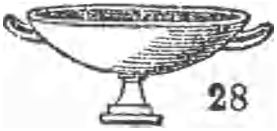
Editorial

Since the last Newsletter we have lost two of the Society's most distinguished Elder Statesmen – Cedric Hentschel, who was Chairman 1982–87, and Francis Feather, our great benefactor. One of JCP's most active supporters in France, Michel Gresset, has also died. Appreciations of their lives and their contributions to The Powys Society are printed in this *Newsletter*.

This has turned out to be a wickedly overweight *Newsletter*. TF and Llewelyn Powys are represented by extracts from their very different diaries from 1911. We have an interview with Ian Robinson of the Brynmill Press, and a review of TFP's *Early Works* from Brynmill, which contains the journal. JCP appears in various guises: at a wedding in Corwen; surveying his beloved Homer; and in the late fantasies, freewheeling through his imagination and memory.

Once again we look forward to the Conference at Llangollen, with the View of Dinas Brân on the heights and Afon Dyfrdwy below. May the clouds allow it.



ON OTHER PAGES

Chairman's Report for 2004

Late in 2003, as I mentioned in my last report, it became clear from the analysis of our Treasurer Michael French that the Society was on somewhat rocky ground. 2004 was the year during which we put our financial affairs in order. The decisive Committee meeting was held on 21 February at Shelagh Powys's home in Cheltenham.

It was agreed that, broadly speaking, the income from subscriptions should balance the expenditure on the *Journal*, the *Newsletter* and Administrative Expenses. Income from publications should go to fund further publications. Income from gifts and legacies should be used for extraordinary items and not (as has been done in the past) to cover the ordinary expenses of the *Journal*, the *Newsletter* and Administration.

Having thus established a proper financial framework, it was necessary to bring the accounts back into balance. This was achieved by the passing of three proposals: to shorten the length of the *Journal*; to find a less expensive printer for the *Newsletter*; and to raise the annual subscription to £18.50, with overseas subscriptions increased to £22 and that of students to £10. A vote of thanks was then expressed to Michael French for his outstanding work in alerting us to the dangers we had faced, and in putting us back on track.

Shelagh Powys's home was also the setting on 12 June 2004 for a most successful seminar on John Cowper Powys's *Wolf Solent*, arranged and introduced by Dr David Gervais

Our other principal achievement of 2004 was the holding of an extremely successful Conference at Sherborne School. Our speakers included David Gervais, our former Chairman Professor John Williams and the Headmaster of the Sherborne Prep, Peter Tait. The best-selling author, columnist and respected scholar A. N. Wilson also spoke memorably on 'Vicarage Childhoods', and there was a dramatised reading on the Powyses' schooldays, 'The Unreturning Morning', prepared by Dr Peter Foss and presented by Chris Wilkinson. Once again our thanks go especially to Peter Foss and to Louise de Bruin for their excellent organisation.

During the year further additions were made to the Web site, which continues to attract new members to swell our ranks. We also produced a number of excellent newsletters edited by Kate Kavanagh, and a first-class *Journal* edited by Larry Mitchell.

2004 saw Peter Foss step down as Hon. Secretary after three years in office. We owe him much, and he has kindly agreed to continue helping Louise de Bruin with the Conferences. He has been succeeded as Hon. Secretary by Peter Lazare, who has already impressed members with his tact, efficiency and quiet good humour. In addition, David Goodway stood down as Vice-Chairman, in which role he has been ably succeeded by David Gervais.

Your Chairman and your new Secretary held at the Dorset County Museum, where the Society's books and papers are stored, our second annual meeting with curator Judy Lindsay. Dr Morine Krissdóttir was also present and there was a useful exchange of views.

This will be my last report as Chairman, as I am standing down after four years in office, though I shall continue to serve the Society by maintaining and further developing our Web site. In the meantime I thank my fellow-officers, the Committee members and all those many others who have worked with me during that time on the Society's behalf.

I am sure that under our new Chairman John Hodgson to whom I give the warmest possible welcome we will continue to be guided by our founding principle, which is to establish the true literary status of the Powys family through promotion of the reading and discussion of their works.

Richard Perceval Graves

Committee Nominations for 2005–6

The following **Officer** has been nominated and has agreed to stand:

Position	*Nomination*	*Proposer*	*Seconder*
Chairman	**John Hodgson**	Richard Graves	Tim Hyman

As no other nominations have been received the present Honorary Officers will serve for a further year. They are:

Vice-Chairman **David Gervais**
Hon. Treasurer **Michael French**
Hon. Secretary **Peter Lazare**

Members of the Committee

As reported in the April *Newsletter*, there were 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.

The following, therefore, will serve on the Committee for the coming year: **Lorna Burns**, **David Goodway**, **Richard Perceval Graves**, **Tim Hyman**, **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter* editor), **Jeff Kwintner**, and **John Powys**. **Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe** has decided not to serve another year. **Stephen Powys Marks** will continue to attend meetings as Publications Manager, and **Larry Mitchell** as editor of *The Powys Journal*.

The Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society

The Hand Hotel, Llangollen at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday 21 August 2005

AGENDA

1 Minutes of the 2004 AGM – published in the November 2004 *Newsletter.*
2 Matters arising.
3 Report of the Hon. Secretary
4 Report of the Hon. Treasurer and Audited Accounts, as published in the July 2005 *Newsletter.*
5 Report for 2004 by the Chairman, as published in the July 2005 *Newsletter.*
6 To note the election of the Chairman for 2005–6.
7 Date and location of the 2006 Conference.
8 AOB.

The Powys Society Annual Conference

The Hand Hotel, Llangollen, Friday 19 August to Sunday 21 August 2005

'THE CENTRE AND THE CIRCLE'

Programme

Friday 19th

4.00 Arrivals
5.30 Informal Reception in Dinas Brân Suite; welcome by Chairman
6.30 Dinner
8.00 Professor Charles Lock: *'Powys and the Aether: The Homeric Novels'*

Saturday 20th

8.00 Breakfast in Dinas Brân Suite
9.30 Richard Maxwell: *'Rescuing Time in* Porius'
followed by Coffee
11.15 Barbara Ozieblo: *'The friendship of women: Alyse Gregory and Gamel Woolsey'*
12.45 Lunch
Afternoon free, with informal arrangements between members for trips if required
4.30 Tea available
6.30 Dinner
8.00 Entertainment: *'The Tangled Tree'*, based on letters between Oliver and Frances Wilkinson

Sunday 21st

8.00 Breakfast

9.30 Ian Robinson: *'T. F. Powys and the Renewal of English Prose'*, followed by Coffee

11.00 AGM, including our welcome to the incoming Chairman John Hodgson. To be followed by a Discussion by all present on JCP's experience of Wales, leading on to a general examination of the influence of place in the life and works of all the Powyses. Were they disadvantaged as writers or thinkers by the remote places in which many of them lived, or did that very remoteness feed their creative power? Were their many letters in themselves a form of life?

1.0 Lunch

2.0 End of Conference and departure in afternoon

Committee News

Members of the Committee met on 2nd July 2005, at the Hymans' house in London. (*This is an informal account.*)

Our **Chairman** Richard Graves welcomed to the meeting his successor (there having been no other nominations by 30th June) – **John Hodgson**. John has written on the Powyses since the early days of *The Powys Review*, c.1980 (and among other remarkable talents is a professional translator from Albanian). **Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe**, finding it difficult to participate as energetically as he would wish, has decided to resign from the committee. We hope he will continue to monitor and advise as in the past on references to Powyses and the Society in the public domain.

The **discussion meeting at Dorchester**, on T. F. Powys's 'John Pardy and the Waves', was attended by about a dozen people and much enjoyed (*see page 20*). On the same day the director of the **Dorset County Museum** Judy Lindsay kindly opened the Powys Collection room for Society members. RPG reported that there are still difficulties with access to the Collection since volunteers are scarce and the Museum is unlikely to have a full-time literary curator in the near future. Morine Krissdóttir will still be available as consultant.

Tim Blanchard, a member of the Society and communications manager at Omobono, presented his **Media Relations Programme** for the Society. This included suggestions of *moments in time* – significant anniversaries, new publications etc.; *named champions* – well known figures who might be prepared to help publicise the Powyses; and *assembling materials* – previously published articles and extracts that could be reprinted. Tim was very warmly thanked for his significant contribution, and members are invited to contact him with any further ideas on tim.blanchard@btopenworld.com .

The Conference Organisers have visited the Hand Hotel at **Llangollen** and plans for the Conference are on course, with 38 people booked to stay in addition to the speakers and organisers (details to be sent with the July *Newsletter* to those attending). Budgeting for **next year's conference** (probably at Chichester) should be confirmed soon.

Publications by the Society next planned are a reprint of the original 'Little Blue Book' (1928) of five essays by JCP, including the title piece *The Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant*, introduced by David Goodway; also a short booklet, *John Cowper Powys and Hardy*, of a selection of JCP's views of Hardy from *Autobiography*, letters and literary essays (it is hoped this will appeal to Hardy devotees, and draw attention to the collections in the DCM). Stephen Powys Marks demonstrated examples of new printing methods for the Society.

This may be a good moment to express briefly the Committee's thanks to Richard for his genial and encouraging presence at the helm during the last four years. His tact and humour and above all his goodwill have been much appreciated. Committee meetings chaired by him have been relaxed and constructive.We especially enjoy the significant Powys texts he selects to introduce them.

KK

This and other sketches are from A Homeric Dictionary, *based on the German work of Georg Autenrieth, first translated into English in 1876 (see quote on page 53).*

Subscriptions

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

U.K. £18.50

International £22.00

Student £10.00

We are grateful to the majority of members who have paid their subscriptions, but if you are not one of them you will have a remainder with this *Newsletter*: we hope you will renew your membership.

Michael J. French

Honorary Treasurer's Report for 2004

The accounts for 2004 are set out on the following two pages: they have been approved by the Society's Honorary Auditor, Mr Stephen Allen, and once again the Society is most grateful to him for his work for, and advice to, the Society.

Our paid-up membership for 2004 was 288, which represents a small, but welcome, increase over the 279 members in 2003. With a tax refund under the Gift Aid Scheme of £580 (£483 in 2003), our total subscription income was £4,687, or 56.7% of our total income of £8,271. This 56.7% is a significantly smaller fraction than the 64.6% in 2003: this reduction is principally due the increase in 2004 of the total income as a result of the sale of the remaining copies of *Wessex Memories* and the significant surplus resulting from the Sherborne Conference.

As in previous years, the largest part of our expenditure was on our two regular publications, *The Powys Journal* and the three issues of the Society's *Newsletter*. In 2003, these had absorbed 118% of the subscription income. At its early meetings in 2004 the Committee recognised that this level of expenditure was unsustainable and needed to be reduced closer to the target fraction of 90% that had operated in earlier years. In 2004 the net cost of producing the Journal and Newsletters, including distribution, was £4,228 or 90.2% of the subscription income. The Committee hopes (and believes) that this decrease has been achieved without a reduction in the quality or usefulness of the two publications to members. Before taking into account the movement in publication stocks, the Society ended the year with an excess of income over expenditure of £2,942 (in 2003, expenditure had exceeded income by £1,503).

At its November 2003 and February 2004 meetings, your Committee considered the value placed in the accounts on its stock of publications (particularly in the light of the slow movement of its considerable stock of back numbers of *The Powys Journal*). In consultation with the Society's Honorary Auditor, the Committee resolved to adopt a straight-line depreciation to zero over five years in respect of its publication stocks. This resulted in an exceptional write down of £1,326 and a consequent decrease of £1,921 in the value placed on the Society's stock of publications. Overall, therefore, taking into account movements in the value of publication stocks, the accounts show an excess of income over expenditure of £1,021 (in 2003 the expenditure exceeded income by £999) and an increase in Society's net worth from £5,969 to £6,990 in the course of the year.

Michael J. French

THE POWYS SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2004

INCOME [1]		£	£	£	*2003*
Subscriptions	In arrears (2 members)	33			
	Brought forward from 2003 (11 members)	171			
	For 2004 (277 members)	3,903			
	Honorary members (14)	–			
	Tax refund under Gift Aid	580	**4,687**		*4,601*
Donations	Conference book sales (*less* commission)	242			
	Other	60	**302**		*405*
Publication Sales	*Wessex Memories*: sale of 114 copies	969			
	less expenses	(41)			
	add 17 copies sold in 2003	143			
	Stock publications	312	**1,383**		*2,140*
Conference	Registration fees	4,728			
	less costs	(2,839)	**1,889**		*(51)*
Other	Bank interest		**10**		*23*
	TOTAL		**8,271**		*7,118*
EXPENDITURE [1]					
Powys Journal xiv	Cost of printing [2]	2,189		*2,650*	
	Cost of distribution	341	**2,530**	*533*	*3,183*
Powys Newsletters	Printing costs, Nos 51, 52, 53	1,210		*1,742*	
	Cost of distribution	488	**1,698**	*493*	*2,235*
Wessex Memories			**–**		*2,246*
T. F. Powys day			**–**		*30*
Administrative	Web-site maintenance	70		*70*	
Expenses	Alliance of Literary Societies	15			
	Advert in TLS, December 2004	157			
	Expenses in relation to subscription increase	157			
	Officers' expenses	368		*345*	
	Travel to Committee meetings	334	**1,101**	*512*	*927*
	TOTAL		**5,329**		*8,621*
EXCESS/ (DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE			**2,942**		*(1,503)*
(DECREASE)/ INCREASE IN PUBLICATION STOCKS [3]			**(1,921)**		*504*
EXCESS/ (DEFICIT) OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE (taking stock movements into account)			**1,021**		*(999)*

THE POWYS SOCIETY

STATEMENT OF FUNDS AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2004

GENERAL FUND [4]	£	£	*2003*
Funds at 1 January 2004		**3,969**	*4,072*
Excess/ (Deficit) of income over expenditure		**1,021**	*(999)*
Transfer from Wilson Knight Benefactors Fund		**–**	*896*
Funds at 31 December 2004		**4,990**	*3,969*
Represented by:			
Stock of *Powys Journal* and books [3]		**1,222**	*3,143*
Cash at Bank 31 Decembert 2004 [5]	4,025		
Less subscriptions received in advance [6]	(437)	**3,768**	*826*
		4,990	*3,96*
THE WILSON KNIGHT BENEFACTORS FUND [7]			
Funds at 1 January 2004		**2,000**	*2,896*
Transfer to General Fund		–	*896*
Funds at 31 December 2004		**2.000**	*2.000*
Represented by			
Cash at bank		**2,000**	*2,000*

NOTES

1 Cash turnover in 2004: total receipts, £11,672; total payments, £8,506. After adjustments, relating to the cost of new publications stocked, existing publications sold, writing down of stock and subscriptions received in advance, the excess of income over expenditure was £1,021. (In 2003 expenditure exceeded income by £999.)

2 This includes a charitable element of £889, calculated from the production costs (£2,189) less the value of 400 copies distributed or stocked at £3.25 per copy (£1,300).

3 Value of stock at 1 January 2004 was £3,143. During the year this was increased by the taking of new publications into stock (£228: 70 copies of *The Powy Journal* xiv for 2004 @ £3.25 per copy) and decreased by the sale of existing stock (£570: 114 copies orf *Wessex Memories* @ £5.00 per copy; £253: other publications) and by the exceptional revaluation of stock on the adoption of a straight-line depreciation of existing stock to zero after five years (£1,326). This gives a total decrease during 2004 of £1,921 and a stock value at 31 December 2004 of £1,222.

4 **Society's net worth at 31 December 2004, £6,990 (General Fund £4,990; Wilson Knight Benefactors Fund £2,000).** (At 31 December 2003, net worth was £5,969.)

5 Community Account £72, Savings Account £6,133, *less* WKB Fund £2,000 = £4,205.

6 Subscriptions received in advance: from 2003 accounts; £42 [3 subscriptions for 2005]; from 2004 accounts: £378 [19 subscriptions for 2005] and £17 [1 subscriptions for 2006].

7 All interest has been retained in the General Fund.

Michael J. French, Hon. Treasurer

AUDITOR'S REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE POWYS SOCIETY

I have audited the financial statements in accordance with approved auditing standards. In my opinion, the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Charity's affairs at 31 December 2004 and of the surplus for the year then ended and comply with the Companies Act 1985.

J. S. Allen (Chartered Accountant), 6th May 2005

Obituaries

Francis Feather
(1908–2005)

The President writes:

With the death of Francis Feather, which took place on May 25 in Bulawayo, the Society has lost one of its early and most loyal and generous members. We gained a lot from his practicality and knowledge of business affairs, as well as from the gift of his personal collection of rare Powys books and manuscripts, which has been lodged in the Collection at the Dorset County Museum. He and his wife Kathleen were regular attenders at the Annual Conference, and their friendly presence added greatly to the value of those occasions. Despite ill health in his later years Francis remained indomitably cheerful and I particularly remember the lively part he played in the book auctions. Our sympathy goes out to Kathleen, with many memories of her kindly and supportive presence. She and Francis were about to celebrate their 69th wedding anniversary.

Glen Cavaliero

Morine Krissdóttir writes:

In these past years, the Society has seen the death of some of its most well-loved members – Wilson Knight, Kenneth Hopkins, Francis Powys, Oliver Wilkinson, Isobel Powys Marks – but with the death of Francis Feather I suddenly felt that it was indeed the end of an era. These were the larger-than-life characters that attracted the Powys brothers and upon whom they in turn cast a spell.

In the past few years, since the Zimbabwe post became so uncertain, letters to Francis and Kathleen had to go via their daughter Juliet's e-mail. From Juliet too I heard of Francis's declining health, of the everyday struggle to get food, of their removal to a retirement home. The move from their big house must have been difficult. I remember room after room filled from ceiling to floor with books – the books of a collector, not one without its rarity value. Even when we had packed the five huge cases with his Powys collection, it seemed as if hardly a dent had been made. He showed me his collection of Eric Gill, some of the drawings so erotic that he said, with a twinkle in his eye, he would not want his wife to see them. Despite that protectiveness, in the two weeks I spent with them I saw a marriage such as I did not believe still existed, so beautifully rock-solid in its 'this-ness'.

One day, Francis (Dougie to his friends) took me aside and read my palm! He told me I had a short life-line, which did not surprise me. But *his* life-line was a long and successful one. As John Cowper Powys would say, 'May he rise to Immortality & Intense Happiness!!'

(If anyone wishes to know more about the Feathers or the Powys Collection, I can be reached at: <krissdottir@telinco.co.uk> ***MK***)

Ian Robinson writes:

Francis Feather was one of the handful of people who kept substantial bodies of work together when the T. F. Powys manuscripts might well have been scattered. Without them the Brynmill T. F. Powys series would not have been possible. Some collectors like to keep unpublished works private, but we were very lucky in our approaches to the very generous E. E. Bissell and then Francis Feather, who was nearly as eager as ourselves to get some of them published. It was characteristic that our main debt to him was when he supplied a photocopy of the latest known manuscript of that movingly beautiful tale 'The Sixpenny Strumpet', for his collection was inspired by an intelligent love of the author, and he did much to confirm my own opinion that the handful of long tales with which T. F. Powys ended his writing life were a fitting climax. I remember a discussion at the Powys Society Conference in 1987 when he supported our project (still unfulfilled, I'm afraid) of making a variorum edition of *The Only Penitent*, which he thought the summit of T. F. Powys's achievement.

A visit to Zimbabwe

Although we knew Francis Feather well before he moved to Zimbabwe, we would like to remember him particularly by recalling our visit to him and Kathleen in 1991.

We had been staying at Ngare Ndare within sight of Mount Kenya, visiting our cousins Rose and Tony Dyer, where we were shown the farms and houses of the soldier-settler Will Powys, Rose's father, and many of the sights of Kenya in the Nanyuki area. During our three weeks in Africa we made our excursion to Zimbabwe to stay with Francis and Kathleen in their spacious and comfortable bungalow in Bulawayo. Their welcome was quite exceptionally loving and heart-warming. Kathleen did her own cooking, and we had the best beef Wellington ever. They introduced us to various family members nearby, who very generously showed us some of the fantastic sites of that beautiful country, including Cecil Rhodes' grave in the Matopo Hills.

Francis was an avid collector of books of many authors, but above all of Powys – obviously his was the most comprehensive structured accumulation of Powys books anywhere – together with a considerable collection of manuscripts (a few of the most valuable had been left in Britain with a daughter). They were beautifully arranged, many in patent glazed units, and he had the greatest pleasure in showing us many gems and rarities from this marvellous collection; it was at this time that we first learned of his desire that the collection should be handed over to a responsible keeper in England. The Powys Society had only recently become a registered charity (in April 1989), so now Francis felt that he could consider the Society as a potential owner; I was able to convey this thrilling news to the Committee, and Morine Krissdóttir took on the negotiations which resulted in the successful removal of the collection in the face of the deeply

obstructive attitude of the authorities in that country; surely this would have been utterly impossible now. (The other manuscripts were later fetched from Scotland by Stephen.)

We are very sad to lose such a valued friend.

Tordis and Stephen Powys Marks

Francis Feather's reminiscence, Mr. Weston and the Girl in the Green Hat, *relates his early serendipitous discovery of T. F. Powys and his meeting with Kathleen, in* Newsletter *42 (April 2001). News of the Feather family at that time in Zimbabwe, by Juliet Rickwood their older daughter, is also in* Newsletter *42 (page 37).*

Morine Krissdóttir's account of her expedition to bring the Feather Collection to England is in Newsletter *20 (November 1993, page 9).*

This photograph of Francis Feather was taken by Morine on that occasion.

Francis Feather, 1993.

Cedric Hentschel

(1913–2005)

The President writes:

Cedric Hentschel was Chairman of the Powys Society between 1982 and 1987. He was a man of great urbanity and unostentatious charm. His career in the BBC European Service and the British Council took him to posts in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Mexico, Finland and Jamaica. Such a cosmopolitan background rendered his enthusiasm for the work of the Powyses all the more authoritative; and his editing of John Cowper's book on Keats and letters to Sven-Erik Täckmark (a long-time friend of Cedric's from the latter's time in Sweden) witnessed to a scholarly expertise which had already earned him a Doctorate. On the occasion of his ninetieth birthday he published *Less Simple Measures,* a collection of poems written during the last decade of his life, a highly personal book which provides its readers with the very best of company.

As Cedric was in life, and he kept his razor-sharp mind to the end. A man of wide-ranging cultural interests and an accomplished linguist, he was once described by John Cowper as 'pulling my leg while gently caressing it', a response indicative of Cedric's particular quality as a conversationalist and friend. Paul Roberts, who acted as the Society's Secretary during the latter part of Cedric's chairmanship, recalls how he was 'always extremely calm, and his dignity and gravitas was leavened with humour and a very great kindness' – a view which those who remember his work for the Society will readily concur. He was a wise and gracious man whom it has been a privilege to know.

Glen Cavaliero

Cedric

> *It is after all, as Goethe says, the personal which interests us. The attempt to substitute, for the personal, any degree of scholarship or erudition, is fatal to genuine interest, both in art and criticism.*
>
> *(JCP,* Confessions of Two Brothers*).*

I wish here to evoke for you the Cedric I slowly came to know a little, through the handful of letters we exchanged over these last three years, since unfortunately I was too impressed in the eighties by the *cénacle* of eminent Powysians around G. Wilson Knight to speak to any of them. I now regret this very much, for Kenneth (Hopkins) and Cedric were both genuinely warm and engaging personalities. It was only in September 2002 that I wrote to Cedric for the first time, knowing of his links with Sweden, seeking his help to translate Professor Algulin's paper on *Autobiography* for *la lettre powysienne.* He accepted with good grace, and also contributed an original paper, 'Self-Portraiture in Borrow and the Powys' which appeared in the same issue. From then on, we began a correspondence.

After the first formal exchanges, I came to look forward to reading his missives, for as well as showing friendliness and giving me kind encouragement in my

Powysian activities, he would include snippets of erudite or personal allusions twinkling with humour, establishing some kind of rapport between us through subjects of interest to us both. Thus his admiration for George Borrow came from the time when he received *Wild Wales* as a school prize. I also gathered that after a somewhat difficult childhood during the first World War, he earned a scholarship to a local London grammar school, where he 'benefited from an excellent education. As to the ethos of that school and its inmates (both boys and staff), looking back from today's unruly perspective, we seem to have been almost unimaginably innocent and well-behaved.' Later he went to University College London, where as he recalled Marie Stopes had lectured much earlier; he admitted to having 'a soft spot for her' and her pioneering work. At some point I must have mentioned Uppsala, where I had attended Sven-Erik Täckmark's *specialsamling*, an Exhibition of his Powysiana devoted to John Cowper, at the prestigious 'Carolina Rediviva' Library in November 1990. (It was, may I remind you, the first JCP exhibition ever launched.) Cedric too had retained fond memories of Uppsala, (which he calls 'a haven of contemplation'), where he was sent on assignment in 1940 by the British Council, and his wedding in 1946 to Eva took place at the Cathedral where Swedenborg is buried. It was of course during these years that he met Sven-Erik Täckmark, as he also recalls in his Introduction to *Powys to Eric the Red*. A fascinating photograph of a young and smiling Cedric taken in 1942 may be seen in his volume of poems *Less Simple Measures* (2002).

His letters, usually one long typewritten page, were always interesting and alluded to many topics *en passant*. He wore his erudition lightly, but it was, nevertheless, firmly built on his profound familiarity with European culture, from Goethe to W. G. Sebald, a neighbour he was sorry not to have 'contacted long ago at the University of East Anglia. His unique narrative mode, with its quaint visual embellishments, is both original and profound.' In another letter in response to a card carrying a reproduction of the German painter Friedrich's 'Rüngen Cliffs', he asked me if I knew that 'Coleridge took a fancy to C. D. Friedrich (and also to Rüngen) during his visit to Germany in 1798–99'. The young Cedric had also been made familiar with Chateaubriand, Vigny, Lamartine and Victor Hugo at school. He knew French well and used it faultlessly. I had sent him a book by Michel Rio, a French writer of Breton origin, known here by a series of books on 'la matière de Bretagne'; he read it with gusto and remarked that 'the chronological appendices and maps at the end of *Merlin* are most helpful. I sometimes think that if JCP had included similar explanatory appendices in his two historical novels, these would have assisted his readers to find their way amid the chaos of his narratives.'

Perhaps because of his own German–Polish roots and Eva's Hungarian origins, he roamed freely in the culture of Mitteleuropa, and I was often amazed by the wide range of his knowledge. But he had learned much through his prolonged stays in different countries, for he had been, as he wrote, a 'wandering

scholar' who had given lectures from Sweden to Holland, from Israel to Bavaria. I had told him of the current interest manifested by some Russian students for Powys, one of whom resides in Kazan. This prompted the remark that Wittgenstein had once been offered the Chair of Philosophy at Kazan University. When I mentioned Riga, my father's birth-place, he noted that Latvia, a Baltic country which was already very civilized in the 18th century, 'having at various times belonged to Sweden, Germany and Russia, helped to foster that European Vision there is so much talk of these days – more talk than substance, I fear, on this side of the Channel, despite that British 'colony' in the Dordogne. However, Eva and I do cherish that vision, and so, I expect, do you and your Max.'

Apart from his mastery of German literature, Cedric's other great passion was of course English literature. His Editorship of *Powys on Keats* in 1993 is a fascinating and erudite exploration of JCP's early work. His knowledge seems inexhaustible.

Cedric knew the works of the Powys inside out and admired them all, I think, but perhaps especially John Cowper and Llewelyn. On receiving *la lettre* devoted to *Wolf Solent*, Cedric copied for me what J. D. Beresford had written in 1933:

> The reason why *Wolf Solent* and *A Glastonbury Romance* must have 'survival value' is that although they are specifically novels dealing with our own times, their true subject is simply mankind on this earth! Cut out the references to railway trains, motors and such other things as date a book in the historical succession of events, and the immortal substance of *Wolf Solent* would be unaffected. The characters lived in the twentieth century, but they would not have been out of place if the setting had been Elizabethan. And we may believe that four centuries ahead, they would not be less comprehensible as representatives of common humanity than they are today.

I was aware of his work on Byron, and he had gracefully acceded to my suggestion that he write something on the relationship between Byron and JCP for a next *lettre*. His last letter to me is dated 19th of November 2004:

> I've not forgotten JCP and Byron. My first impression was that it was rather a narrow subject – but it leads in some surprising directions, even to Rémy de Gourmont and to Richard Wilson Knight's thoughts on Lord Byron's marriage.

But that paper was not to be. His Christmas card bore the ominous words 'More about Byron if we survive the festivities'. On the 19th of February of this year, his son Anthony gave me alarming news of Cedric's health, but added:

> He asked me to tell you that once he is fit and well he will continue work on his Byron/ Powys essay, which is half finished [...] I'm sure frustration with leaving unfinished work that marries two of his great heroes helped him make up his mind to stay with us in this world a little longer.

Cedric left us on the 26th of March. It is our loss.

Jacqueline Peltier

Cedric Hentschel's editions of Powys to Eric the Red *(letters to Sven-Erik Täckmark, 1937–1956, with appendixes including a memorial poem to JCP by Täckmark, and extracts from 'John Cowper Powys and the Gretchen Cult' by the young Hentschel), and of* Powys on Keats *(volume I of* John Keats, or Popular Paganism, *JCP's pre-1910 unpublished study), were published by Cecil Woolf in 1983 and 1993 respectively. Another essay by Hentschel on Powys may appear later in the Powys Heritage series.*

Newsletter *49 (July 03) contains a review of Hentschel's* Less Simple Measures *with two of its poems. Other essays by Cedric Hentschel are in* la lettre powysienne.

Cedric and Eva Hentschel, summer 2004 (courtesy of A. Hentschel).

Michel Gresset
(1936–2005)

Michel Gresset died on May 31st, aged 68. After an outstanding academic career as Professor of American Literature at Paris University, he had recently retired due to a rare and fatal disease. Professor Gresset was a distinguished scholar, critic and translator. As well as being indisputably *the* William Faulkner specialist in France, he was instrumental in making other Southern writers of the United States, such as Eudora Welty, better known in France. But Powysians will remember him as an untiring supporter of John Cowper Powys in French literary circles, and one of the collaborators to the outstanding 1973 *granit* volume of essays on John Cowper Powys. ***JP***

Letter

From Theodora Scutt:

I was extremely sorry to hear of the death of Gerald Pollinger; he was a good man as well as a good literary agent. I entirely agree with Mr Foss that the T. F. Powys estates should not have been taken from Pollinger Ltd, and I am very glad that Gerald Pollinger knew that I, as co-heir, was extremely against this and did all I could to prevent it.

I would like The Powys Society to know it too. I know nothing of the J. C. Powys estates, I didn't even know that Pollinger Ltd was his agent, but if they too were taken from the firm I do feel pretty certain that J.C. would not have approved. Mr Foss writes a very good obituary. He wasn't to know how strongly I felt about this matter or I'm sure he would have made it clear that I was very positively not to blame for it.

News and Notes

Llewelyn's Birthday on **August 13th** will be celebrated according to custom at midday at *The Sailor's Return*, East Chaldon.

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Richard Perceval Graves will give a talk, 'The Powys Brothers: an Introduction' at **Dorset County Museum** on **Tuesday 4th October** at **5.30 pm**, as part of this autumn's literary lecture series.

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The two recent numbers of *la lettre powysienne* (9 and 10), richly diverse as usual, include several essays on ***Glastonbury.*** No 9 contains Cicely Hill's exploration of dualism, Mystery, and Mabinogian echoes, in 'Bert's Cauldron', and 'The Towers of Cybele' by Ian Mulder; and in no 10, 'Mysticism and suffering in *Glastonbury*' by Jorg Therstappen. No 10 also has 'The Supreme Addict' by Cedric Hentschel who died this year; and from Belgrade, 'At Last, John Cowper Powys' is from a book of essays ('Gardens of the Spirit') by the Serbian writer **Ratko Adamovic**. This refers to translations into Serbo-Croat of *In Spite Of*, *A Philosophy of Solitude* and *The Art of Happiness*. 'Critics and academics of our time aften compare Powys with [the Hungarian writer] **Béla Hamvas**, perhaps because the latter late-discovered author often quotes Powys in his books' (Ratko does not entirely agree with these critics). Letters from JCP to Béla Hamvas are in *Journal* III.

****

At the annual **Swedish Powys Society** meeting in April – at the home of the still in extreme fragility going-strong Sven-Erik – Gunnar Lundin spoke on 'Man and Life-Illusion'. A new Chairman was elected: Olof Björner, who runs a bookshop

in the inner part of Sweden and is the owner of a collection of Powysiana. Mikael Nydahl and Ariel will continue to publish JCP. *A Philosophy of Solitude* in Swedish has sold very well. Lars Gustaf Andersson will remain the society's contact-man.

****

A **Mexican** Psychoanalytic Review, *me cayó el veinte*, has printed a translation of JCP's ***The Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant*** as a booklet (*El arte de olvidar lo insoportable*), together with the four other essays which originally made up one of the Haldeman-Julius 'Little Blue Books' (1928). Coincidentally, a reprint of this is planned by our Society – see 'Committee News'. The brief biographical details in the booklet are accurate, and a bibliography is up to date. There is also a translation of JCP's essay on Oscar Wilde (as in *Suspended Judgments*, 1916) in the magazine itself (the title of which I *think* refers to getting 20 cents back from a public telephone – a pre-cellphone image, as it were our old 'press button B'). It looks a fairly highbrow production, on the theme of 'art and artifice', ranging from Auguste Comte to Harold Pinter, with articles on transvestism and the iconography of death. The editor's introduction quotes Powys on the role of art as 'the cupbearer of Lethe': life not being one truth to be discovered but a collection of infinite possibilities, in which we may be able at times to direct ourselves away from disgust and horror and towards magical beauty. JCP's essay on Wilde is 'a little jewel we discovered, to complete the *dossier* on the Irish poet in the magazine's previous number, written in 1916 before the dust had settled on Oscar's attitude to life'. The translators are congratulated on the difficulty of their task. Thanks to Jaqueline Peltier, an indefatigable internet trawler, for alerting to this publication.

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David Gervais writes about **Timothy Hyman's painting** in *PN Review* 164 (July–August 05). In a note (referring to JCP's appearance in the picture 'Gandhi's Ark') he says, 'Hyman's devotion to John Cowper Powys has been a refrain throughout his work. At the risk of simplifying it, one might point out how much he owes to Powys's unselfconscious fluidity of self-revelation, particularly in his extraordinary *Autobiography* (1934).'

****

References to Powyses in the letters of **Philip Larkin** were discussed by Charles Lock in NL 18/19 (April/July 1993: 'Persecution and Fabrication', p.19). A new biography of Larkin (*First Boredom, Then Fear*, by Richard Bradford) includes an account of a flurry of letters to the poet after a BBC programme in 1978 on the subject of Death, with Larkin's terrifying 'Aubade' read by 'that embodiment of mirth Harold Pinter'. The eminent Cambridge sociologist, W. G. Runciman, sent various empirical attempts to explain the cause of our fear of death. In reply, Larkin recommended some

> literary treatments of the topic, particularly '**Llewelyn Powys's *Love and Death***, an autobiographical novel that ends with death in the first person, quite a *tour de force*'. Quite, given that as Larkin was well aware,

Powys's experiment played a tantalising game with the relationship between literature and life, his autobiographical first-person novel coming as close as was possible to death by writing.

Llewelyn Powys was evidently a favourite of Larkin's, who quotes 'as Llewelyn Powys would say' (e.g. 'in broad country English' or 'the sons of sods') rather as JCP quotes Homer.

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A question for *Newsletter* readers from Nick Birns – The German author **Ernst Kreuder** (1903–1972) is reported to have read JCP in the late 1930s. Does anyone know more about this connection?

****

Reginald Lechmere (Primeswell, Evendine Lane, Colwall, Malvern, Worcestershire WR13 6DT, tel. 01684 540340) has Powys books for sale, including a presentation copy of *Weymouth Sands* to MAP and LAP, first editions of *The Only Penitent*, *Black Bryony* and *Unclay* and Louis Wilkinson's biographies; also *Passages from the Diaries of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys, 1756–1808* (1899).

****

No 2 Waterloo, Blaenau Ffestiniog, is now for rent as a holiday home (No 1, JCP's last home, is also now a (private) holiday home). The new owners of No 2, a German family who are proud of the Powys literary connection, would be pleased to show round anyone from the Society during the weekend of 27th August (the one following the Conference weekend). Any enquiries can be addressed to Peter and Ursula Busche, Latscher Strasse 30a, D 92637 Weiden, Bavaria, Germany; e-mail <peter.busche@lycos.de> , telephone 0049 961 27494 or mobile 0049 179 546 0649. The two-bedroom cottage is fully modernised with a woodburning stove and gas heating, with a picnic terrace overlooking the waterfall. The price for a week ranges from £175 to £375. The Busches hope to pursue their Powys interest next year, when their daughter hopes to go to Leeds university.

1 & 2 Waterloo, Blaenau Ffestiniog.

T. F. Powys Discussion Meeting
Dorchester, 4th June 2005

As at others of these meetings, a dozen-plus met for lunch before the discussion, which this time took place round a convenient table in a lofty room in the Corn Hall (a well-appointed artistes' dressing room, with make-up lights round mirrors in the background).

John Williams read a paper on T. F. Powys's writing, and his attitude to death, in the context of nineteenth-century German philosophy and literary production; more specifically on TF's story 'John Pardy and the Waves' and writings by Thomas Mann. Mann more than equalled TFP in his fascination for the outsider, and for the extremes of cruelty and perversion to which human beings can sink. Rather than considering the bleakness in T. F. Powys as exceptional, he can be thought of less as part of an 'English' tradition and more with reference to the European writers who explored the 'Gothic' genre.

In this context, the often heard objections to TF's supposed nihilism, sadism, patriarchal views, black humour, repeated characters, etc. – his 'perverse' view of the world, nowhere more than in 'John Pardy' – are seen as 'a means to pry into the dark corners of the human condition' with the compelling artistry that argues his status as a truly remarkable writer.

Theodore's 'un-Englishness' led JW to quote the D. H. Lawrence poem 'The English Are So Nice', followed by a distillation of stories by Mann that explored humiliation, death and human cruelty; and a meditation on death from Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, a German version of TF's perception of a God whose creation of mankind was a 'grave mistake', an incompetence for which penance is due. The shocking end to the TFP story, as John Pardy walks contentedly into the waves, can be seen in a Nietzschean sense as an act of 'transgression' from the material values of life, an alternative way of viewing the world, part of the 'cosmic joke'.

In the bookroom.

For JW, John Pardy is a disreputable

outsider who embraces death as triumphant fulfilment. The discussion that followed threw up a variety of views. Is Pardy a simpleton, a searcher for happiness like Candide, a happy man, an anti-materialist man of Nature, a romantic responding to rationalism, a holy innocent on a spiritual quest? Is his suicide a happy fulfilment, an act of vengeance, a crazy alternative religion? The apparent contradictions and arbitrary details in the story, its transition from the humdrum to the sublime (as usual with TF, its ending more interesting than its beginning), its hints and possibilities, expanded in all directions.

Peter Lazare conjured tea and cake from the dressing-room kitchenette, and then Judy Lindsay, the director of the Dorset County Museum, opened the Powys Room treasure-house for us to see – always an inspiring sight for which we were grateful. We dispersed after a drink in the Kings Arms. It was a convivial and interesting day, and it is good to feel the Powys link with Dorchester is maintained. Many thanks to the organisers.

Any suggestions for future discussion groups?

KK

John Williams's talk will appear in a future Journal.

Fabian Heus from Holland, John Hodgson, Stephen Powys Marks in the Powys Society's bookroom at the Dorset County Museum.

Review

Selected Early Works of T. F. Powys,
edited with an Introduction and Notes by Elaine Mencher.
The Brynmill Press, 2 volumes, 2003 [recte, *2004*]. *ISBN 0 907839 88 6. £120.*

The value of a collection such as this to readers of all the Powyses is unquestionable; to those particularly interested in the development of Theodore Powys's writing it is invaluable. The initial publication has been limited to 200 numbered copies, 175 of which are for sale. As the price indicates this is intended as a collector's item, handsomely bound and contained in a slip-case. Volume 1 (278 pages) includes a comprehensive note on Editorial Matters, and an Introduction of 104 pages. Volume 2 (336 pages) concludes with a brief Bibliography. In addition to the two volumes, the set includes a folder containing a selection of Manuscript and Typescript Facsimiles. In a review of this length the most important task is to give a clear indication of what these volumes make available.

As Elaine Mencher explains early in her Introduction, 'Being plunged into the depths of [Theodore Powys's] earliest work is not always an enjoyable experience.' We do encounter here Powys giving vent to his darkest and ugliest moods as he searches for a voice and a genre in which to write. The selection has been carefully designed to display this process. Most of the items included here originated in the first two decades of the twentieth century, including short stories, plays, Bible commentaries, essays, autobiographical fragments, and prose poems. Also included is the 'Journal' of 1910–13, where self doubt and despair are tempered by Powys's grim determination to seek comfort in his own version of an existentialist creed: 'I do not know how to use myself, how can I know how to use the world? I only know that I move, I feel like one that is half awake and yet is compelled to go on. I see many lies but man is not a lie.' (267). There are extracts from unpublished novels, and also included are the cancelled chapters of Powys's first published novel, *Mr. Tasker's Gods* (1925).

Elaine Mencher comments on each of the items included. Equally importantly, she includes information about the rest of the collection of this early work not represented here. The account is scholarly and detailed, containing bibliographical information, and comments of a more speculative nature. Of the 'Journal', for example, she notes that in the latter entries there is a significant shift (particularly in the final entry) from the recording of 'personal philosophy' to the inclusion of '*happenings* which prompt Powys's philosophical responses; responses which go beyond the self to embrace the life of the labourer in the field and beyond.' (lxv). *Soliloquies of a Hermit* is a seminal text for all readers of Theodore Powys; the 'Journal' thus reveals the road Powys had travelled immediately before embarking on that newly refined attempt to bring his thoughts within the confines of a prose medium that could express them.

Soliloquies has invariably been read as a key text both for understanding

Powys's philosophy, and for appreciating the range of his reading, and how other authors were influencing the development of his writing towards maturity. Powys's essay on Bunyan of 1908 is included here, and it very clearly justifies the profound importance of Bunyan for Powys which Mencher, along with many others, proposes. Though men may be capable of unspeakable evil, Powys, as we saw from the 'Journal' extract quoted above, retains a conviction that Man might equally perceive and cherish 'Truth'; not that this 'Truth' will necessarily be a comfortable commodity. Bunyan takes his place among the mystics in whom this seed is sown: 'it will bring forth fruit if the soil be good'. Set alongside Bunyan in this respect are 'Boehme and in our own day Nietzsche'. What then follows illustrates that Powys was by this time very aware of the fact that the act of writing for a public readership, and therefore developing a style and genre to that end, would impose restrictions on what he was be able to express. 'The true Mystic', he writes, enters the seed of truth, and grows up with it 'out of the cave of the Earth' into 'the sunlight above'. The consequence of this, as he describes it, in many ways epitomises the difficulties and the rewards which a study of his mature fiction offers: 'Oftentimes the Mystic would carry a little of his favourite earth into the newfound heaven, and in the written works of man, the earth often hides the heaven.' (163)

In the Introduction, this essay is set alongside the later, 1922–3 John Wesley essay, and the essay on Conrad (of uncertain date, but post 1913). By this means Mencher ensures that the reader remains aware throughout of much more than is included in these volumes, and is alerted to Powys's commitment not only to his own development as a writer, but to his extensive reading in the course of these early years. In the final paragraphs of 'Under the Bondage of Fear' (1904), a profoundly depressing story in which, never the less, there are fascinating shifts of style and intertextual experiments to observe, Powys's attempt to relieve the gloom with a glimpse of a 'newfound heaven' takes him directly to Blake. We have seen Blake referenced in the extract from the Wesley essay quoted in the Introduction (Powys commented, 'how far Blake was influenced by Wesley I should like to know'). The Biblical roots of 'Under the Bondage of Fear' are, as Mencher shows, to be found in the first Epistle of St John, and then in a variety of Old Testament sources. At the end, however, the body of the victim is taken to 'the Garden of Love ... And the flowers in the Garden of Love grew, and in the village other little babes were born, and the people lived in peace.' What Powys has done here, and it is worth noting given how grim most of the action is, is to take William Blake's dark vision contained in his poem 'The Garden of Love' ('That so many sweet flowers bore'), and transform it into a vision of positive, pastoral contentment. The final verse of Blake's poem describes a paradise lost: 'And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,/ And binding with briars my joys and desires.' The final paragraph of 'Under the Bondage of Fear' reads: 'But after many years changes came, and new hands reaped the corn, but Fear came not

back again, neither were the people any more under his bondage.' (107)

It is to be hoped that it proves possible before too long for Brynmill Press to produce a cheaper edition of these meticulously edited and annotated volumes.

John Williams

Powys Publishers: The Brynmill Press

Questions answered by ***Ian Robinson*** *(company secretary and editorial director of Brynmill), 2005.*

KK *How would you describe the Brynmill Press – what kind of publisher is it?*

IR Of criticism and *intelligent* fiction and poetry. The Brynmill Press Ltd, including the series Edgeways Books, is a small independent press now thirty-five years old, set up originally within the University College of Swansea to publish the quarterly review *The Human World*, but which then expanded into book publishing, firstly of literary criticism. Our policy consistently has been to demonstrate that ordinary discussion of works of literature is still possible though this is denied in the universities. So as well as books on Wordsworth, the modern English novel and Shakespeare's tragedies and Chaucer, we have organised a big selection of Matthew Arnold's literary criticism and have forthcoming a *Selected Criticism of Thomas Carlyle*. We have also published philosophy, notably one of the smaller but important works of Wittgenstein, and the criticism need not be only of literature. One of our recent books is called *Managing Britannia*, about the superstitions attached to the notion of *management*, and another is the first detailed critical consideration of the new Church of England liturgy, Common Worship. We have published fiction and poetry when the rare circumstances occur of good work which we think (often mistakenly) that we can sell.

Our rule is to appeal to an intelligent readership though not one confined to or conditioned by the university, so we have published three works of fiction by the well-known essayist and travel-writer Roy Kerridge, and poems by D. S. Savage, among others. We commission books but are also always on the look-out for intelligent and lively work, the authors of which find it harder than ever to get published. We sometimes reprint classics or other older works if they are interesting enough, including George Borrow, and a series of criticisms of Locke by Thomas Burnett, previously unavailable since the seventeenth century, and one of the great books of the nineteenth century, Mrs Oliphant's *Autobiography*. In the 35 years we have used up nearly 100 ISBNs.

What kind of reader (or buyer) is Brynmill aimed at?

The common reader. We advertise mainly by mailshots and e-mails, and anyone

is welcome to get on the list. Occasionally we do a big mailing to named academics, from a commercial list. We have tried all kinds of press advertising and find that it never pays for itself. We once had a big launch-party for a book but that, though a good time was had by all, didn't pay for itself either, so we did not repeat the experiment.

Review-copies go out in abundance – of everything except our recent *Selected Early Works of T. F. Powys*, which was a special case. Small firms find it hard to get reviewed but we can't grumble. What I do grumble about is that thirty years ago a favourable review in one of the broadsheets or the *TLS* would sell enough copies to make an edition viable: nowadays we think ourselves lucky if even a rave review, which we do occasionally get, makes any perceptible difference to sales. This is perhaps because it is harder and harder to get booksellers actually to stock copies of anything. Of course we would prefer it if the reader of a review could go straight to the nearest bookshop, but almost all our trade is one-off orders from people who take the trouble to order something not on the shelves.

What is Brynmill's range of authors?
A selection: Matthew Arnold, Daniel Barratt, George Borrow, Thomas Burnett, Brian Crick, C. Q. Drummond, David Holbrook, Roy Kerridge, Brian Lee, J. C. F. Littlewood, Robert Marchant, Mrs Oliphant, John Pick & Robert Protherough, Peter Toon, Michael Wallerstein.

Has it become more specialised since it started in 1970s? No, less specialised.

What part is played by TFP in the list? A special series.

I.e. for specialists?
NO!!! TFP is one of the three great English fabulists, and central to the last great flowering of English literature: and he ought to be as widely read as Lawrence, Eliot and Joyce! We have twice issued limited first editions but otherwise all our T. F. Powys titles are comparatively low-priced, including for instance the extensively revised edition of *Father Adam* ('beautifully produced' – *The Use of English*) at £8.40.

Is TFP now Brynmill's chief interest?
He is very important to us but I wouldn't say we have any one chief interest.

Is Brynmill profitable?
It varies from year to year. Over a five-year period we have at least to break even.

Subsidised? No.

Are there other TFP publishers? if so do you co-operate?
Not that we know of – if there were we'd love to co-operate.

Who is the present Brynmill 'team'?
Active: Brian Lee, chairman, Ian Robinson, secretary and editorial director,

Duke Maskell, distribution and web-magazine editor. We are on the point of appointing a recently graduated publicity manager. The main driving force of the T. F. Powys series has been Elaine Mencher.

What brought Brynmill to the Powyses?
Elaine Mencher discovered an opportunity. Ian Robinson's opinion of T. F. Powys has, he hopes, got clearer but is essentially unchanged since working on him as a research student at Cambridge.

[*In* PSN *25 (July 1995) Elaine Mencher describes discovering the T. F. Powys stories in 'the lovely title'* God's Eyes A-Twinkle, *with TF's 'terrifying honesty' about the variety of man's imagining of God, and his 'wonderful combination of love for humanity and a deeply amusing irony directed against its evil doings'. From Richard Graves's 1983 biography of the brothers she learnt of the unpublished TFP novels and the Bissell, Feather and Texas collections. Kenneth Hopkins directed her to TF's heirs, and so the Brynmill TFPowys series began.*]

Do you connect TFP with any other of the Powyses? No.

What is TF's special value for you?
He's a religious and imaginative genius whose work is comparable in English only with *Piers Plowman* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. As part of this he is part of the renewal of English prose in the 1920s sometimes ascribed to D. H. Lawrence and Joyce and Virginia Woolf. T. F. Powys is just about the most underrated author in English literature! Years of long editorial labour have confirmed this opinion. When the Menchers and I were proofreading 'The Sixpenny Strumpet' it took twice as long as it should have done because it made all us hardened editors cry! 'But his was individual mind/ And new-created all he saw/ In a new pattern ...' [*Shelley on Wordsworth*]

Your own TF favourite?
'The Only Penitent'.

As a publisher, what is expected of his books – how many printed – are they long-term sales?
No fixed numbers: depends on what we judge likely sales. Steady sales, but we cannot yet retire to the South of France.

All unpublished material, or also reprints?
Mostly previously unpublished but some reprints, e.g. two items in *Early Works*, and the other three novellas in *The Sixpenny Strumpet*.

Which have sold best? Previously unpublished books.

What proportion bought by The Powys Society?
We can't be sure because we don't know the destination of copies sold through

bookshops but our guess is less than a quarter. (N.B. we have offered the Society, though not individual members, ordinary trade terms.)

Which book are you most proud of publishing?
Selected Early Works.

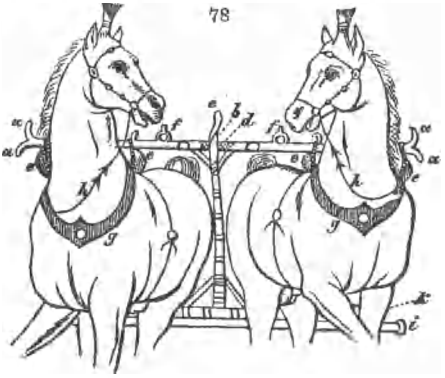
What plans for the future, ideally?
Permission to continue the series with carefully edited editions of some of the out-of-print works.

Ian Robinson – KK, June 2005

The Powys Society Newsletter *25 (July 1995, ed. Paul Roberts) contains: M. B. Mencher, 'The Brynmill Press' (p. 11), and Elaine Mencher, 'Publishing T. F. Powys' (p. 12, with a correction in* PSN, *p. 13); also a long essay on TFP by David Gervais, and a review of Brynmill's* Mock's Curse *(19 stories).*

The Brynmill TFP series currently includes:
Father Adam (*1990, 2003. Unpublished novella. Second edition with two extra unpublished stories and more editorial material. £8.40*).
The Market Bell (*1991. Unpublished novel. Revised second edition scheduled for 2006*).
Mock's Curse (*1995. 19 previously unpublished stories. £18*).
The Sixpenny Strumpet (*1997. Unpublished novella with 3 others:* 'In Good Earth', 'God', *and* 'The Two Thieves'. *£24*).
Cuckoo in the Powys Nest: a Memoir *by Theodora Gay Scutt (adopted daughter of T. F. Powys). (£27).*
Selected Early Works (*2004, not 2003 as on colophon. An anthology of mainly unpublished material; a two-volume boxed set with folder of facsimiles, first edn limited to 200 copies. £120. A more economical edition of* Early Works *may be available once the original edition is sold.*)
At press: T. F. Powys, Aspects of a Life *by J. Lawrence Mitchell.*

All Brynmill/ Edgeways books can be ordered at any bookshop or direct from the publishers post-free to any address in the world. Orders by post to: Brynmill Press Ltd, The Stonehouse, Bishopstone, Herefordshire, HR4 7JE. Secure credit or debit card ordering via the website <www.edgewaysbooks.com>.



T.F.Powys: Chaldon Journal

Some of the most interesting and least familiar voices of TFP in Brynmill's Early Works *are in directly autobiographical material. 'This is Thyself' (c.1915-16) was in* The Powys Review *20 (1987). 'Cottage Shadows' (c.1913–16) reflects TF himself in different characters, with portraits of his parents. (An admiring letter from JCP, re-reading the story in 1951, is printed with it.) The 1910–13* Journal *provided raw material for* Soliloquies of a Hermit. *A few excerpts, from one twelvemonth, with an additional poem, may suggest the various flavours of it. As Elaine Mencher points out, the Journal begins as spiritual wrestling, but imaginary dialogues, and with them some humour, creep in, along with the objectivity of art. Poems are interspersed with the prose entries. They are often difficult to tell apart. 'The Child' is the reborn soul, as 'a little child' in the Gospel (*Luke xviii.17). *During 1911 TFP was 36, Violet 25, Dicky and Francis 5 and 3.*

April 11th 1911

I believe there is quite enough to delight anyone in the earth life and the movements of all living things. I think anyone may have Sun life enough to live by. Now ought I to keep on saying that I feel the sun is too cold? If anyone has a happy message to write let him write it, if not let him remain silent. This feeling is very curious, like a struck match after it has burned out and not lit the fire. I love the dimmed green of the grass when the sun is half hidden by a distant cloud, and the settling of a lark after she has sung makes me love the earth. If I then am a happy Mortal what of the others? I ought to long for the child and will to live, but just now I fear I envy the celandines that still open wonderfully to the sun. O the light that is around and above, where art thou hidden?

April 29th 1911

Really I am a very healthy person, the way of my life is cast in a grey coloured mould; but much joy there is. If I look at a beautiful thing for a good long while, Suddenly I know it to be beautiful, and I wonder that I had not seen it so at first. In my mind I pass by what is very wonderful and obscure. I ought to look and look, only the vision is gone, Driven out by some terrible walking horror, moving to and fro about the earth, fear and the dark ugly thing in man. I must learn to look steadily towards the dawn and the terror must end. A Thousand years of death may end it, but I can only take one day and one thought at a time. In oneself in a moment the dark thing can be conquered.

May 20th 1911

What have the days to give,
The days that call the buds to fairest life,
What have the days to give to man?
Draped figures slowly crumbling to dust
Under the brow of the hill. Above
The lark has left the earth, She knoweth,

But man knoweth not.
I love the Sea, I dare not sink therein,
I love to think of death, I dare not go to him.
I bear a stranger's burden, a Wanderer though at home.
Oh to change men to Swallows and to flowers.
What a little dancing shadow the Swallow gives,
I am sad that all things that are beautiful live in Man's travail.
I have lived a moment in heaven,
I saw a child that wrote upon the sand and played with little stones,
and round about him there was light,
And that child was man.

July 14th 1911

My dear T
You go on from day to day and you fill up your time wisely so that even the evening star and the sleeping cows cannot give you Joy. Only the grosser elements shake you, but even they cannot shake you out of yourself. Do you know the good that you do, no you do not know it. You fear life, you find it terrible this continual bringing forth to death, this corpse living, this moving and ever mouldering body to be taken on and at last buried. It would be well for you to get all this off your mind it is true, but there is more of something else in you, you can think, well then don't think, the foul fiend has you there. The earth is not upon you yet, the coming of death will indeed stop your thoughts. No it is no good to talk to you, you must carry your own corpse and your cross too.

August 20th 1911

How can I my duty find
To do each day
All that I may,
And never let one moment stay behind.

When clouds come to stay
And only night
Gives kindly light
And sorrow opens the sad eyes of day.

If I put forth my hand
To work or play
On any day
Around me imps and elves and fairies stand.

I can only go
As the wind driveth
As the bird flyeth
To meet the sound of voices deep and low.

August 28th 1911 [*Louis Wilkinson and TFP*]

L.W. Music and colour and joy surround my life, you keep sorrow near you and give pain, you are cruel, you are the way to darkness, and it annoys me that any child should think of you otherwise.

T. Do you never deceive yourself?

L.W. Yes I like to, I think one Ought.

But your honesty is rotten, your chastity would be weakness and your goodness sentimentalism.

If you were thinking of doing hurt you would not do it—It is just when you think you do no harm that you are doing it.

I go my way to love and joy and gain, to friendship without pain, to love without regret.

I can leave you, I can do without you, you dare not do without me.

T. There is one thing that I may one day learn to do without.

L.W. What is that?

T. The thing that is called life.

L.W. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Your weakness makes you jealous, you fool, you dare not taste the apple because you fear the worm in the core, would you tell the young bud of the maggot and the worm.

O your God and your child,

The child of your dreams.

O you fool, you are poor, your life is poor, keep your poverty to yourself, don't let the skirts of your poverty touch the ankles of my girls, and all girls are mine, all life is mine. Do I get joy out of you?

Yes, out of your dung.

The end

September 22nd 1911

I cannot go, I cannot stay,
I hang midway between the earth and heaven,
and all my ways are open before men.
Out of strange pits and holes my words are brought
bound out to the light.
One lust forceth me from my babes,
another setteth clouds over all the hills,
another maketh the dark hours hang long
No way to flee. I cannot even mock myself to shame,
I cannot set myself a way that I can follow.
Trees that I would uproot bend down their boughs and hold me.
Pass on thy way, the night will close on thee
and the last flower that stung my hand shall give me strength to go.

October 12th 1911

I said He is in the sea
I followed the path to the sea
And I was cold. One little fish
in a pool knows more of him than I.
Slowly I made myself pass by
And what I saw drove me away.

The sky darkened, heavy my feet were,
And the low tide left the dead rocks bare
"And you must seek for life," I said,
But the weight of rocks was on my head.
And I turned me back again and fled.

Humbled must we all be thus
The Truth may know me but him ~~may~~ I cannot know
His thought in my thought liveth—

[NOTE *First reading of last line:* He liveth in my thought of Him further I may not go.]

April 11th 1912

... my head is heavy, and a cloud covers the sun. With wild cries come up the gulls from their nests in the cliffs, they come right over us, and I bend again and dig.

April 16th 1912

Yes a cloud still covers the sun.
And it seems strange to me that I have ever seen the sun.

April 20th 1912

Sometimes I wake happy, but as the day goes on a kind of weariness overtaketh me. A kind of unreal excitement enters into me as the day advances. The first swallow has flitted past and O this eating up of time in a mouthful. I feel the winter again near . . . . .

Joy should come to everyone in the morning, but poor human kind! only some children know it.

Have we not longed for the spring. We have longed for the new leaves, and now the spring is come, Just like a little maiden, but I don't know what I am to do with her now she is come.

August 4th 1912

To the Theodore that I know best

As I walked upon the high white road,
By the wayside, with steps not fast nor slow,
My sisters and my brothers said to me
We each have found a way right good to go.

To us the dust is gold, the stones are pearl,
And every day we meet a new desire,
We find the way all good because we are
The lamp that kindles all the road with fire.

And we all pass thee, for thy steps are dumb
And each doth force upon thee his own pride
And saith, Behold my loves, behold my glory, Behold me!
We dance full free, and laugh, thou turnest to deride.

But once or twice, one who leaps and dances too,
(We all leap gaily for we know how wonderful we are!)
A child I think it was, a girl, threw dust at you,
And for a little moment your eyes grew blind as ours.

And so we went, all of us on our way,
Until we saw, the ending of the road,
And we stood still Having no word to say.
We all stood still together And each one was alone.

from T.F.Powys: Journal *in* Selected Early Works *ed. Elaine Mencher, Brynmill 2004. With permission from and thanks to EM and Brynmill.*

Llewelyn and Theodore
from Llewelyn's diary, October–December 1911

In April 1911 Llewelyn, aged 28, had returned, escorted by his brother John, from a year and a half in a sanatorium in Switzerland. He spent the hot summer at Montacute, regaining his strength by walking. His diary at this time provided the material for Skin for Skin. *After two months with Theodore he returned to Switzerland (reawakening his illness by walking the Furka Pass) until March 1912.*

Wednesday 25th October, 1911
Dorchester once more! And there on the platform was Dostoievsky himself! Was it from Danish ancestry, I wondered, that the tawny redness of his beard was derived. In the afternoon we walked down to Ringstead Bay. The sniff of the salt-drenched beach gave me an ecstasy, and I must needs dip my hands in the sea to gratify a strange amorous instinct such as I might feel for a girl. I demand the exchange of physical sensation with those I love. 'Yes, this desire [*? 'love' crossed out*] of old things, of houses, of furniture is often exaggerated disproportionately. Why, a human child is older than all these.' As we came over the downs, the sun was setting behind Weymouth. Far away beyond the Chesil Beach the Atlantic rose like a wall on the Mendips seen from Ham Hill. There was a breadth, a freshness about the prospect as of a cosmos new create. We two standing alone on the rim, on the ultimate border of the world.

Thursday 26th
Woke early and watched two men hurdling sheep on the downs. After breakfast walked to the White Nore. It was pouring with rain; the loneliness of the place, the engulfing recesses of the great waves and the wild fury of the wind made me afraid. Clinging to the elder bush

halfway up the cliff path I was overtaken by a dizzy nightmare panic. The curved outline[s] of the downs are very clearly defined from my window, especially at twilight when their bareness and simplicity give an impression almost biblical in its gravity.

Friday 27th
... Walked with Bob in drenching rain over the downs to Upton Lodge ... Standing in the soaked churchyard we were made aware of the profound autumnal melancholy of the day. 'Hardy never attacks God to his face. All his sly sallies are directed at his back, but perhaps it was the only part ever presented to human eyes.'

Saturday 28th
Walked into Weymouth. ... Bertie and Mr Weir were here when I got back. 'What are they making this noise about? Are they buggering themselves in there? You never know what they'll be up to, these architects, when they get together.' Bob.

Wednesday 1st November, 1911
I have just been reading my diary to Bob and have been amazed by its insipidity. This morning I walked to the Mupe Rocks and clambered about on perilous ledges. The sun was hot and I longed to bathe naked in the sea and this eventually I did, my small white figure sliding eagerly into the water.

Thursday 2nd
... In the evening was on the Five Marys with Bob. We looked at Pegasus together and I with interest marked Draco curling round the Little Bear.

Sunday 5th
Today I knelt at Christ's altar, furtively sipping his blood. A Pan or a Priapus for sport strayed in here along with the gardener and vicarage servants ... Found a dead seagull on Swyre Head. I cut off its wing for Katie. In the afternoon went a walk with old Bob to the stone circle. 'I like the long white downland grass,' says he, 'nothing ever eats it, and it's like the curious grey hairs of some old woman. In the summer I often roll in it; it never gets wet.' As we passed a solitary tree in a little dell by the side of a field Theodore told me a satyr had leapt up and whispered in his ear. Places have influences. Coming home we saw Beth Car under the moon, Saturn and Mars. Still further above were Andromeda, Perseus and Cassiopeia, and to the left Auriga.

Tuesday 7th
Walked with Bob to the Mupe Rocks. Picked up a round white pebble on the beach of Lulworth Cove for him to use when he darns stockings ...

Thursday 9th
Woke early and looked out of my window. There high up in the sky I saw Orion. Bob downstairs was busying himself with the fire. 'Go out you cats,' I heard him say, and wondered from what obscure regions these goblin intruders had come. 'Cats'—unreal furtive moonlight demons—tall two-footed sly half-human shadow lovers. Coming over the down I saw a rabbit having its blood sucked by a stoat. I stopped my ears against its screaming, but discovered that there was in my nature something wild and savage by no means displeased. It gave me a cockstand. The moors were white with frost. I walked across the moor and looked down upon Affpuddle and Tolpuddle. Just past the bridge over the river Frome I met an old woman carrying a basket of toys to her grandchildren, bought, she told me, at Puddletown fair ...

Monday 13th
Walked with Bob to Osmington Mills. We sat together in the tavern—he drinking stout, I milk ... As we passed by a turnip field on the top of the downs, Theodore remarked upon the leaves washed so clean. 'Nothing,' he said, 'in Nature suggests freshness and purity as much as these turnips against the brown mould, leaves blown by the wind and each root so snug in the ground.'

Thursday 16th
... In the afternoon walked with Bob to Black Knoll and marvelled to see how his sombre bearded figure seemed to tally with the heath....

Sunday 19th
... Walked with Theodore to Ringstead Bay, and along by the sea shore, white waves pouncing like lions, as Theodore said, on the yellow sands. ...

Monday 20th
... In the afternoon walked with Bob to the two grey rocks on High Chaldon. His steps up the garden path were burdened and heavily-laden. I had overheard Violet's shrill chiding at the gate and it was revealed to me how ponderous is the state of matrimony.

Sunday 26th
A glorious morning! Frost and sunshine. Walked with Room to the White Nore, then to Middle Bottom where we rested with two peregrine falcons swooping at each other above, and Theodore teaching his son to shoot with bow and arrow in the valley below.

Monday 27th
... In the evening as we trudged over the downs in rain and wind, the moon like a monstrous lantern, as Bob said, swung out from under a cloud and lighted our way.

Saturday 2nd December 1911
... In the evening Bob came in to see me; a shroud of blackest melancholy hung from his shoulders. 'In this life all we can do is each day so to tire our limbs that rest is acceptable - and finally death.' We set a bottle before us and his gloom was dispelled. 'This,' I said, 'is the only saving grace for such poor snakes as us—drink. He is our saviour, he must die for our sins.' 'For a pint of honey one shall here likely find a gallon of gall; for a dram of pleasure, a pound of pain; for an inch of mirth an ell of moan; as ivy doth an oak these miseries encompass our life.'

Wednesday 6th
A frosty morning. I walked with Theodore to the village to get the milk in the grey dim morning twilight. Then climbed High Chaldon hoping to see the sun rise, but was too early. A soft waving mist like a wedding veil was spread over the village. The moon, a perfect silver circle, was dropping down over the Owermoigne hills. Hastened exquisitely back to breakfast - banana, porridge, cream, bacon, egg, tea and cigarette.

Friday 8th
'So swiftly run we to our final END'—from inscription on monument in Bere Regis church. Walked with Theodore to Culpepper's Dish and from there to Bere Regis ... Sat opposite each other in the bar of the Drax Hotel drinking stout. A little boy and girl stood on the pavement below our window, with holly and ivy in their arms. Sat on two very ancient oak sedilia on each side of God's altar in Kingsbere church. Sat together backbone to

backbone on the great grey pagan boulder which marks the parting of the ways on Black Heath. A cold drenching rain from the south-east lashed us all the way home. It was dark when we reached the Five Marys.

Sunday 10th
For the first time since the first of May I stayed in all the day long. 'Take to yourself what you can and don't be ruled by others; to belong to oneself—the whole savour of life lies in that.' 'Liberty,' he repeated; 'do you know what can give a man liberty? Will. His own will; and it gives power, which is better than liberty. Know how to will and you will be free and will lead.'

Tuesday 12th
... Set out with Bob for Culpepper's Dish. The moor laughed and sang in the sun. 'You don't find its aspect on such a morning as this described by Thomas Hardy.' The gorse bushes still flowering, the gay Japanese effects of the grass and rushes and lean skeleton trees done in daintiest watercolour. 'The old dog,' said Bob ...

Friday 15th
Walked into Moreton with Bob. 'It was here under this hayrick that I lay that hot September day while Bertie and Jack went on to the station for the poems.' Passing by the Sturmey's house, Tadnoll Mills, we scrutinized the duck, lily-white, floating in the water there. We are to eat her wing to wing, webbed foot to yellow beak, this very Christmas ...

Saturday 16th
Walked with Bob and Gertrude to Ringstead Bay and from there to the cave where we sheltered from the rain, snug and happy ...

Sunday 17th
It rained all day ... In the evening walked with Theodore upon the downs overlooking West Chaldon. We talked of death. 'O youth! Youth! Little dost thou care for anything; thou art master, as it were, of all the treasures of the universe, even sorrow gives the[e] pleasure, even grief thou canst turn to thy profit; thou art self-confident and insolent; thou sayest "I alone am living", but thy days fly by all the while and vanish without trace or reckoning, and everything in thee vanishes like wax in the sun, like snow.'

Monday 18th
Walked with Bob to the Durdle Door. A driving rain from the south-west swept against us all the way. The downland grass is now no longer grey and bleached as in October, but russet red. We were astonished at the perfect unmarred beauty of that shingle beach cleansed and cleansed again by wind and waves and rain.

Tuesday 19th
Walked with Theodore and Dicky to the Durdle Door. The sky was cloudless and the sun very warm. I left them sitting in a cave and tramped over the shingle to Bats Head ...

Wednesday 20th
Theodore's birthday. I gave him a lantern—a gift he highly commended and quoted from Friar John's crimson rhyme:

Thou who canst water turn to wine
Transform my bum by power divine
Into a lantern, that may light

My neighbour in the darkest night.

At night we wrangled over the possibility of immortality. 'Beware,' said I, 'all religions, all philosophies whose roots are in the sky.'

Thursday 21st

Went a walk with Theodore - he in a coat torn and ragged at which I took exception. In the evening we walked on the downs, coming upon a group of low-set gorse bushes gathered close on the hillside like a flock of gorgons. Returning, Sirius—brilliant and dazzling as a shepherd's lantern—shone clear on the edge of the down. Far away to sea a fog horn made monotonous moan.

Friday 22nd

Breakfasted quickly so as to catch the train at Moreton. It was very still walking over the moor, dense grey clouds shrouding the sky. Before we reached the station a few misty raindrops had fallen ... A party of village people with happy eager-eyed anticipation waited the train's arrival. A little girl in a summer hat, as Theodore noticed, was one of their number. When we got out at the Southwestern Station at Dorchester it was raining hard. We bought Christmas presents—wine and toys and a sledge-hammer. We wandered round the museum and dived here and there through the wet streets like sticklebacks ... Turning through the iron gates we rang the vicarage bell. The windows like lidless eyes stared vacantly at us. Jane and Ellen gave us tea, and certainly I experienced a thrill when, the lamp having been brought in, we drew our chairs up to the table—Jane and Ellen, Theodore and I. The home-made jam, apple and plum was admirable, and I kept feeling that in this one half hour I had tasted, been put en rapport with, the only pleasurable sensations that are ever experienced by the girls of this haunted house.

After tea Theodore read us the Bible—the Sixth Book of Amos, then we prayed, all joining in the Lord's Prayer, which we repeated deliberately, emphatically. We came back by West Chaldon, Theodore still carrying his sledge-hammer on his shoulder. 'Woe to them that are at ease in Sion ... that chant to the sound of the viol, that invent to themselves instruments of musick like David, that say ... Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?' Amos VI. *Arse Holes.*

Sunday 24th

At night Theodore and I clambered down to the sea. Grim rocks encompassed us on every side, pitfalls and snares were at our feet, making us feel like Dante going down to Hades or like Panurge and his company journeying to the mystic bottle. It was Christmas Eve and we sat on the lonely shore together looking at the long line of Weymouth lights over the water. Three times I kissed the cold crumbling surface of the great Pegasus rock.

Monday 25th

Christmas Day! The little boys blew trumpets. Theodore and I walked to the tavern at Osmington Mills, then over Poxwell downs. At night we drank together and read the finest chapter in all literature—how Pantagruel related a very sad story of the heart of the heroes.

Thursday 28th

This morning Theodore chopped off the head of a hen. To my amazement when he had done it, the body, raising the raw red stump aloft, raced round the block ... which grotesque movement made me roar loudly in applause ... Walked with Theodore to Mr Shubless to pay his income tax. On the bare hillside he turned abruptly, this bearded brother, and declared all my philosophy to be false. 'Like Walt Whitman,' says he, 'we must

welcome Death—Death as the great father of all things, for without Death there is no life.'

Saturday 30th
Walked with Theodore down to the sea, past the white necropolis and the tree melancholia. Climbed up the White Nore by the coastguard's path, then lay on the top gazing at the sea over the fringed edge of the cliff. Looked at our reflections in the round dew pond. In the evening drank wine and eat olives, scanning the while the wrinkled brows opposite.

Sunday 31st
In the evening we walked to the stone circle upon Poxwell Downs. We lit a fire in a cresset formed by one of the grey rocks. We hid a whistle there and mumbled out a prayer to PAN. As we passed through Holworth yard we caught a glimpse of a stable interior illumined by the red warmth of a lantern. The lolling labourer, the glowing hindquarters of the horses, brought to our minds and apprehensions the long hours of toil in summer and winter done by these men: life for ever and ever gliding away as swiftly as we into those dim misty fields beyond. Sat with Theodore and Katie and Violet sipping champagne while the old year ebbed and ebbed. Olives, like spiced green crysallines [?], rolled under each tongue and poetry was upon our lips. *'Go lovely rose/ Tell her that wastes her time and me ...'* This [*by Edmund Waller*] is Theodore's favourite lyric, chosen by him on New Year's Eve. Katie read an extract from Walt Whitman and I from Edgar Allan Poe [*'The Conqueror Worm'*].

(*Excerpts from* The Diaries of a Consumptive *with thanks to Peter Foss)*

A Glimpse of Corwen

Lucy Evans (always known as 'Betty' to avoid confusion with her mother, also Lucy) was the second youngest of five children. She was born at Bryntirion Cottage, a small toll cottage on the Cynwyd road near Corwen in 1918. She had to leave school in 1935 to help nurse her sick father, a plumber who was suffering from lead poisoning, and, to augment the family's income, became housemaid for J.C.Powys and Phyllis Playter, and also for Phyllis's mother and aunt, Mrs. Playter and Miss Vandyke, who lived next door.

Osmund Hollington met Betty on one of his cycling trips from London, when he stopped at the cottage for refreshment. A compulsive writer all his life – his last poem was written just before he died in 2002 – it was inevitable that when he was introduced to J.C.P. they would soon be discussing literature and the art of writing: five letters from J.C.P. survive from the first few months of their acquaintance (Oct.1940–Jan.1941).

See below for an extract from one of these; in another JCP writes *Your (and our) Betty has been the Pillar and Pivot and Protector of these two little houses and their dwellers for the last 4 or 5 years. She's a true "Belle & Bonne" like Voltaire's Niece.*
Betty and Osmund married in July 1941 at Cynwyd church in Llangar parish,

with JCP as best-man. The photograph shows Betty with JCP outside Bryntirion Cottage, with Miss Vandyke on the seat. Three years later, he and Phyllis were godparents to Osmund and Betty's first daughter, also named Phyllis (Phyl).

SL

Phyl writes:

In the *Daily Post* of May 2002, Dr Morine Krissdóttir, working on a biography, is quoted as saying that 'J.C.P. was poverty stricken most of the time he lived in Corwen ... but as nearly everyone in the area was equally poor it didn't seem to matter.' This may indeed be so, but from my perspective as a young child the Powys family seemed the epitomy of well-to-do, genteel, even aristocratic living! They lived in a comparatively large house, with both electricity and running water and even a bathroom, and they were the only people I knew who had had a servant. We lived until I was almost 7 in Giat y Gell, a tiny one-up-one-down toll cottage at the bottom of the hill, with no facilities at all apart from an open grate, an Aladdin lamp, a tin bath, and a rain-butt in the garden. The weekly washing was done at Bryntyrion because there was a tap in the yard there.

We visited quite regularly; Mr. Powys was always very welcoming and almost over-enthusiastic. Like my father, I think he was thrilled that I was learning Welsh at school. Of course to me he was incredibly old, much older even than my granny or Jemima who also lived in Cae Coed and supplied the Powyses with eggs. I was fascinated by his white curls and noble features, and rather in awe of him. He probably thought me rather insipid as, having been primed by my mother to be on my best behaviour and to keep quiet, I would be very anxious in case I offended in any way! My father and I often met J.C.P. on the stony track above their house, sometimes reciting in Latin and brandishing his stick in the air. He once told us that he had felt compelled to visit America after becoming excited on hearing a band play the rousing march of "The Stars and Stripes Forever". As keen cornet players my father and I could identify with this. My mother often told us how "soft" he was with tramps, who would often take off their shoes and hide them in the hedge before knocking at the door, knowing that J.C.P. would not send them away empty-handed.

However it was Mrs. Powys who played the more active part in my life. (She was known in Corwen as Mrs. Powys, although she always signed herself as Phyllis Playter.) She used to visit us at home, and at Christmas there was always a large parcel of unusual and imaginative gifts for myself and my two younger sisters—dolls, puppets, an accordion, a magnetic ballet dancer, a glockenspiel, and jewellery. She was similarly generous on my birthdays; one year she made me a pinafore dress and matching blouse. She also gave me a beautiful carved walnut bed. Later a friend of hers was keen to buy it, so she suggested I sold it to her to raise money to buy myself a 'cello.

Over the years she guided my education by her choice of books such as a dictionary, books on the Impressionists, on music, on drama. In particular I

remember a leather bound copy of *Great Expectations* when I was 11, and *Middlemarch* when I was 17, both of which I read with enthusiasm. An early book was inscribed "To Phyllis Hollington aged 6 in 1950 from Phyllis Playter aged 6 in 1900, with love." My senior by 50 years, she always seemed remarkably broad-minded and modern in her outlook. She was a striking person, small and neat, with dark eyes, heavy lids, and high cheekbones. I once asked her if she had any Indian blood (i.e. Red Indian) which she found amusing. She always wore black, and a hat when she went out. She was camera shy and refused to have her photo taken, even at my wedding.

When I was 17, she paid for me to stay in a B&B in Blaenau Ffestiniog so that I could spend a few days with them. She talked to me on a wide range of subjects, including pop music and films, and she sent me to see *Saturday night and Sunday morning*, probably to broaden my mind. It was with her that I first experienced eating out in restaurants, and she introduced me to Italian and Chinese food, and to home-made sloe gin! She was intelligent and well-read – I was impressed that she was reading a French novel in the original. My father always consulted her on important matters because he appreciated her sagacity and humanity.

I was pleased that Swansea University honoured J.C.P., especially as I was reading English there from 1962–65. When he died in 1963, I felt I had let Mrs. Powys down by failing to attend the funeral as, thanks to British Rail, I got stranded at Aberystwyth, but typically she was very understanding. She travelled to South America by cargo boat via Holland when she was 70, and later she took to wintering in hotels so that she could keep warm and not have to cook. My husband and I visited her in the Royal Crescent in Bath one year. Together we went to see Beckford's Tower, and she later gave us a print of it. One of her last letters to me was on the birth of my first daughter in 1976.

There are probably many references to the Powyses in my father's journal, kept from 1951 until 2002, but I have only just started to read these. The 'photo of JCP and me was taken at 1, Waterloo, Blaenau, in 1957. At that time he was still walking to 'his' waterfall each day.

One feels that J.C.P. would have been larger than life wherever he landed. However it was Phyllis, this sophisticated American, who managed in a small Welsh town to win the heart of her goddaughter and have a lasting effect.

Betty's Wedding and Phyllis's Christening

(from JCP's Diary)

23 June, 1941. Betty bought white wedding dress in Rhyll. She is to marry Osmund on July 23rd a Wednesday.

23 July. Moscow terrifically bombed by Hitler like London but the Russians are still holding them .... A superb day this is as to weather. One of the very finest! Cloudless sky ... gorgeous sun ... little wind. All the feminines will be happy to see

this day so fine! It is a reward to a good girl a good Cinderella in Betty's case. No umbrellas no cloaks necessary! All hats will be seen by all! Betty in her new black mourning dress brought Osmund in pale Civilian Khaki "Shorts" & Osmund's mother a very sage very wise very considerate & tactful Londoner, "One up for London!" to see us & the ladies. Aye! but I am so profoundly interested in this wedding — since I am not deeply involved in it I can analyse it to an exquisite point. The T.T. has already noted how Mrs. Evans, Betty's Mother .... free from the Restrictions of Betty's Father is launching out & branching out in pleasant things for the House. And we both have noted how Betty's face — the face of a good conservative custom-loving girl! always brightened when the wedding was mentioned and always darkened when the bridegroom was mentioned because of little clashes with him over his Cornet and an absurd wish he inopportunely expressed that the first day of the honeymoon they should stay on at the cottage for him to walk with his mother — also a natural and heathen and ancient wish to BATHE in the Dee the morn of his wedding. But I can analyse below the surface on all sides that a formal and splendid wedding like this, full of all the customary traditions of a far off past is really a great Victory March or Victory-Roll. Women in their unending Battle with Men. At Birth & Marriage Men are out of it; not only negligible but objects of irritable derision. At death they would be out of it — for dying men hold women's hands & call for water from women & have to be washed & their eyes shut & laid out by women only by their Invention of PRIESTS — (Priests are Man's Invention to keep women in order & in control!) I notice in the air today a gleam, a dance a lively merry mischief a humour an exultation and an unspeakable triumph in the faces of all the women while all the men — while all all all the men are awkward irritable restless cantankerous & detached. Betty & Osmund's Wedding!

JCP and Betty after the wedding, 1941.

24 July. I broke every principle every conviction I broke & I broke every Taboo on Betty's Marriage by wearing a Rose.

Sunday 30 January, 1944. Betty's DAUGHTER Phyllis our God-daughter Born at 10 p.m. Last Night while Redwood was reading fine poetry about Flanders he wrote 35 years ago!

Monday 5 June 1944. Our God-child Phyllis's Christening! She is a Perfect Darling I adore her. The T.T. & I felt in great Harmony over all except Just How such Christenings should be carried through! But this is neither here nor there ...

JCP to Osmund Hollington, 1940/1

... and then out with it !

Now I think far far far the best thing in all these sketches – is when you describe that shyness & awkwardness you felt when you shouted and couldn't make out what words to use—& felt so embarrassed & yet you were alone facing that town!

I shall never forget thast passage. One day I hope to steal it from you – that curious psychological discovery of yours I mean — & bring it into some novel of my own.

Second best to that I like the end of the Dinas Bran essay.

Third best – your humour about that Irish graveyard respected by the sheep — & your entering the tower—

and that very good jest about the bare stumps of footless legs! & the fish eating the Cat!

I don't agree with you though—of course I couldn't very well considering the struggle I'm making to learn Welsh!—about not learning Irish—tho' I know there is much more to be said for Welsh!

I'm thrilled you like that youthful Robber Band part in Glastonbury

The Scene at Aberystwyth

That Girl in the Milk Bar

has the making of a fine Short Story (a la Guy de Maupassant!)

but ...

[*sideways at side*]

Do try to get hold of some of my brother Llewelyn's descriptive semi-autobiographical essays—such as Skin for Skin The Verdict of Bridlegoose a Pagan's Pilgrimage

[*sideways middle*]

These books would be just in the line of your literary development I think at this juncture.

Hazlitt ??

(*With thanks to Phyl Lewry and to Sonia Lewis, and to MK for the diary extracts*)

JCP – The Late Books

The move from Corwen to Blaenau took place in Spring 1955; The Brazen Head *was the first book to be finished there. Apart from the books listed, as displayed above, JCP's published writings in his last ten years include his prefaces to: Louis Wilkinson's* Seven

Friends *(1952); Marian Powys's* Lace and Lace Making *(1953); reprints of* Glastonbury *(May 1955) and* Visions and Revisions *(Oct 55); Llewelyn's* Somerset and Dorset Essays *(Oct 55); the first printing of JCP's 50-year-old poem* Lucifer *(July 56); editions of* The Meaning of Culture *in Japan (1958) and India (1960); and to* Wolf Solent *(May 61). The many letters continue, up to 1962.*

The Inmates (written 1951), June 1952 (all books first published by Macdonald unless stated).
In Spite Of (written 1951-3), April 1953.
'The Ridge' (written c.1952), in *Review of English Literature*, January 1963.
Atlantis (written 1953), October 1954.
Lucifer (written 1905), with introduction July 1956.
The Brazen Head (written 1954-55), November 1956.
Up and Out and *The Mountains of the Moon* (written 1957), Aug 1957 (a *TLS* front page review by G.Wilson Knight appeared in October 57).
Letters to Louis Wilkinson 1935-56, May 1958.
Homer and the Aether (written 1957–58), February 1959.
All or Nothing (written 1958–9), May 1960.
You and Me (written 1959), Village Press 1975.
RealWraiths (written 1959), Village Press 1974.
Two and Two (written 1959), Village Press 1974
Topsy-Turvy, Abertackle and *Cataclysm* (written 1959–60) published as *Three Fantasies*, with Afterword by Glen Cavaliero, Carcanet 1984.

Publication dates from Derek Langridge's Record of Achievement (date). *Books not available in the 1970s were reprinted by the Village Press, as well as the three that were first printed posthumously. Dates of writing (approximate) from letters to Philippa Powys and Nicholas Ross.*

The Fantasies

Are they entertainments, Surrealism, metaphysical speculations, Freudian dreams, automatic writing, indulgences, nightmares, comments on current events, projections of I *Waterloo, attempts to exorcise fears? Ludic or ludicrous? Schoolboy or sage?*

Their predecessors are The Owl, the Duck ... *(1930) and* Morwyn *(1937). Glen Cavaliero discusses the fantasies in his essays 'JCP Space Traveller' (*The Powys Review *16, 1985) and 'The Comic Spirit'* (Review *20), and in his excellent afterword to* Three Fantasies *(1984). Ian Hughes's review of* Three Fantasies, *also in* Review *20, sees them as 'glosses on the major writings' (putting in the 'queer ideas' and sexual fantasies, often wittily). To this reader, their traceable elements, random selections from memory and changes of tack, with the narrator's detachment, are very like those of dreams. They are occasionally unpleasant, often funny, and (in details) lifelike. If they have a message, it may be that infinity and personality create each other.*

Plot summaries may help those of us who haven't read them, or who have but find it difficult to remember which is which. These leave out the Discourses that form at least

half of them all — anti-religion and anti-vivisection, on the death of God, the differences between men and women, the consciousness of the inanimate, the interplay of Mind and Matter and of individual humans with Space and Infinity.

Up and Out

The first written is one of the more violent. It contains many of the ingredients the fantasies share: teenaged sibling heroes, beautiful girls, projection into space, extinction of stars, classical and Celtic deities, God and Satan, monsters and apparitions (not all hostile), butchers-shop mutilations, devouring ogres, events in 1959 newspapers, non-sequitur story-lines and often farcical humour. Discussions take place on Being and Not-being, and the superiority of Space over Time.

The first-person narrator (reminiscent in this of *Morwyn*) is Gor Gognigog of Blaenau. He and his love Rhitha (of Llanderfel) are investigating the Moloch-directed horrors of vivisection in New York when – as they stand under the ailanthus in Patchin Place – the world explodes. They find themselves on its only surviving fragment, a circle of emerald-green grass in outer space. They are joined by Org, a multilimbed terraqueous monster (the product of vivisection) and his beautiful wife Asm, white-armed as is Rhitha. They encounter Time in the shape of a slug and pass through it, destroying its heart en route. Next Eternity, a disgusting slimy cloud (an invention of 'religion', smelling of mouldy old hassocks), conveniently devours itself. In the void beyond (Welsh *diddym)* there appear in turn the god Mathonwy (in the form of a statuette), the star Aldebaran (revolving coloured lights), Kwangtze (another statuette, with its broken head attached by a tangle of nerves), the Buddha, a cloudful of Greek gods, and finally Jehovah and Satan. All these give their versions, some at length, of the relative merits of Being and Non-Being (the stars, like humanity, have opted for suicide). After a long speech God smiles, which disconcerts his humourless colleague the Devil. God was thinking of creating a new human world without free will, but he feels weary, and agrees with Gor's suggestion of a leap into another dimension. This ultimate state at first appears to be an imaginable afterlife, with bodiless souls communicating, but soon turns into extinction for everyone, including God and Satan. Gor's final worry is about who will be left to be his audience ('All my life I've only wanted two things – to enjoy myself, whatever's happening, and to lecture somebody else on how he or she can enjoy what's happening!') Who will receive his last words? These are: *alla ka empes*, and the *Solis occidere* of Horace.

The Mountains of the Moon

This 'lunar love story' is more colourful, and Grimms'-fairy-tale-like. Young Rorlt of the moon kingdom of Zed is seeking his sister Lorlt, who has run off crying that she wants a lover. A talking gold necklace worn by their recently buried mother directs him to the East – fortunately, since the West side is barred by a wall of treetrunks, engendered by an ancient king of Zed who preferred embracing trees to women. Carrying a massive semi-animate club named Blob, Rorlt and his black-bearded father descend a shaft, to a realm whose ruler, a very tall thin cavernous-headed giant, tells them that Llort has eloped with his own son, Yoom, to the mountains that border the far side of the moon. Rorlt, who wonders if he couldn't marry his sister himself, ancient Egyptian-style, strides off in pursuit. Meanwhile a dance (in four-time, like Whitman's 'Square Deific') is performed by Oom's puppet-troupe of 'Turnstiles', epoch-making curiosities that include a fragment of the Ten Commandments, a Chinese emperor's toe, the heel of Achilles, Mahomet's sandal, a shell picked up by King Canute, Nero's fiddlestring, a crust from King Alfred's burnt

cakes, a spearhead of Queen Boadicea, the nail used by Jael to kill Sisera, Eve's, or rather Adam's, apple-core, and two feathers from Noah's dove and raven (another loving couple). These also set off for the mountains. Woom-o-Rim, son of the hidden Moon Goddess, appears like a silver Hercules. He is unsure who is his father. Other characters drawn to the mountain are (in spirit form) Woom's old Welsh nurse Myfanwy Cellwair (an expert in *willing*); Miss Os, an academic teacher; and the elderly philosopher Om with his companionable walking-stick, Ob. Om, who knows every inch of the mountain ridge, finds Lorlt and Yoom happily together. He discourses to them on the consciousness of Space. Meanwhile Rorlt is led onwards by Blob and the mysterious voice of a girl. He passes his sister by and climbs the mountain barrier. On the far hitherto unseen side, Helia, daughter of the Moon, runs up to meet him. She is his other half.

All or Nothing

The many characters come and go unpredictably, in this longer story. The twin 17-yr-old heroes, John o'Dreams and Jilly Tewky, live with their Nu family in a house called Morty. Their friendly vicar believes in a Duality, not a Trinity. Beautiful Ring and Ting are children of the giant Urk, living in Cad castle. In the woods, Bubble ('Nothing') is a rock-spring and Squeak ('All') a rock-skull: their dual philosophies are discussed throughout. Bubble and Squeak assume 'aura' form and convey John to the Sun. Urk appears and devours the Sun's Heart. John kills him. The headless corpse is washed up at the local port, Foghorn. On another voyage, with a shape-changing Arch-Druid, to the Milky Way, the twins encounter among others a hospitable indigenous tribe with faces on its chests, an aboriginal housekeeper engaged in guerilla revolt, two more giants, one the friendly Cerne, a milky falling-star girl who comes back with them to earth but then explodes; and Wug (a worm) and Slug, who turn into dwarfish flying escorts. Back at the fountain, God appears in the form of a Newt, later a Cockroach. A roving Nightmare disturbs the Vicar and his housekeeper, Miss Posh. On a third cosmic voyage, Cerne creates a new star. A plane-load of colonists from Australia, led by a tweedy lady, is routed by a huge philosophical Space Monster with its head on a stalk. (All monsters and giants have devouring mouths, and two get their heads smashed.) Home again, the two sets of siblings marry and have children. All finally set out to the Tower of London, where Queen Boadicea, reclining on coloured pillows, gives her blessing to the Cerne Giant's new planet. 'All is not Nothing, neither is Nothing All, but both of them have one home-star, where they can sink to eternal quiescence, or mount to everlasting activity, and that home-star, my children, is the heart in every one of us.'

You and Me

Another first-person narrator, Um, leaves Beyond-Space and his two-in-one parents to explore London. He can switch from being a young man in a cloth cap into ghost mode, in which he can pass through walls and enter anyone's mind (indeed become them), but this begins as an almost realistic story, with Dickensian boarding-houses and housekeepers; Lord Boomerang of Phantom House; an eccentric military man, Colonel Katterventicle; and Professor Porpustle with whose adopted daughter Thisbe Um falls in love. Um also falls in love with Theophil, a three-year-old girl in Hampstead, and makes friends with Jane Fixem, a spinster after whom he names his walking-stick. He decides that his object in life will be to intensify everyone's experience, especially of babies. He claims to be a Polytheist, definitely not a Pantheist. A sinister stranger, Mo, appears by his bedside. Mo performs a circus-show, acting all the parts without props ('He *was* Punch. He *was* Judy');

he also seems intent on seducing women and devouring his victims. Um decides to associate Mo with the Devil and himself with God. In a dream, the spirit of Edgar Allen Poe urges Um to destroy Mo, but Thisbe suggests that Mo should convey them all to the Moon in a space-barge. This vehicle, seemingly a cross between bombed-out London houses and an ocean liner, is given the name *Cork* by little Theophil. Its flag-motto is *Impavidum*. On deck, Mo describes to Um in detail how he will enjoy torturing and devouring him. They land and form a camp in circles, each with one of the women in charge, supervised from a mast-head by Mo. Um crosses an expanse of brilliant green grass, meeting the ghosts of Shakespeare, Poe, and Keats. A dance of Numbers surrounds him (4 is friendly, 3 ugly and threatening). He enters a Castle ruled by the beautiful Moon Goddess and inhabited by souls of London Lunatics. His guide there is destined to die as a seagull, since wounding one with a stone on the cliffs at Weymouth. Um begins to miss his mother, but hears her encouraging voice. He decides to fly with Thisbe to another part of space and seek out the parents of Mo: these are a grotesquely sexual tripartite being. Um's mother warns that Mo is threatening the child Theophil. Um and Thisbe fly back to earth in time to see the passengers disembark from the returning space ship. They invite Mo and Theophil into a rowing boat which they capsize, drowning Mo. This makes Theophil cry, but she recovers to be their bridesmaid.

Real Wraiths

Another complex tale. Fabulatorius, King of the Ghosts of Blaenau Ffestiniog, addressing the iron railings beside a steep path, reminds them that all inanimate man-made things share in ghostly natures. A nuclear scientist named Glottenko has the noble and terrific idea of eliminating the human race, ghosts and all; being extremely ugly, however (unlike the King), he gets no support. Wang and Tang are deeply attached sibling ghosts, aged fifteen and seventeen. They agree that humans deserve to perish for inventing cruelty. They decide to see the world. Near Dover they collect the ghost of a collection of objects (cigarette, matches, pen and inkpot) on a table-top; and another ghost, Rimpoperin, in a Calais cafe. Florence is uncomfortably heaped with quivering spirits. They are advised to adopt short nicknames. They are soon sick of Venice, but in a nice wood on the Lido they discuss whether ghosts can die. They visit Heaven to find out. It seems God has disappeared (though Jesus has been seen visiting prison camps in Siberia), and the Saints (a genial crew) have caught Satan (a clownish figure with a tail) at their back door. He, now having nowhere to go, joins the discussions on the meaning of life, and male and female roles in particular. He leads them down a brass corridor to Hell (an endless pavement of black marble). Wang and Tang decide to become a new kind of double Deity, named Twang. For this they need bows and arrows, obtainable in Regent Street. Next stop is Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where they are warned off by the ghost of Solomon. On, conducted by the goddess Iris, to the classical Hell, Tartarus. Echidna, mother of Cerberus, is a merry blonde with a spotted snake-tail; Typhoeus a volcanic monster; Tartarus an endless black ocean, Erebus a bottomless gulf. Queen Persephone takes charge. King Hades, an exhausted man, wants to build a dam to combine Erebus and Tartarus. He discourses on Hatred (of madness, above all). He leads the ghosts to the planet Venus (magnetic soil, unbearable beauty) where they are joined by Persephone reunited with her mother Demeter, both now also wraiths. The goddesses will create a safe space-haven on Venus. The group invades Mars, where the inhabitants retreat, mistaking Demeter for Themis, goddess of law and order. Mars himself is too encumbered by armour to move (though the Homeric Hymns make him pray for peace). Hades leads them to a

land below the Pacific Ocean. On its gateway is 'To Be or Not To Be'. A satyr warns them of a man-eating monster. They enter a fortress covered in grass that rolls back like a carpet when a cord is pulled. It is ruled by Hecate. She has the special powers of an only child. She relates the death of God at the hands of sado-masochists, comforted by Saint Paul and a fisher-boy. She advises Hades to abandon the underworld and take the plunge into universal matter, becoming its soul. Their centre of communication, chosen by Tang, will be William Tell's chapel in Switzerland.

Two and Two

Fewer characters in this one. Two couples, named for the elements, start as enemies but soon pair off (fire with earth, water with air). A tramp-magician, Wat Kums (rhyming with crumbs) joins them. He tells his life-story to a fly. A Raven advises him to become King of the oldest country. He tells the raven about Hardy and Tess. He meets Saint Alban. He invites the young people to fly to Nubilium, Cloud-Land, but transfers his kingdom to an asteroid, taking a cloud with them. He composes a national anthem. He carries a ticking clock, rescued from the sea-bed where *Great Eastern* was laying a cable. It is an Oracle of the Mystery of Time.

After some years a Monster appears on Asteroid Nubilium. It is the titan Typhoeus, now in the form of a dragon, once struck by Zeus's lightning, now a traveller. He regrets being carnivorous, wishes we could feed on mud and rocks. He does not devour the four small children of the four friends. Mr Kums ponders mind and sensations. Typhoeus licks his hand. They fly off together, headed beyond the stars, into ultimate darkness and nothingness, enjoying their companionship. Mr Kums composes a nonsense song. They fly into a twilight, from the stuff of which they can create their own universe. They realise the importance of being Two, in infinity. They meet an airship bearing Ob and Wob of the land of Loll. They enter a gulf which reminds Typhoeus of the House of Hades, to a hall lit by Lidicity, the coloured lights behind your eyelids. Loll inhabitants resemble Daddy-longlegses, with hairless heads, long arms from the hips and hardly any feet. Their land was discovered by Captain Cook, who left them an illustrated English dictionary. Kums and Typhoes pick up two Centaurs and fly to Orb, a land of gestures without words. Disgusted by this they move on to Utopia, greeted by Sir Thomas More, Shakespeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Tennyson. Kums quotes appropriately. Duality is everywhere. The universe is Matter within an ocean of Mind. But our minds may have created our bodies. They cross a threshold and lose their bodies. Better never to have existed says Kums. But living things were born to feel, Typhoeus argues. Kums discovers Infinity, and that it is Infinity's power that forces matter into separateness. We assert ourselves into living identities. Our *selfness* is *increased* by infinite space. A gigantic figure appears, carrying a beacon of fire. It is Prometheus. The Devil, grinning, is nesting in his hair. Typhoeus worries about Jesus – being worshipped turns you to stone. Then a colossal Jesus appears, enveloping them all. We shall all be dead, but all that matters is while we live to be good and kind.

Topsy-Turvy

We start off in 1 Waterloo, with cosy chat between the Souls of Armchairs, an American rocking chair, a picture of a children's party (painted by Nelly Powys) aka Topsy, a Bokhara Carpet, a tall Bookcase and its supporting inhabitants (Lempriere, Aristophanes, Whitman, Landor, Charlotte Guest, a history of American Tribes). Turvy inhabits a jerky black door handle. There is talk of disturbances by Whirlwind and Whirlpool. Whirlpool wants to swallow Topsy, which Rocking-Chair would enjoy seeing. Topsy takes refuge in a

wood called Bushes' Home. Rocking-Chair persuades his crony Bottom-Step to come for a walk. At Turnstile Corner they observe the chimney-nest of Whirwind and Whirlpool, a married pair who specialise in things beginning with W. Meanwhile in Mrs Sideboard's parlour, Big and Little Doll are tidying their bed. Big Doll thinks sleeping together without 'ravishing' is a happy way to avoid responsibility, but Little Doll thinks she might like a baby. She considers a deflowering operation, or finding an alternative impregnator. The books all shout at once, disturbing the brass poker (aka Exy, short for Excalibur). Dark-eyed Rocking-chair visits the Whirlpools, enjoying their electric heater. They grew up in Derbyshire. Rocking-chair's childhood memory is of Dick Turpin riding in a china cupboard, in a kitchen nine steps down.

Topsy and Turvy escape into the Fourth Dimension of Naked Truth, and a world of solid clouds. They are correctly dressed, but see naked people all around them. They are introduced to Dido and Aeneas (now a happy couple), and discuss the creative consciousness of Inanmates. Discussions take place on why Human shape (male or female) is best for personal identity. Another happy couple are Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. Dick Turpin gallops up on Black Bess. A flock of birds remove their clothes: Topsy is beautiful. Maid Marion, Friar Tuck and Robin Hood join forces with Turpin. Whitman and Poe are worshippers of Beauty: Poe can find beauty in an ordinary living-room. Turvy says *use* is more important. Whitman pats Topsy on the head, and says the secret of life is I LIVE. On another cloud Kings Canute and Alfred, naked but wearing crowns, are arguing whether England had better been ruled by Danes. Samson and Delilah are a less than happy couple. Kipling, Ainsworth, Lytton and Haggard defend their favourite beaches. They do not know how their country differs from Heaven. A wise woman would know. A fierce African prophesies Black rule to De Quincey with his street-walker love Ann, and to King Numa of prehistoric Rome with the nymph Egeria who will help him to rule the world. A clock in a bag carried by Numa strikes nine. It is Big Ben. Ann and Topsy make friends. Turvy explains how human feelings enter inanimates. The Sea-Nymph Galatea, fleeing the Ocean, bursts in, bearing feathered wings snatched from a temple. She flies down with Topsy and Turvy and into the house. Amid great confusion and excitment Big Doll falls upon his mate and rapes her. She will have a baby at last.

Cataclysm (printed last in the book but probably written before *Abertackle*).
Yok Pok (aged seventeen on 1st January 1960) has decided to destroy the human race, on grounds of its cruelty, especially to animals. His younger sister Quo protests. Yok agrees to sleep on the decision. But he has discovered enough bomb-dust for the job, and tested it on some beggars. His learned Great-Uncle Eeak will help him, with permission from Great-Aunt Zoo-Zoo, who is descended both from Christ's grandparents and from Penthiselea, Queen of the Amazons. Yok sits by the fire in his Uncle's ornate study. Eeak is nostalgic for the days when clerymen and policemen ruled the countryside. Yok will borrow his aeroplane Irah (pronounced 'Ire-rah'), with its crew Kar and Lar. Zoo-Zoo is a remarkably handsome 40-year-old, an anti-vivisectionist and feminist, who idolises her husband. She, as well as Quo, received private sex lessons from their Parisian schoolteacher Miss Pipple (named from a holy well near Weymouth), whom the headmistress Miss Goldenguts (who is not one) suspects of being a Lesbian. Zoo-Zoo ponders her (and Eeak's) horror of childbirth, and her favourite Saint Anne (mother of Mary), and Nature's unfairness to women. She thinks of turning herself into the Earth-goddess Gaia, to foil a plan by vivisectionists to kidnap animals from the planet Venus. She becomes a colossal giantess. She devises a method for Yok to get his bomb-dust from the sack without spilling it. He

decides he must deal with the vivisectors before the rest of the human race.

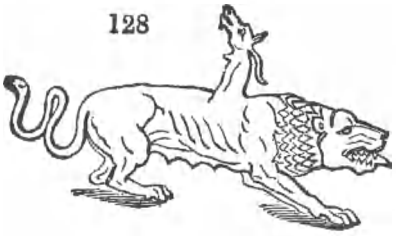
Irah (with Zoo-Zoo streched on top of it – it is evidently a sea-plane) intercepts the infernal vivisection vessel *Adamant* on 22nd January, 1960. They both take off into space. Zoo-Zoo sees from the deck three snouts emerging from the ocean, murmuring 'Mother', and realises these are the monsters that Gaia gave birth to. The Gorgon is ugly as her mother's hatred of Ouranos. Gaia failed to protect the Hydra from Hercules, or Chimaera from Bellepheron. A large curly-haired man, Ki (to rhyme with cry) appears. He lays his hands on Zoo-Zoo's. They were destined to meet, since Ki (while playing with a teddy-bear in Dorchester) was told by an inner voice that he would rule the world. Yok blows up the vivisectionists. Ki and Zoo-Zoo, in golden crowns, set out on a world-tour, with *Adamant* in tow. They have a child named Why (it had to begin with W). When Why is nine he sets out on his own into space. He meets another boy, Ve Zed, from I'm, the land of eyes and mouths. He has eyes all down his front, with lids like butterflies, mouths all down his back, and genitals on his hip. They discuss the convenience of this. Why describes English public-school customs. Zed's mother's ancestors include a sister of St Helena and Bobby-Up, an artist descended from Daedalus who discovered a method of collecting the dust of vanished worlds to form a new one. On I'm is a curious spiky tree. Zed's home contains rich rugs and bookcases. Mrs Zed strokes her son's feet; Mr Zed shows Why an architectural folio. The Zeds speak English and recite 'Jabberwocky'. Grandfather Zed announces an invasion by Gee Whiz of the cruel Kanawitakons, who in a previous invasion buried the royal family up to the neck and danced on their heads. The two boys rush out to battle. The enemy is invading with barges. Gee Whiz is grotesquely thin with a huge head and hands, brandishing a battle-axe. Yok and Quo appear on the *Adamant* . Yok's powder blows up the enemy. Why and Ve are sick of killing. They fly off happily together. They find themselves in a crowd of disembodied people. A girl – Nelly Wallet, daughter of a Sherborne housemaster – explains they are in a galaxy of floating intelligences. She came to space with her uncle, who died and left her in this country called Tappaskulltinkadom. She discourses on the divine dullness of death, and complains that minds without bodies can be selfish too. Why do they never think about masturbation? Why Ki suggests himself as a sexual missionary. All three set off again. They find themselves above a half-frozen globe, Orb. They capture a small luminous inhabitant, a ball that lives on frozen air. It speaks English because that is the simplest and most superficial language (Orbians learn Greek and Latin first, in their nurseries). An Orbian settles on Nelly's hand. Human life might have come from another visiting universe. Can space have an end? Nelly has a vision of the Wall of the World. It is a hundred feet thick, of grey stones on which seaweed (or lichen) has grown, its height and depth lost to sight. It is the end of everything. They fly on till they come to it. Light comes through cracks. They cling to it. Nelly talks to each boy in turn. Two ugly voices are heard chanting a rhyme. They drop to the end of the Wall, touching the bottom of it. The boys hug Nelly. Shall they plunge into Nothingness? Or return to Gaia and London? Nelly fears the ugly voices of Hugger and Mugger. But the three-armed giant Gyges appears. He shakes the Wall to pieces.. He smashes their three skulls into one mass, and eats it. Their headless bodies fly into space along with the dust of the Wall.

Abertackle

Abertackle is a queer village on the Go peninsula; its tone, as Cavaliero says, a cross between Harold Pinter and *The Young Visiters*. Among its inhabitants, realistically drawn, are Charles and Mary Po, their housekeeper Nancy Potticup, Mr Willmop, (who annoyed

Mr Po by eating only bread and butter when Mr Mo had gone to a deal of trouble opening an American tin), a bachelor who hates human beings and their food but admires Miss Tarnt (who toys with her food). The Po's discuss such things as finding celandines in February, and gossip in the Clapper-Cove cafe with Squire Neverbang, who lives with Ooly-Fooly, a famous European clown, and the well-bred cousins Jack Coffiny and Tom Boundary. Jack has written a dozen books on his Philosophy of Escape. The final escape must be to the 'divine nothingness of death'. At another teaparty Lady Astis and Nelly Saunter eat thin bread and butter with Letty and Bob Ord, who foresees a time when the earth is ruled by machines. In another teashop belonging to two nice old ladies, the charismatic Ooly-Fooly discourses on sexual differences. They plan to start a Little Theatre. Bickery Bum (a gamekeeper) and Fanny Flabbergast (as English teacher) have been encouraged to marry by Mr Squot the Vicar, so they can now happily go to church.

The Po's' chilren Gor and Nelly, who love each other, have run away. Gor is now in London. He can walk on air. Despite some dyspepsia he strides through the darkness. He meets wise Maia Tuffalon from Portland. David Cox, a painter, is going round the world in a chariot drawn by a space-horse with a twisted horn. They join him. The space-horse is possessed by the Devil, who thinks about his fussy old enemy God, who invented him, and who became dotty and helpless before he died. He also met Merlin and became half of him. A beautiful female demon, Murdrawla, hovers over them. She might help Gor's dyspepsia. The Devil hates ceilings but loves the Littre's French dictionary in his bookcase. Gor makes love to Murdrawla in the air. Their excrement falls onto London, causing complaints about aeroplanes. The Devil enters into Gor's walking-stick. Led by the stick they are circling the sun and the stars. The Arch-Eagle of the Universe, Paragon, unfolds its wings and sweeps them into a remote region, where he holds a Conference. The Devil comes out of the stick. Humans invented him, Hatred is his joy. The Eagle installs Gor and Medrawla as rules of Mankind's Kingdom, and negotiates a psychic empire with world rulers. He has difficulty with South Africa and the Eastern bloc, but is welcomed by Canadian indians. A monster, the Unknown One, lives in a cave. The Devil visits him. He is in pain. The Devil discourses on Hell and St Paul. The Unknown One approaches the camp but is distracted by a small badger. The Devil plans to build a hut filled with toy figures. He longs for some grandchildren. The Devil finds the monster in its cave with its mother, Wow. The Devil explains his invention (and God's) by the human Power to Create. King Arthur's sword appears. Gonflab, a monstruous dwarf, appears. His arms and legs come out of his head. His stomach is in his head. The Devil imagines him being torn apart by the Eagle. With the Eagle's help he decapitates Wow, and stabs the Unknown One through the heart with Excalibur. He falls to Earth. The Eagle carries them all into space, for incalculable time. Gor suddenly remembers his sister Nelly. They smell the seaweeds of Go as they return to Abertackle.



Letters: The Jacob Hauser Trail

A gleaning from the internet, sent by Paul Roberts

A Room with a View

Tim [sic] *Magazine*, Oct. 25, 1948

"After all, you've got to have some outlet," said Jacob Hauser, voicing the cry of many a man smothered in a big city. Mr. Hauser is a poet. Like many another poet, he is—or was—unpublished.

Eighteen months ago, he bought a second-hand Mimeograph machine, set it up in his three-room apartment on New York's grimy Second Avenue, and began putting out a monthly publication called Solo. Containing about seven pages of Hauser's poetry, it is sent free to writers and critics culled from Who's Who.

Hauser is somewhat irritated by those who think "there's something funny about my wanting to give something away." Says he: "The best things in life are free. I'm a poor philanthropist." Sample poem:

> Ah, I grow lonely in muck company!
> Surrounded by people, I think of quiet lanes,
> I hear my voice, and think I hear the wind
> Buffing desolate walls in far-off places.
> When I go home tonight, I shall write poetry.
> When I feel this way, I always write poetry.

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation / Fellowships to Assist Research and Artistic Creation / 1936 / Foundation Program Areas / Jacob Hauser, Poet: 1936.

Anthony Head writes:

Following on from Prof. W. J. Keith's article on JCP and Jacob Hauser, and the latter's mysterious *doppelgänger* Jacob Hansen in *The Dorset Year* (*Newsletter* 54, April 2005), I can add another small piece to the jig-saw. I would think it a certainty that the Foreword that Powys wrote in 1935 for Hauser's *Physiology of Composition* and which Hauser irrelevantly used so many years later in his 1977 collection of poems *Green & Golden Rhyme* is indeed the same as that in his 1943 collection *Future Harvest*. For it is certainly the same as the Foreword in an even earlier collection of poems by Hauser called *City Pastorals*, published in 1940 by the Hagglund Press at San Benito, Texas. It would seem likely that Hauser used it in all his slight and infrequent publications. To constantly republish this two-sentence imprimatur (Is this indeed the entire 'preface' that John wrote?) is evidence either of undying confidence in Powys's stature, or, more likely, of a failure to find any such favourable comment from a perhaps more suitable man of letters. *City Pastorals* is a 32-page stapled booklet of poems divided into three unrelated sections: 'Pagan Psalms', 'Argument for Immortality' and 'Metropolitan Pictures'. Here and there Hauser has a good line or two, but on the whole

his verse is pretty undistinguished stuff. There certainly isn't, as Powys said there was, 'something so free and daring and arresting about his way of expressing his ideas', but then this is what John wrote with reference to the abortive *Physiology of Composition* (Was this mislaid/unpublished/lost manuscript indeed the long – and dreadfully titled – poem the editors refer to in *The Dorset Year*, or might it not have been some sort of theoretical or critical work?).

One wonders whether Hauser ever sent Powys a copy of *City Pastorals*, it being already four years since his visit to him in Corwen and five since John had penned the 'preface', or of the later *Future Harvest*, and indeed whether John knew that his recommendation for one particular work was being used later as a recommendation for others that he had not seen. It would doubtless not have bothered him.

If the Foreword is exactly what he wrote that evening of Jan. 29, 1935, then he obviously knew he was writing about a Jacob Hauser, and not Hansen, and this latter is an editorial mistranscription. But if this was the point of their first contact, then it's possible he misread Hauser's handwriting and wrote Hansen in both the first diary entry and the Foreword, and was subsequently corrected by Hauser in a letter, so that the correct spelling appears in the second reference a few weeks later. Only reference to the Diary MS will tell, or to their initial correspondence, but I have never been able to find any trace of their letters to each other and doubt that they survive.

Homer Revisited

> *The aristocrats of the sword, the Hectors, Tamburlanes, Alexanders, Caesars, Hannibals, Attilas, Alarics, Mahomets, Napoleons, captivate something in our imagination that even the most philosophical and most humanitarian find it difficult to resist. An indescribable glamour, appealing to the eternal childishness of the human race, hangs over these great names, so that the least of their personal idiosyncrasies become charged with a peculiar kind of magic.*
>
> [*from 'The Perfect Gentleman' in* The Art of Forgetting The Unpleasant]

Having recently taken the *Iliad* voyage (in Robert Fitzgerald's 1974 blank-verse version, in World Classics), I revisited *Homer and the Aether*, JCP's 'Freudian paraphrase' as he called it, with new interest. I found it entertaining, funny and wise.

Like all late JCP (and some not so late) there's some uncertainty whether it is written *for* children, or in deliberately child-like language for the child-*like*. Possibly he wrote for readers of 85 like himself, since most classics grow more accessible with age.

He certainly wanted to help bring the potent spell of Homer to readers (young or old) who might find the story daunting; but his own preferred method of reading it, in the simplest possible literal translation with the original opposite for those with a smattering of Greek to glimpse the magic, does require imagination, even if you have the smattering. And he might have been over-optimistic about the imagination of latter-day children, like Henry Miller's Tony, aged nine, who 'tried 3 times, but "too many gods, too much killing"'.

> *O my dear Henry, I do indeed understand Tony's feeling about The Iliad. I have* ...[a digression on his 1873 Homeric Dictionary, a present from W. E. Lutyens] ... *only to start work on it again to get my interest back with fresh and new excitement. I know exactly what Tony feels and I should feel, without any respite or recovery, just the same as he does if* [*it*] *weren't for having the original Greek and this Homeric Dictionary of the original Greek! The extraordinary music of the Greek verse is lost entirely in these damned translations whether in verse or prose. But I confess ... I still, like Tony, get fed up with this unending killing & sticking in & pulling out of spears! But I would say to Tony ... practise copying the Greek Alphabet both little and big letters and then learn by heart, like I had to at school, the first lines of The Iliad. Sing O goddess the wrath of Achilles which caused disaster to so many strong heroes – for such was the will of Zeus* ...

A potent, potential, spell for any age. But age is perhaps irrelevant, as it was the simplicity of Homer, his ordinary human-ness, his non-abstractness, that for JCP made him great, greater for him than the 'clever' sophistication of the Greek tragedians; while he himself was glorying in a 'second childhood' when anything goes, all things are magical, sensations and excitement are everything but nothing is expected of you.

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We all know the fundamental role Homer played throughout JCP's life, (or rather *The Iliad*, since he considered *The Odyssey* a later work by another hand). So *Aether* must have been a labour of love. It could have been a relief for him to be anchored to a text rather than freewheeling in the fantasies that followed it (unless *Aether,* which took him two years, provoked an escape to freedom into the fantasies). But then, the narrator, JCP's alter ego the *'shining, celestial Aether'*, is an Elemental, *'beyond all gods and men' 'who sees through everybody and everything'*: high above the action, but able to infuse atmosphere and suggest ideas to the characters, via its protégé Homer. It, or She (JCP calls Aether a goddess), is the ultimate novelist, the ultimate Magician.

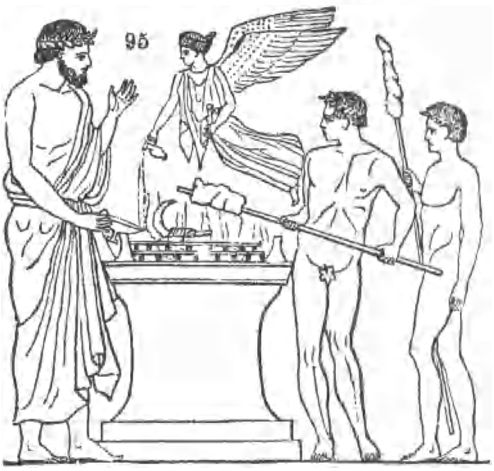
The cast of *The Iliad* fitted in well with JCP's experiences of life.

The Greeks (virtually all male) are of course a public-school, with its hierarchies and loyalties & rivalries. Hulking simple-minded boastful but good-hearted Agamemnon (head boy) is protective of his well-meaning inadequate brother (*'What are you doing with this wretch, you little softy?'*—Menelaus was sparing a prisoner); impulsive Diomedes, always the volunteer; the Ajaxes, dependable mountainous full-backs; devoted squires and charioteers doing what they are told; old Nestor (a retired headmaster) with his interminable stories of youthful prowess; Odysseus (the influential teacher) older, wiser, ruthlessly practical.

The worst of them in Aether's view is the charismatic, barbaric, unpredictable, superhumanly swift-footed, fearless, superb and ultimately stupid Achilles. Best of them all in human terms is Achilles's friend Patroclus, simple-minded too but brave, unselfish and above all sympathetic and kind – no wonder Achilles depended on him, and mourned him so fiercely, or that Briseis (Achilles's beautiful captive stolen by Agamemnon, hence Achilles's 'wrath') was, according to Aether, another of whose favourites she is, in love with him. Patroclus is a heroic anti-hero, as Horatio is the hero of *Hamlet.*

The Trojans, with their women and children, are a family. Aether may be above it all, but its (or her) chief sympathy is with them if only because they are doomed to lose, and have a weaker team of gods on their side. (*'O how dearly would I love ... to defy every single one of those damned Greeks making cruel war on ground that is not theirs ...'*)

'Pathetically downright' Hector, leader of the Trojans, is as much a killing machine as Achilles, but he is doing it for his city and family, not merely for personal fame. This can be risky: *'To hell with all omens at this great moment! The only omen I believe in is to fight for king and country!'* (195) He can be possessed by blood-lust, and touched with reluctant clairvoyance, but he worries humanly. *'All we warriors long to be immortal, but I doubt if I ought to have brought in any deities by their actual names ...'* (158) In the game of warriors he taunts Patroclus, dying in Achilles's borrowed armour: *'I wager that's just what he said to you, little man! And now see what has happened as the result of his persuading you to face me, idiot that you are!'* (222), but we see him also gentle, in the famous domestic scene with his wife and the baby frightened by the helmet; and



exasperated but tolerant with his irresistible, flippant, 'tricky' brother Paris. *'You don't take life as it ought to be taken. You take it as if it were a game of no importance ... You don't seem to care about anything, except making love and dressing yourself up ... But come on now, brother of mine ...'* (130) Helen of the supernatural beauty, the outsider, is another favourite (*'one of the nicest and most natural of beautiful girls'*); to Aether an interesting character, almost more attached to Hector and King Priam than to her new husband. Doomed Andromache is the eternal wife and mother, lamenting her child's fate above her own, in the world of war, and men.

Aether looks down on the human battlefield with sympathy, but finds more entertainment in the often ridiculous family on Olympus. Formidable Athene and manipulative Hera act in feminist league on the Greek side; Apollo does his best for the Trojans (with Aphrodite not much help). Poseidon growls in the deep sea, but defers to his older brother. Thetis (Achilles's immortal mother) flits between ocean and heaven. Lame Hephaestus, the only ugly one, is a sympathetic character, constructing his robots of gold. Aether has *'always been very partial to Iris'*, but Themis, the bossy Comptroller of the immortal Household, Aether is not keen on (though she/it adores human housekeepers).

Above all, in every sense, Aether-Powys is interested in Zeus. There is a good deal of Merlin and a touch of Owen Glendower in this all-powerful but often helpless ruler: '" ... *if I'm to follow my law of* each entity for itself, *I must give all the curst rebels a plain blunt warning. I don't believe they have the least idea what power I've got! The real fact is that I myself don't realise its limits, any more than I have the least idea how I came by it ... To be a god you must create and destroy something ...*" *He himself sat down among the topmost peaks of the mountain, exulting in the delicious sensation of being his own omnipotent self.*' (143–6)

Zeus keeps the tribe in order (*'Hera! you* are *a difficult creature to deal with! Don't you remember when I hung you from heaven with an anvil fastened to each of your feet?'* (210)), but he indulgently allows himself to be beguiled by them, enjoying the humour of things but impatient to be left in peace to enjoy the spectacle below; allowing his sympathies to influence the action, but inflexible once the main scenario has been decided; deferring, even he, to the fixed rules of Destiny ('Moira') and Necessity ('Anangkee') and individual Fates ('Keer'). These forces are mysteries, which even Zeus does not understand. '*What use is it, what advantage is it, to be the ruler of gods and men, if I cannot save ... my darling son, when ... an implacable* keer *condemns him to death? ... What is this hidden, secret, baleful power that dominates gods as well as men?*' To which his sister-wife Hera soothingly replies, *'Father of all, I tell you this: if you start meddling with everlasting Fate, something may happen that none of us dream of. No! No!'* (219–20)

Aether/Homer/Powys also respects, and accepts, the mysteries that rule the universe. This makes for an attractively complex attitude to life and death. All the mortals respect the gods, and defer to whichever of them is seen to be taking part in the action that day (whisking a favourite warrior off the field, deflecting spears,

providing opportune mists). At the same time you cannot be merely passive where gods are concerned. The immortals mingle with the action like football referees. You can never be sure if someone is a god in disguise. You do your best, aware at the same time that whether you live or die (your Keer) has been decided elsewhere. Achilles, of course, knows what his fate will be, or rather that he must choose beween two possible fates, to kill Hector and be killed shortly after, or to sail home for a possibly long peaceful life – given his glory-driven character, only the first is a likely option. Hector suspects that he cannot win in the end, but chooses the illusion that the gods may change their mind. Tragedy is built-in to human life because humans are mortal, but at the same time life is a 'comedy' in the sense of a play in which all, humans and gods, take part, and this gives it some coherence. We are not simply as flies to the wanton gods, to be killed for their sport. With luck, and suitable prayers, another god will protect you. Even gods are sorry when their favourites (or children) have to go.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Aether is a convincing guide through the twenty-four Homeric chapters, cleverly sorting out the repetitive spear-throwings and their gruesome results. The characters and actions are all there in the original, but Aether tells you what they are thinking, and fills in stage-directions like getting out of breath or leaning against a wall. As often with JCP, the naive-seeming descriptions and the sometimes curiously Victorian dialogue (especially with young girls – it's a pity we have to begin with one) can distract from the subtleties in characters and the lifelikeness of the strongly visual (strongly *lit*) scenes. But the confidential tone the Aether addresses us in, both grandmotherly and detached, rather suits this. Aether is reporting both on what happened, and on what Homer, the artist, the master-craftsman, inspired by Aether, wrote. Aether allows her/itself a few digressions on favourite Greek phrases, or insensitive future editors of the text; also time-shifts forward to when, in the as yet unexplored Far North-West, bards (such as Matthew Arnold, we deduce) will compose poems on these events. There are also speculations on future alternative human possibilities (such as forgiving one's enemies) that Zeus does not (yet) have to deal with. Aether sees clearly both into the singlemindedness of warriors and into their occasionally mixed motives, and into the moral difference between knightly


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Hector and dangerously dissident Achilles. Aether's easygoing Immortals are arguably more modernly human — squabbling with each other, but with less supernatural elements in their lives, only one effective ruler to obey and no self-doubt – than the poor mortals, who have to balance those conflicting divine influences both outside and inside themselves.

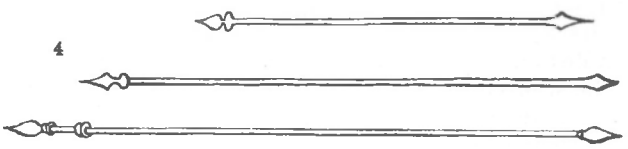
Achilles's defiant *'Alla kai empes'*, 'all the same for that', is there, 'from a heart terribly stored'; but strangely, some of most memorable scenes in *The Iliad* are almost passed over by the Aether. I think of fleet-footed Achilles outrunning the river-god, overflowing and out to get him ('The man broke free/ of swirling water, turned into the plain/ and ran like wind, in fear' (Fitzgerald, book xxi)); and the moment in the scene when the aged king Priam pleads with Achilles for Hector's body and both weep together – the king for his son, Achilles for his friend Patroclus and for his own father, both for the tragic nature of life – 'and sobbing filled the room' [Fitzgerald, book xxiv] . *'I ... was unable to suppress my pity for both these men'* is all the immortal Aether has to say.

Aether is anachronistic, of course, in preferring the unfortunate Patroclus to everyone else's 'excellent' Achilles. But the chatty, low-key narration isn't out of place. Listeners to Homer must always have felt they knew these people well. Gregory D. Alles, in his essay on 'The uses of Homer after empire' sees Powys's *Aether*, with its focus on internal emotional consciousness and its celebration of the ordinary, as a means to 'transvalue' the *Iliad*'s aristocratic mentality and the Homeric male values of combat and plunder. *Aether* is a serious alternative to the heroic Homer that has inspired empire-builders (and public schools) over the centuries; consistent, too, with JCP's theory of a Multiverse. It could be true too of JCP's attitude to history and society in general: admire, love, despise and hate where you will, but bring things away from the abstract, down (or up) to the human – *'like human beings as they always were, are and will be!'*

Aether doesn't replace or contradict Homer. It made this reader feel closer both to JCP in his old age, and to *The Iliad* itself.

Letter from HM to JCP, 2/9/57, from Correspondance privée *(Nordine Haddad, Criterion, Paris 1994); JCP to HM, 19/9/1957 (Village Press 1975). Quotations from Robert Fitzgerald's translation (1974) in World's Classics. (The modern* Iliad *translation that JCP probably saw is the prose one (not to say prosaic) by E.V.Rieu in the Penguin edition (1950), a revelation in its time.) 'A Freudian paraphrase' from* Letters to Nicholas Ross, *Aether a 'goddess' from* Powys to Sea Eagle. *Essay by Gregory D. Alles, on* Homer and the Aether *and Derek Walcott's* Omeros, *in PSNA* Powys Notes *10/2, 1996.*

Kate Kavanagh



Review

A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England, by Jed Esty
Princeton UP, 2004. 304 pp., pb. ISBN *0 691 11549 4. £12.95.*

Jed Esty's impressive book examines how certain works published between 1920 and 1960 engaged in a deliberate revival of rural Englishness as a reaction to the pressures of war and decolonization. Esty, a younger American academic who teaches at the University of Illinois, argues that writers of this era turned anthropological techniques developed to inquire into other cultures back upon England itself, establishing a specificity that posited England as a place unto itself and not as the seat of empire. This 'respiritualized core' (121) after the 'peripheral' colonies had shown signs of separation, helped buffet English culture as it navigated a twentieth century that had proved perilous for it.

Esty is particularly interested in the way the motif of the village pageant-play, seen in such canonical entries as Forster (*Abinger Harvest*), Woolf (*Between the Acts*) and Eliot (*The Rock*) manifest this idea of local revivals as a stanchion to hold onto amid historical change. This is an excellent idea, one which indeed should have bene pursued long before this, and Esty should be congratulated for seeing these parallels amid a larger pattern. Esty pursues this theme through many works of literature as well as parallels discourses of modern-era economic and politics.

Esty's methodology is representative of that generally practiced by the Modernist Studies Association (MSA), which publishes the prestigious journal *Modernism/Modernity*. This group studies the modern period as a period, as the romantic or Victorian periods would be studied, bypassing more polemical questions – is Modernism good? Is it bad? it is over? Did it ever exist? This approach allows for far more consideration of political and cultural matters. It also gives scope for the inclusion of non-canonical figures. Thus it is pleasing to see Esty give eight pages to Powys and to *A Glastonbury Romance*. Esty introduces Powys well to the academic reader who has never before heard of him, stating that JCP 'stands out as a monumental "minor" writer of the period' and that 'the spiritual ambition and sheer energy of Powys's prose has captured the attention of many distinguished and devoted readers' (62). Esty positions the theme of the pageant in *Glastonbury* amid historical circumstances of revived twentieth-century rural pageants. Esty, for instance, notes that Powys's years at the 'Sherbourne [*sic*] School' connected him with that school's headmaster, Louis Napoleon Parker (1852–1944; a name that indeed could have bene in some sort of novel). Parker, himself a figure of considerable interest, invented the modern pageant at Sherborne in 1905. This linkage has been pointed out earlier by Susan Rands and W. J. Keith, but its enunciation in *A Shrinking Island* certainly clinches Powys's centrality to Esty's overall argument. Esty sets the Glastonbury Pageant alongside Eliot's, Woolf's, and Forster's, insightfully describing how Powys uses the pageant not to re-enshrine old paradigms but to come to grips with multiple centers of consciousness in a way that exceeded Henry James's evocation of the single center of consciousness. Esty is also sensitive to the different levels of scale in the novel, observing that *A Glastonbury Romance* 'dilates local-color narrative into epic length' (65).

Yet Esty tends to see JCP as a conservative, pastoral figure, who is more sympathetic to John Geard's revivalist religiosity than to Marxism and who ultimately espouses 'insular revivalism' (69). This scants the fact that JCP, in the two decades before he wrote the novel, had lived largely in an urban American setting where he knew some of the leading radical thinkers of the day. Charles Lock's work in *The Powys Journal* xi (1999) on Powys's return

to England as a throwing down of the gauntlet to the authorities there would have helped Esty. So would – especially given Esty's repeated description of Powys as reviving 'chthonic Englishness' (62) – some use of Richard Maxwell's earlier work on autochthony in Powys, which shows that, if Powys was of the earth, he was so in conflicting and ambivalent ways.

Esty is responsive to the power and complexity of JCP's writing – far more so than, for instance, than he is he is to that of J. R. R. Tolkien, who is simply rapped on the knuckles for (allegedly) writing about a timeless England of 'ale, roasts, and tobacco over dinner' (122). Powys himself might have been skeptical about some

of Esty's implied political photons. Esty speaks of England fighting the Second World War 'with Wales and Scotland still in tow' (121). Would Powys's Welsh neighbors in Corwen have seen themselves as 'in tow' to England in 1941?

Nonetheless, Esty should not be overly castigated just because he is an outsider to the world of JCP enthusiasts and has priorities different from those generally attracted to JCP. We need outsiders to come in and give us an overview of how 'our' writer looks in a larger context. If being more of an experienced reader of Powys helped Robert L. Caserio achieve greater depth in his discussion of *Weymouth Sands* in *The Novel in England, 1900–1950* (1999), than Esty manages to achieve here, Esty should still be thanked for making such incisive comments on Powys in his study. Even more, we should thank Esty for making fascinating connections between *Glastonbury* and deployments of local Englishness in other works of the period. Esty's development of a new horizon in which works set in rural England are not simply evading the 'present' of the twentieth century but registering that 'present' in a complex fashion, should be of nothing but benefit to the study of JCP.

Nicholas Birns

Letter

From Gunnar Lundin:

... Copenhagen is where the academical gothic cathedral of bricks from Powys's novels is built – while we others mainly use his texts to remove bricks between ourselves and life.

KK *Removing* bricks is an original concept, I'm more accustomed to Blake's *making* mental bricks to build Jerusalem ...

GL The bricks I'm aiming at are all mental ones, out of education or modern advertising, setting up false jerusalems. I don't like bricks as a positive mental device; it reminds me of the Egyptians erecting the pyramids. And then, what? Burying our kings?

And then, what about JCP and 'truth'? I think the combination of being a preacher and a pyrrhonian sceptic makes him non-authoritarian and above all inspiring. You may experience truth – both analytic prejudice-annihilating truth and devotee-truth – in his books, but both kinds are for the time being or for the situation in hand. This is evident in his novels; instead of writing like Kierkegaard under pseudonyms he is polyphonic; Eivor Lindstedt's dissertation [see *la lettre powysienne* 10] is a good introduction to *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Porius* in this area. But can't you feel when his discourse goes from empathy to sympathy and identification? In his philosophy essays he of course gets dogmatic; but it is the dogmatism of an elementalist, non-authoritarian. You can, when you start to know him, get imbued with pages in his books, but you are soaked by a liquid that explicitly doesn't want to stain you indelibly.

Marwnad

JCP's Diary, 13th June 1940: I composed and the T.T. typed a letter I mean a Sonnet & a letter to the 'Adsain' in memory of Road Man Friend Mr William Williams—Marwnad—W.W.—Ioan Powys (as it always says) *ae cant.*

MARWNAD
William Williams

We never used to meet but in a trice
Charmed by your voice I leant upon my stick,
To hear you, little guessing how the wick
Of life was burning low. 'Twas as a Sais
You *spoke*, but *thought* yn Gymraeg. Once or twice
As with rich dignity you broke off quick
And smiled your meaning, you explained this trick.
Ah! You must now translate from Paradise
Until our foes hear the tremendous tongue
That always hath made tyrants stammer and blink:
"Who takes the sword shall perish by the sword!"
Too soon, too soon, the Invader's bells are rung.
You hear, you tell me, from beyond the brink
The thunder of the chariots of the Lord!

IOAN POWYS *ae cant.*

The cutting reproduced on the back cover comes from Yr Adsain (*The Echo*) *and was found by Meic Stephens in a copy of* Caniadau Cymru, *an anthology of Welsh poetry that had previously belonged to JCP, Huw Menai, Gerard Casey and Glyn Jones (1905–95, poet, short-story writer and novelist) who gave it to MS in 1986.*

marwnad: *'elegy'*
ae cant: *'who sang it', an archaic form denoting authorship*

Apologies for the mistake with Glyn Jones's name in the last Newsletter.