moment when he was saying about Hell "not for a thousand years a million years but for ever—and EVER and EVER" he looked so exactly like the bronze head that it was quite startling.

Phyllis made us all delicious tea which we drank out of beautiful cups and I absolutely agree with you about her and think that small frail frame houses a great spirit—What wonderful luck for him to have found her—With her forever at his side, prompting him as it were in the wings, he can be the great actor but she is the one who sustains him and makes it all possible. He is her genius child and she has a generosity of spirit and an understanding that surmounts all pettiness.

****

Six years later, in JCP's last months, another sculptor tried his hand.

(Hugh) ***Oloff de Wet*** *(1913–75) made portraits among others of Ezra Pound, Lawrence Durrell, Brendan Behan and Robert Graves. One of Dylan Thomas (described as a 'carousing companion'), was recently re-found in a cellar at the Festival Hall and used in Dylan Thomas celebrations in 2003. The head of JCP that was displayed in Jeff Kwintner's Village Bookshop in the 1970s would seem to be the master cast described by de Wet in his essay. (See the* Newsletter *front cover.)*

De Wet's horrific but engrossing book In the Valley of the Shadow *(1949) recounts with ironic sangfroid his arrest in Vienna in 1939 as a spy (for France) followed by five appalling years in Nazi prisons, most of them in a condemned cell next to the guillotine shed, with hands shackled to a belt. He survived by craft, courage, mental resources and amazing luck (though as the only Englishman in such a situation he may, unknown to him, have been spared as a hostage). He was born in Jersey of South African descent. An earlier book is about the Spanish civil war in which he was a pilot on the government side.*

'A Visit to John Cowper Powys' was printed in Texas Quarterly *in 1968, and as a Village Press booklet in 1974. An abbreviation follows.*[3]

Two views of Oloff de Wet (lower right) with Hugo Manning (with pipe) and Derrick Stephens at de Wet's studio, photographed by Jeff Kwintner in 1973.

Oloff de Wet: A Visit to John Cowper Powys

'A day to be remembered ... Thursday the tenth of April, 1963' ... Oloff de Wet, 'a portrait sculptor with a penchant for men of letters', presents himself as a feather in the winds of fate: 'complacent, agreeably indolent, unaggressive ...' Urged by two JCP admirers ('Militza the Serb', and John Gawsworth Fitton Armstrong, poet and bibliographer), and in the teeth of discouragement from 'my wise friends in the world of letters' telling him no one had set eyes on J. C. Powys for years, 'a certain bloody-minded, to-hell-with-the-pedants asserted itself'. No strivings for objectivity here. But he has read *Autobiography*, and a good deal else. And his 'then dealer' in New York has options on up to six bronzes. He sets off in a 'purposeful deluge', unwisely choosing the Easter weekend.

> In my gullibility I assumed a picture of him hidden away in cave or tower deep in the fastnesses of forbidding Snowdonian crags. Guarded over by wild hounds, malicious he-goats, mistletoe, fierce druidesses and their approaches echoing 'No! No!—Never.—Away. Away.—Turn back. Turn back!' and other encouraging cries of the ghosts of others who had preceded me in their fruitless quest to meet a fretful, cantankerous, intransigeant genius. As such, I had been assured, he was!

He misses two trains, with some relief. Militza persuades him, if only for an autograph in her copy of *Porius*. Three soldiers on leave and a bottle of Scotch help him on his way. He changes at Chester and it starts to snow. No trains after Llandudno Junction, and tomorrow being Good Friday, no trains at all. He pays a taxi-driver double. Over a hilltop, they look down on the blue pyramids of Blaenau Ffestiniog:

> The bottom of the hill passed between the feet of two of the monsters ... my eye went dizzily up, up to the sky above and on its way surprised isolated rhododendron bushes crouching over the great scale-like shards, now mauve seen from this lower level ... I was sensible of an inscrutable menace, a threat of impending doom, doom in abeyance but inevitable, emanating from the sinister mountains of slate.

The proprietors of the North Western hotel claim not to have heard of Powys. ('A writer of books?' They have only been there five years.) Other locals claim to have set eyes on a tall and ancient gentleman with long white hair and a long crooked stick. But one hotel maid, Gwenfe, mentions a lady who is not Welsh, who comes to the hotel for lunch twice a week. She is small, a little grey, always wearing black, takes a gin and vermouth before her lunch, a glass of wine with the meal, and coffee in the lounge ... De Wet arranges to sit at the same table. It is indeed Phyllis Playter. De Wet has a letter of introduction from his friend Gawsworth who once corresponded with JCP. He explains that he is a sculptor. Miss Playter is doubtful whether there would be space to work in the cottage, but he is invited to visit that afternoon. He is hesitating whether to mention the

autograph, when Phyllis wonders if his friend in the book trade might find her another copy of *Porius* ... 'He wants it so badly in connection with his diary.' De Wet presents it: 'She turned the book over in her hands. Looked at the title then at me with an almost childlike smile of pleasure. "But this is a miracle."' He tells her everything. She keeps smiling. 'John Cowper loves to have visitors.'

They set off up the main street, past cottages being slowly devoured by the slate heaps. He remarks too, on the slope up to sturdy stone Waterloo, the four-foot fence of slate tablets, their tails sunk into the ground, heavy iron staples linking their heads. They go through the shiny black door to the white-painted interior.

> Thick white hair covered his scalp, accentuated by the scarlet cushion framing his head, a square almost Slavic jaw ending in a firmly projecting chin—but not agressive; mouth slightly open as though in perpetual utterance—the Duke ofWellington's beak of a nose—very thick eyebrows above the sockets where his eyes sparkled among the kindly, mischievous wrinkles and lines. His eyes were bird-like, but not to be confounded with the eagle, piercing, incandescent blue eyes of an Ezra Pound. Powys's eyes were more the eyes of a jackdaw—if of a different hue—curious and knowing at the same time.
>
> Such was my quick first impression of him. He was reclining upon a divan couch beside the window, his shoulders propped amongst numerous cushions of different bright colours. Even in this recumbent attitude, it was evident that he was a very tall man. On being introduced, his long lean fingers took my hand between both of his, retaining it there for what seemed a very long time while he stared up into my face saying never a word, till Phyllis Playter having explained the object of my visit, he released my hand, beamed from one of us to the other, and in a clear rhetorical voice enunciated, 'My word! Fancy that!' In the course of the next few days I was to come to know this particular idiom in an instructive range of uses ...

JCP finds the Taliessin passages in *Porius* and reads aloud. '*With the roots of a thousand worlds dangling beneath me* ... '

> He read with a clear, young, melodious voice. Melodious, yes, but not of that variety sometimes associated with the pulpit. His changing cadence precluded that. While the voice was definitely rhetorical, it had no tedious histrionic artifices. This seemed to me to be achieved by a weird ironic chuckle in the background, there like an accompaniment—pianissimo, pianissimo, but there none the less.

Phyllis makes tea while de Wet draws, with his quick continuous-line technique, and goes through JCP-like rituals,

> thinking my own face into a likeness of what is before me ... I could by closing my eyes and pressing my knuckles into my eye-pits see emerging from the nebulous and kaleidoscopic the finished bronze of John Cowper

Powys. Knowing that between the substance and the vision there remained but a few simple and almost automatic exercises of my fingers to form and shape a solid image, and after that the straightforward mechanics of casting.

They drink from Rockingham china, that seems to de Wet especially to suit JCP's 'tea ceremony' of arranging sugar lumps and intently watching them dissolve.

Back at the hotel, the head reaches fulfilment in record time. De Wet is one who squeezes all his efforts into a brief sustained impulsive rush, enjoying 'the spontaneous reward of savouring an undertaking accomplished with its inception'. 'You had finished when you began', Ezra Pound, another sitter, told him – the most acceptable compliment he was ever offered. Gwenfe and the waitresses are entertained by the sculptor's face smudged like a sun-tan with red clay. With rain outside, he thinks as he works of sunlight, and the children in *All or Nothing*, John o'Dreams and Jilly-Tewky, journeying to the sun with the Cerne Giant and attendant flying slugs.

Next day, carrying the head to Waterloo, he is greeted by JCP singing his school song, '*Olim fuit monachorum* ...' He puts finishing touches to the clay with a hairpin, observing JCP as he talks to three small children, visiting with their father. He enjoys a gin with Phyllis; JCP lives on tea, biscuits, icecream and Complan. At one point JCP embarks on a fantasy, imagining (like so many English storytellers – like his own earlier 'Miss Rowe! Miss Rowe!') the ornaments in the room coming alive. Later he reads from the *Telegraph* about the mysterious foundering of the US submarine 'Thresher' – something de Wet recalls when he discovers that the metal used to cast the head came from a consignment used for a nuclear submarine. He is not surprised when Phyllis and JCP declare themselves delighted by the sculpture. 'Those who are not enthusiastic about what purports to be their likeness are generally the ineffably dull, the even inanimate in the flesh, the disinspirers ...'

'So the time came for me to be on my way, to leave those two kind people.' He should have felt elated; but a shadow falls as Phyllis asks him if, when the day comes as it must to all of us, he will take the death mask of her companion. Back in Kensington with the head, he describes making the mould of paraffin wax, washing out the clay from each half, joining the mould and filling it with 'liquid *terrosa ferrata*' (extra hard plaster mixed with iron filings). Then he tours the pubs and invites his friends in, arranges the head on cotton waste in a metal dish, melts the wax and sets fire to it.

As the circle of fire round the base melted the wax so the flames rose higher and higher till the whole glistening white mass becamer a great torch of seething, twisting, up-rushing fire whose jagged-edged blades of flame, rising some five feet in the air, carved a hole in the night and lighted

> up the white walls of the yard and the faces of the onlookers. The blaze continued splendidly for some little while till slowly, slowly with the consumption of the melted fuel, the incandescence subsided. With the flames less rigid in their ascent the night airs played with them, fluttering them and brushing them aside, and from their midst, phoenix-like, gradually looked forth the pyrophorous head of John Cowper Powys.

Soon after, a letter from Phyllis tells him that after he left she was taken ill (as she had been earlier). In June he returns from a trip abroad to find another letter, written from the hospital in Blaenau Ffestiniog where she is recuperating from an operation, and JCP is also staying. The hospital 'looks down a green valley with mountains on both sides and in the distance. It has a "loggia" across the front of the building and each room has a French door opening on this. It looks much more like a resort in Switzerland than a hospital. And the Matron treats us more like guests than patients.' DeWet had sent her some avocado pears (then probably a rarity in west Wales), that came 'to my great surprise and delight. When I was just getting better the first time and beginning to be able to eat again. Everything seemed delicious to me—even bread and butter—but Nothing could have seemed as good as those avocado Pears ... you could not have sent me anything I enjoyed more.'

A few days later he gets a lift to Liverpool with a friend in the BBC, thinking he could visit Blaenau again (with his friend possibly getting a recording). They are in Sheffield when the radio news announces that John Cowper has died. He telephones, briefly; Phyllis is 'calm and gentle in her usual way'. She smiles at him from her hospital bed, and he goes respectfully about his task. At one point a gold design on a piece of plastic seems to shine like a visitation: 'I do not omit mentioning this trivial little incident, believing as I do that if the then intangible Mr Powys had been following the event from somewhere else, perhaps in company with John o'Dreams, he might have chuckled at the bathos of it.' Later, Militza, the instigator of the journey, receives in exchange for her *Porius* a copy of *Autobiography* inscribed by Phyllis 'for John Cowper Powys—too late for him to do so himself!'

With thanks for help with this to Peter and Naomi Jones, Graham Carey, Belinda Humfrey, Meic Stephens, Susan Rands, Jeff Kwintner, Joan Stevens, and anonymous deWet obituaries.

[1] Athene Provides *reprinted from* Essays on John Cowper Powys *ed. Belinda Humfrey (1972).*

[2] *Letter from Deirdre (Bland) to Eve Elwin (1957, extract) provided by Susan Rands. See also the advertisement in* The Powys Review *27/28 (1992–3), p.15, presumably the same Head.*

[3] *Abbreviation taken from the Village Press reprint (1974).*

Some portrait heads of JCP:
(top left) by Miriam Bryans, ? pre 1935 (at Sherborne School);
(top right) by Oloff De Wet, 1963, in profile;
(lower left) by Jonah Jones, 1957 (photo, National Library of Wales);
(lower right) the same, in profile (from Essays on JCP*).*

Theodora Scutt: Marian Powys Grey

To judge from the portait that used to hang on the landing of her son's house, Marian Powys must have been very beautiful indeed until middle age or even later. I only saw her twice in England, once when I was about four (at Chaldon) and I can't really remember it; Peter, who was ten years my elder, must have been about fourteen or so. The next time I saw her, which I do recollect, was when Peter and Barbara Tyler were married in Chaldon church, and I was Ty's bridesmaid – she was always known as Ty – and the Vicar, whose name I forget, distinguished himself by asking Marian in an anxious whisper, 'Forgive me, Mrs Grey, but is your daughter-in-law-to-be a Red Indian?' Indeed Ty was very dark, but her people were American Irish! – from the farmlands of Maine I must add, not from the suburbs of New York or Chicago. Marian had put on weight by then, but she was a good-looking woman for all that. I dare say she had been in England on more occasions than those two but I just hadn't seen her.

I didn't see her again for about seven years. Then Peter and Ty very kindly invited me to stay, and their house and Marian's were next door, that's to say, there was Marian's big wild garden, a small bit of Peter's, and rather a lot of spice-bush copse between them. Marian never visited Peter and his wife; I dare say she might have liked to, but by then she had fairly bad arthritis and it was quite a rough walk – and further by road. Ty visited her occasionally. Peter did so quite often. So did I while I was there, now and then, but it was difficult, as the two women only had one thing in common – great courage. They didn't get on at all; Ty had decided that Marian thought her not good enough for Peter, and I got the impression that Marian was exasperated with Ty for not even trying to be friendly. How much Ty's Irish Catholic background had to do with this, I can't guess, but probably very little; Ty didn't exactly practise her religion and didn't seem to care about her Irish background, and certainly Marian didn't; but they were two exceptionally strong women, and in such cases it's lucky indeed if they 'get on'.

Neither arthritis nor being pretty plump are going to help one's looks, yet still Marian was a good-looking old woman. Before I'd thought about it properly, I used to wonder why Peter's father hadn't married her when he was widowed; but

Marian wasn't going to take orders from anyone, even a husband, and also she was successful in her own right, which not many men are strong enough to put up with – makes them feel inferior. He lived quite close and once Ty pointed him out to me. I must say, if he hadn't looked so much like Peter, who was a fine-looking man, I'd have thought him a very ordinary chap and wondered what on earth the beautiful, intellectual, successful Marian had seen in him; but good looks do

count for something, and I believe they had quite a lot of fun together; she told me once that he'd taught her to swim in the really quite dangerous pool half-way down the long steep slope to the shore of the Hudson River. I don't think it would have occurred to her that the pool was dangerous; she probably did notice that the water was cold!

The great love of her life was lace and lacemaking. Because of the arthritis, I think she had had to give up making it, but she certainly had done so, and done it well, for as long as she could. Honiton was her favourite and thanks to her I can recognise Honiton lace to this day. She was a good businesswoman and extremely determined (I suppose anyone who wants anything as much as Marian wanted to live with lace, is likely to be pretty determined about it) and she reached her goal. I believe in her time she was the world's expert on lace, and I greatly doubt that in these present days anyone could be found who knows anywhere near as much. She was musical also, but not in the same way; just socially expert, as all the women of her class and age were taught to be. I gathered from Peter that she wasn't too sweet-tempered and was in the habit of speaking her mind, but there's nothing wrong with that and she must have had enough to annoy her; she was a woman running a successful business, which even in America in those days women weren't supposed to do, or be capable of doing; I dare say plenty of men tried to get in her way.

I found her sympathetic and understanding, but somewhat impatient, which with an elderly and highly intelligent and educated woman dealing with a less than bright and uneducated young one, is understandable. She took me to see the Cloisters in New York, and as I haven't been trained to communicate in spoken words, she never knew how I appreciated that. She didn't judge, no matter what you'd done; even if it were dishonourable, she'd think there was a reason. She always saw the positive side of everything. I wish she hadn't lived so far away; I'd have liked to know her much better.

Marian Powys Grey:
(left) from letterhead of Arnold Shaw's lecture bureau, New York;
(above) in Englamd, 1950, photograph by Stephen Powys Marks.

Postscript

FOYLIBRA: Foyles Notes and News, April, 1935, No. 95

"Here, There and Everywhere"

This interesting 70 year-old sidelight includes celebrity Visitors to Foyles (Alfred Noyes, Constant Lambert); a Message to Youth from Mr W. A. Foyle in the Daily Mirror *('... our wages were only a pound a week. But now I am achieving success ... Don't be afraid if you are a duffer at school ... Every risk is an opportunity'); Authors' Opinions (e.g. from Bertrand Russell: 'Manners consist in pretending that we think as well of others as of ourselves'); thanks from Alderman Jones for a bronze medal received by Blaina Hospital for its annual Eisteddfod; Mr W. A. Foyle's tour to study bookselling conditions in the Holy Land; large orders for the Jubilee Book of King George V (20,000 copies for Ilford Borough Council for distribution to school-children); and a 'shot' of Foyles Bookshop in the new film 'Charing Cross Road'.* Jobber Skald *is announced for publication at the end of May, and principal speakers for the Literary Luncheon on 11th April are to be Mr John Cowper Powys, Dr A. J. Cronin, Miss Fay Compton and Miss Madeline Carroll (what a shame the last one did not show up – or JCP missed her). JCP's speech at the Luncheon follows, with thanks to Madeleine Boyns and Gloria at the Foyles archive.*

MR. JOHN COWPER POWYS ON "THE DIFFICULTIES OF NOVEL WRITING"

Mr John Cowper Powys, Dr. A. J. Cronin and Miss Ursula Bloom were the principal speakers at Foyles Literary Luncheon at Grosvenor House last month. Miss Fay Compton presided. The guests included Sir H. P. Burt, Sir Ernest Cochrane, Lady Drage, Mr Victor Gollancz, Sir John Hammerton, Lady John Kennedy, Mr R. J. Minney, The Hon. Mrs Montague Norman, Baron von Richthofen, Baroness Zglinibski, Mr Wilson Disher and Mr Howard Spring.

Mr John Cowper Powys said: My subject is a simple and natural one – "The Difficulties of Novel Writing". Let me suppose a young writer is anxious to avoid the difficulties of novel writing and is beginning a book that he hopes is to be a masterpiece, how will this young writer go to work? In the first place, I am in favour of an extreme simplicity of attitude, almost a childlike innocence of simplicity. The best way to approach this childlike attitude to the undertaking of the writing of a great novel is to ask yourself what are the great novels in the world and what is the nature of a great novel. I think everyone will agree that the great novels are those which in the first place are convincing; whether they are fanciful, imaginative, realistic, or mystical, does nor matter, but they must be convincing and they must create or discover a truth, a picture, or a being. As we go about we

say,"Here is a character from Henry James," or "Here is a Balzacian character," and "Here is a Rabelaisian character." This is what the great writers have done, and the true attitude of the young writer is to be childlike and naive in mentality. He must read the great novels of the world; he must dare to use them; he must swallow them and their nature must sink into his nature, and then he will come in his own way to be himself and somewhere in his being will be a great character of a great novel of our civilization.

But what are those great novels, with those great convincing characters? Well, I only name a few of the greatest of all. There is Don Quixote, the Friar John, the characters of Rabelais, Falstaff, My Uncle Toby, the Vicar of Wakefield, Mr Micawber, some characters from Scott's Waverley novels, the creations of Anatole France, and you find something of the sort in Joyce's "Ulysses". All these characters become representative and symbolic of the whole human race. The same thing might be said of such a character as Dostoievski's "The Idiot", and the Brothers Karamazov.

What the young writer has to steep himself in is not so much in the great novels as in the great characters in the great novels. And then he will have to aim at creating characters out of time and space, so to speak, characters like Goethe's Faust; and if he does these things, although his characters may be people next door, there will be a symbolic element in them and they will have something, not of course like "The Idiot," not like Macbeth, not like King Lear or Falstaff, not like Uncle Toby or the Vicar of Wakefield, but they will be going in that direction. The great enemy of real novel writing is cleverness, and particularly a certain kind of intellectual cleverness, a cheap, "smart alec", intellectual cleverness. That is damning to anyone who wants to be a great novelist. Intellectuality in itself is dangerous, but a certain quick wit accompanying intellectuality is fatal.

I would like to say next that a young writer must saturate himself in his subject. It does not matter what subject it is, he must be saturated in it. Writers, children of clergymen, say, like myself, who have been to college or a public school and who live a quiet academic life, can only look at life from the outside and they know very little of seafaring or of the factory or of the real life of a country. I would contend that the only safe thing for writers of what one might call the professional classes, children of lawyers and doctors and clergymen, is to narrow their novels down to those levels of life where they are saturated. For example, I ought only to write of clergymen and of those waifs and strays that come into a professional person's life, particularly that of a clergyman or a doctor or a lawyer, who naturally come into contact with such persons as tramps and, in the country, gypsies, smugglers, labourers, and vagrants. From the qualities and characteristics of the humblest people we can soak up great matter which is grist for our mill. But if you try to describe the soldier's life when you have never been in the army, or a miner's life, a carpenter's life, or a mason's life when you have been living a typically sedentary existence, it is copying.

Now, I will get to another point. The great danger in a young novel-writer is to bring your own theories and your own idea of religion or God or of space and time and to attempt to solve the riddle of the universe. No young man can do the impossible and the most sagacious young writers are those who put their passion into the thing with which they are saturated and who have the wit and self-restraint and sagacity to say to themselves: "We are young men, we are willing to let the middle of the Universe go until we have had more experience. Meanwhile we will write with imaginative passion on what we feel we know."

A great novel must be indirectly historical and it must have the weight of a particular spot, the weight of a particular country, the weight of a great religious, mythical, mystical tradition. It must have that big appeal and it must have Heaven as its antagonist and Earth as its protagonist. I would like to imagine a young writer being influenced by certain moderns in novel writing. I will name three. Dorothy Richardson, not for the unconscious but for what is not usually conscious, not for the very imperfectly realized but for the perfect realization of our sensations from the inanimate in one person. And then let me mention my friend, James Hanley, a passionate writer about the proletariat. Let me imagine that a character composed by James Hanley associated with a character composed by Dorothy Richardson, and remembering my mystical sense, let me bring in my brother Theodore, with that deep, indescribable power which he alone possesses of making the unknown real and the imaginative palpable and tangible. You must not mind saying to yourself, "I am going to get [? *even with*] Dostoievski and Scott and Dickens and Joyce." It is all right. You have got to swallow them. You have to approach these great writers with a great passionate carnivorousness. Make them your own and when you have them in your blood and bone, the style does not matter and the plot least of all. Create the characters which are your background and God will be behind you; Nature will be behind you, and between the earth and the sky those figures will move and work out their own destiny, and your plot will write itself.