Please note: meetings on April 1st, June 17th — see over.

Editorial

News of the **Conference, Chichester,** and the **Conference speakers** on page 4.

The death of **Thieu Klijn** from Holland is sadly reported. **Richard Handscombe** from Canada, who has also died, left an account of his experience as a Powys book collector; while **W. J. Keith** describes the holdings of Powys material, largely from the Handscombe collection, in the University of Toronto.

As a change from the last *Newsletter*, no 57 contains sizeable extracts from longer pieces by Powyses themselves. They are all based on other works (as can be most revealing).

TFP wrote commentaries on almost all the books of the Bible, *circa* 1906–9 (in his thirties). Only *Genesis* was printed as a book, and most remain in manuscript in American collections. The *Book of Job*, as Larry Mitchell says in his notes, is the one TF may have felt especially in tune with, re-interpreting it according to his own supernatural/psychological scheme of things.

Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (finished in 1767) has been in the news on account of the current film ('A Cock and Bull Story') about a director making a film about it (more director than book—as one of the actors says, Sterne was post-modern before there was a modern to be post). Sterne's book is described in publicity as a 'cult' novel, i.e. it has devoted fans, but it could be questioned how many still read it through, digressions and all (*Sentimental Journey* is easier going).

(*cont'd over*)

ON OTHER PAGES

Llewelyn wrote on Sterne in 1923, as one of his many magazine essays on writers (especially 'minor classics'). JCP did not include Sterne in any of his collections of literary essays, but frequently in his lists of favourite authors; his introductions to Macdonald's charmingly illustrated reprints were written in 1947–8. Both JC and LlP enjoyed the Englishness of Sterne's characters, and quote the same bits. With Llewelyn it was perhaps Sterne as a free spirit that most appealed. It is easy to see what John Cowper found congenial both in Sterne's use of an author's quirky personality as confidential narrator, and in his creation of memorable *kindness.*

The young Thomas Merton's 1938 review of *Enjoyment of Literature* is appropriate here, since JCP's essay on Sterne fits in with those essays. By way of light relief, Arnold Bennett in one of his newspaper columns finds an unlikely link between women painting their faces and JCP's *In Praise of Sensuality*.

Two Discussion Meetings

(1) *Saturday 1st April* ELY

A Powys Society meeting has been arranged in **Ely, Cambridgeshire** for **Saturday 1st April 2006.** This is especially welcome as there have not been events in East Anglia of late.

The meeting will be at the **Old Fire-Engine House** (restaurant and gardens). We will assemble at 11 a.m. to 12 noon for coffee, then have lunch at the Fire-Engine, followed by a discussion led by **Glen Cavaliero** our President, on *A Glastonbury Romance*—the 'May Day' chapter (Part One, 17).

Please contact **Sonia Lewis** (The Old Pottery, 50 Main St, Prickwillow, CB7 4UN: *tel.* 01353 688 316; *e-mail* < soniapotlewis@phonecoop.coop >) if you would like to join the group (it is helpful to know likely numbers), or for more information. Sonia says she could meet some trains at Ely, and send a map showing the Fire-Engine House.

(2) *Saturday 17th June* LONDON

Revisiting a former haunt of The Powys Society, the Upper Room of the **Friends' Meeting House, 120 Heath Street, Hampstead, London NW3,** has been booked for **2.30 on Saturday 17th June. Peter Foss** will speak about **Llewelyn and his Diaries.** Please contact **John Hodgson** (address inside *Newsletter* cover) if you are interested.

Committee Nominations and Elections

Nominations are required for the Honorary Officers of the Society and for some Members of the Committee as set out below.

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

Nominations are to reach the Hon. Secretary Peter Lazare at 25 Mansfield Road, Taunton, TA1 3NJ **not later than 30th June 2006**.

Honorary Officers

The present Honorary Officers are as follows:

Chairman	John Hodgson
Vice-Chairman	David Gervais
Hon. Treasurer	Michael J. French
Hon. Secretary	Peter Lazare

The one-year term of all these Officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 27th August 2006, and therefore nominations are sought for all four Officers.

You may be interested to know that the officers have indicated their willingness to serve for a further year.

Members of the Committee

Timothy Hyman and David Goodway have one year to run of their three-year term of office. Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner and John Powys will reach the end of their three-year term at the 2006 AGM. Lorna Burns and Michael Skaife d'Ingerthorpe wish to step down. Nominations are therefore sought for five Members of the Committee.

You may be interested to know that Kate Kavanagh, Jeff Kwintner and John Powys have indicated their willingness to serve for a further term.

PL

AGM

This is to give you notice that the **Annual General Meeting of the Society** will take place at 11 a.m. on Sunday 27th August 2006, in the Cloisters Chamber of Bishop Otter College, College Lane, Chichester. All members are invited to attend whether or not they are part of the Conference.

The Powys Society Conference 2006

"After Our Fashion: Powys Philosophies"

Chichester, Sussex
Friday 25th August — Sunday 27th August

Our 2006 Conference will take place at the **University of Chichester, Bishop Otter Campus, College Lane, Chichester, West Sussex**, from **4 p.m. Friday 25th August to 3 p.m. Sunday 27th August 2006**. *See the LEAFLET enclosed with this* Newsletter *for details and BOOKING.*

This Conference marks a long-awaited return to Sussex. **West Sussex** played an important part in the early life of John Cowper Powys and was the setting for parts of his novel *After My Fashion*. A highlight of the weekend will be an optional guided tour of Powys sites in **Burpham** near Arundel. John Cowper and his wife moved there to Bank House, Burpham (pronounced Burfam), in 1902. Their son was born there, and it was JCP's base for his annual returns from lecturing in America. Margaret and Littleton Alfred lived there till 1927.

Bishop Otter Campus, now the University of Chichester, is situated on the north side of Chichester, just outside the inner ring road but within walking distance (15 mins, subways) of the centre of the cathedral town. It was formerly a Church of England Teacher Training College, founded by the Bishop of Chichester, and the old buildings date from 1849–50. Our lectures will take place in the congenial rooms of the old college; modern accommodation will be used for our rooms. The rooms are singles, but comfortable and with **ensuite bathrooms** (next-door rooms can be requested). The campus is compact with separate buildings all close to one another. There is a **bar** with the usual opening times, and a fine **theatre** which we hope to use. There will be the usual **bookroom** which can be opened at our request. Chichester is easily accessible by public transport. There is controlled parking on the campus.

Chichester (despite formidable modern roads) is a place of interest. A Roman town: the nearby palace of Fishbourne is the largest Roman site in northern Europe. A medieval market cross and walls remain. The Norman—originally Saxon—cathedral contains notable modern works (Chagall and Sutherland). The Pallant House art collection is newly re-opened. The modern theatre is one of the country's foremost. It is a sailing area, on a long sea inlet, with picturesque coastline and harbour-villages within reach (Bosham has a Saxon church and King Cnut associations). Goodwood racecourse is nearby, and many stately homes and castles (notably Arundel). Burpham, near Arundel, home of JCP and his family from 1902, is about 12 miles away. Other literary associations with Chichester include William Collins (1721–59) the archetypal eighteenth-century lyricist (his anthology piece is 'How Sleep the Brave'); John Keats, who stayed there in 1818 writing 'The Eve of St Agnes'; and William Blake who was acquitted of high treason in the Guildhall in 1803, after

being accused by a drunken soldier. (Blake lived for three years at Felpham on the Sussex coast, near his then patron William Hayley, and wrote his *Milton* there.)

Draft Programme

Friday 25th August

4.00 Arrival
5.30 Reception
8.00 **Henning Ahrens** on John Cowper Powys's philosophical books

Saturday 26th August

9.30 **John Gray** on 'Three Powys Philosophies'
11.15 **Elaine Mencher** on editing Theodore Powys
Afternoon: **visit to Burpham** and surroundings with guided walk and readings led by **Kieran McCann** (optional)
8.00 use of the theatre, with currently proposed a reading of Theodore Powys's *The Sin-Eater*

Sunday 27th August

9.30 **W. J. Keith** on John Cowper Powys's *Autobiography*, leading to a discussion.
11.00 AGM
3.00 Departure

The Speakers

John Gray is Professor of European Thought at the LSE, and a long-standing member of The Powys Society. He is the author of *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals* (2003) and *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions* (2004), a collection of his writing for the *New Statesman*. Interviewing him under the title 'The Contrarian', the *Guardian* called him 'the scourge of neocons and the disciples of science and rationalism'. Of his talk on '**Three Powys philosophies**' he writes, 'My aim would be to look at the three main Powys brothers as exponents of quite different views of the world, each a response to the decline of traditional religion. Of course JCP, LP and TFP were not primarily philosophers—fortunately, in my view, given the rather sterile character of much twentieth-century academic philosophising.' (*See John Hodgson on page 19.*)

Henning Ahrens is a translator, poet and novelist, living near Hanover. Two of his novels are *Lauf Jäger Lauf* ['Run hunter run'] and *Langsamer Walzer* ['Slow waltz']. They have been described as 'hyper-realistic depictions of dream worlds'. He has won several awards for his poetry, including the Wolfgang-Weyrauch-Förder Preis of the City of Darmstadt and the Nicolas-Born Preis of Lower Saxony. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on 'John Cowper Powys's Elementalism' at Kiel University in 1995. He has translated numerous books from English into German, including John

Cowper Powys's diaries edited by Morine Krissdóttir, *Petrushka and the Dancer*. Henning Ahrens spoke at the Conference in Uppingham (1996, on Taliessin's song) and at Kingston Maurward (2000, on *Wolf Solent*).

Elaine Mencher has edited four TFP titles for Brynmill Press. *Selected Early Works of T. F. Powys* came out in 2004. It is a rich collection of essays, stories, plays (including 'The Sin Eater'), poems and diary writing, mostly from manuscripts in American collections and previously unpublished. Elaine and also Barrie Mencher have written about TFP and Brynmill in past *Newsletters* (nos 25, 26, 45, 47).

Professor W. J. Keith is well known to Powys conferences and as a contributor to the Society's publications. He is Emeritus Professor of English at Toronto University, Canada. He is currently engaged on a Commentary and Notes to JCP's *Autobiography*; his commentaries on *Porius* and *A Glastonbury Romance* are already on the internet (via Powys Society websites) and are open to further comments and additions.

Kieran McCann is a freelance translator and lives in Brighton. His website on JCP and Sussex is at <http://www.kpmc.fsnet.co.uk>.

JCP and Sussex

Two booklets in the Cecil Woolf **Powys Heritage** series deal with JCP's early life and Sussex. ***John Cowper Powys, Margaret and Lily: the Evidence of the Syracuse Manuscripts***, by Paul Roberts, calls on intensive research to tell us more about JCP's early unpublished work and incidents in *Autobiography*, when the eccentric young JCP invites his street-girl friend Lily to stay with his wife Margaret. JCP's play 'The Entermores', which Paul Roberts discovered, was performed a the Cirencester Conference in 1994 (see *PJ* x). ***John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W. E. Lutyens***, by Susan Rands, describes and speculates on the *fin-de-siècle* circle of relations and friends JCP visited and corresponded with at the time of his marriage, and his relationship with his wife and her family. We hope to refer to these booklets in discussion. Both are available from Cecil Woolf Publishers, 1 Mornington Place, London NW1 7RP, @ £3.50 and £6.50 respectively (*small stocks of both are held by the Publications Manager—see inside back cover*).

Of the novels, a large part of ***After My Fashion*** (written *c.*1919, first published 1980) is set in Sussex, and of course several chapters in *Autobiography* are devoted to JCP's Sussex period, as well as references in the letters to Llewelyn and in Llewelyn's 1908 Diary (forthcoming). Other essays relating to this period are Penny Smith on JCP's early unpublished fiction in *The Powys Review* 23, 'A visit to Mrs Lily Brooks' by T. J. Diffey (*Review* 18), and 'Lily Brooks, a Recollection' in *Newsletter* 23.

Committee News

The Committee met on 4th February at John Hodgson's house in Stoke Newington, London. JH began with a reading from *Soliloquies of a Hermit* (page 56, 'The simple life ...').

Matters discussed were: the 2006 Conference arrangements and charges; new payment methods for Euros (*see below*); possible new Committee members (always hoping for new volunteers, and to lower the average age) (*see Committee Nominations)*; and a possible future collection of literary essays.

The three new Powys Society publications were welcomed: the revised *Powys Checklist*, *The Art of Forgetting the Unpleasant* (five JCP essays, 1928, introduced by David Goodway), and *JCP on Thomas Hardy* (which the Hardy Society will offer to its 1,300 members). Stephen Powys Marks was thanked for this achievement. He also produced the *list of members' addresses* to go out with the March newsletter.

KK

A Legacy

A legacy of £1000 has been received from **Richard Handscombe** (*see page 9*). After discussion it was decided this could be spent on an advertised **essay prize** on a Powys subject. Costs and possibilities to be worked out, and details to be announced at the Conference. **JH**

International payments

The Society recognises the difficulties that international members have in remitting funds to the UK and has received a number of requests that we should accept credit card payments. We have investigated this, but the bank charges would, in all probability, exceed the total amount the Society received by this route in any given year. We believe, however, that **direct inter-bank transfers** may provide a negligible cost solution for many members. We understand that the only information required to set up such a transfer is the IBAN of the Society's account but below are set out the additional information your bank might possibly request. In case of continuing difficulty, do not hesitate to contact the Society's Treasurer:

Michael J. French, Wharfedale House, Castley, Otley, N. Yorkshire, LS21 2PY, UK
<mjfrenc@aol.com>

MF

Obituary

Thieu Klijn 1945–2005

With great sadness I have to report the death at his home in Eindhoven, Holland on 22nd November of Thieu Klijn, who many members of the Society will remember with great affection. Thieu was a great admirer and advocate of JCP, and was amongst the first to recognise the coming importance of the internet by the establishment of one of the earliest Powys websites in 1996. This original site is still accessible at: <http://home.iae.nl/users/tklijn/Index.htm> and retains something of the flavour of those very early days. Largely as a result of our shared interest in using the rapidly expanding internet to attract attention to the Society, Thieu and I became regular correspondents, and I was able to assist with arrangements for him to attend the Conference at Kingston Maurward in 1997 with his son, when the possibility of a dedicated Powys Society website was first seriously explored. At the invitation of the Committee Thieu subsequently became responsible for both the design and maintenance of that initial site, established in early 1998, which quickly began to attract interest and attention. Thieu continued work to develop the site until increasing ill health eventually forced him to retire from active involvement in 2000. However, he still retained all his old interest and enthusiasm for JCP and the work of the Society despite increasingly severe debilitation.

Thieu suffered a very severe illness as a child, which left him virtually paralysed from the waist, and although notionally confined to a wheelchair, with a pair of specially adapted crutches he was able to move around independently in almost any circumstances with astonishing speed and ability. Although only able to attend the one Society Conference, his infectious enthusiasm for life ensured that he made many friends and admirers during his brief stay in Dorchester, and over the next few years he made an important and significant contribution to the development of the Society. Sadly during the last few years his disabilities became increasingly severe and he suffered increasing periods of ill health, leading eventually to his tragically early death.

Chris Gostick
December 2005

Jacqueline Peltier also writes:
... Thieu had been born in August 1945 in Veldhoven, and had a difficult life because of this strange disease he had. A few years ago he lost his beloved wife Brammetje, who was a painter, and from then on had no will to go on living. On the card announcing his death, these words of Samuel Johnson are quoted: "It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives." ... Some members of the PS will surely remember this brave man, so crippled in his body but with such courage and intelligence, who had the greatest admiration for John Cowper. He was, I think, the very first to put up a site on JCP on the Internet, (that is how we met) and he also greatly encouraged us

to do the same. It was due to him that Max and I began working on the virtual *Weymouth Sands*.

Richard Handscombe

Richard Handscombe, who died at the end of last year, taught English at York, the university in North Toronto founded in the 1960s. He organised one of the two Powys Society of North America meetings that were held in Toronto. He bequeathed £1,000 to The Powys Society. His Powys collection, which he describes below, is in the research library at the University of Toronto. W.J. Keith's account of the collection follows.

Romance to Reality: How the Handscombe Powys Collection began and was developed

Romance

In 1962, I was finishing my second year of teaching in Istanbul—on contract at the English High School for Boys as Middle School English master, as well as being a lecturer in the Faculty of English at the university, teaching adults for the British Council and tutoring several private students to upgrade their English for entry to an English-medium university. This was not an uncommon working life at the time and routinely I and my teaching colleagues worked from early morning till near midnight. We all needed a break before exhaustion took over and fortunately there was a two-week period in the spring when we could take off. Our incredible travel agent found half a dozen of us space—first class space—on a cargo vessel that plied between Turkey and Russia, hugging the coast and stopping often and doing so in exactly the time we had free from our teaching duties.

The coast-line of Anatolia between Istanbul and Trabson may not be spectacular though it has its moments. I realised that I was going to have time to myself. I decided I needed One Long Book to take with me. Choosing did not take long, as the school English library was a single shelf. *War and Peace*? Proust? Not a chance. But there was indeed one long book and it was indeed long: John Cowper Powys's *A Glastonbury Romance*. A quick glance convinced me that it was worth the risk.

My colleagues and I were the only passengers in the huge, superbly-provisioned and impeccably-served dining saloon and the last thing we wanted to do was to pass the nights in chat amongst ourselves. Accordingly, I found myself in my bunk within minutes of the end of dinner that first night reading the first page of *A Glastonbury Romance*. John Cowper Powys's fans will know exactly what I mean when I say I was hooked immediately. I was mesmerised, entranced, flattened by the sheer eloquence,

power, imagination, entertainment of the book. That magic hadn't left me when I finished it just as the cruise ended and we docked in Istanbul. It remains with me to this day. A mystery, however, surfaced and also remains: why had nobody mentioned the book while I was at university, studying English literature?

Reality

After three years in Turkey, I realised that I had to come back to the UK to find out more about how to do what I had been being paid for. There turned out to be only a handful of courses that I felt could help me. The one I chose—and again I bless the choice to this day—was offered in the first Department of Contemporary English in the UK at Leeds University, headed by the late Dr Peter Strevens, and led to a Diploma in Teaching ESL. My only regret in taking the program was that it left no time to read even a newspaper. ... So, I did the next best thing and began to collect everything by John Cowper Powys in print. Luckily, Macdonalds (UK) had issued perhaps twenty titles. I bought one of each—all I could afford—and set them aside to read in the future.

In fact, it was not until I got to York University's Glendon College in Toronto in 1967 that such an opportunity arose. As I read, I continued to buy, mostly second-hand but at least affordable, material until I found myself with a good basic collection. Then David Mason in Toronto extended my knowledge, range and taste by suggesting I add the fine collection of Theodore Francis Powys he had put together, and within two days I was hooked by TFP, too, and could far more often find time for a short story, however macabre its humour. In due course, as funds permitted, I added Llewelyn Powys's serenely literate compositions and the work of the other brothers, sisters, wives and contributors generally to the Powys canon.

As I got closer to retirement my chances of focusing exclusively on *A Glastonbury Romance* increased. I had been looking for ways of making this huge text susceptible to a 'stylistic' approach to analysis. The problem remained of how to make it tractable. This time it was Professor John Sinclair (of the University of Birmingham Department of English, UK) who came to my rescue. He was building a huge corpus of real English on which to base the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary,[1] and he had one of the first optical scanners I had heard of. This would 'read' printed text onto tape. He agreed to include *A Glastonbury Romance* in the corpus and sent me a long sample of how the tape looked when printed. The computer programs that were being developed alongside the corpus collection, like CLOC,[2] would produce, for example, a complete vocabulary list of the work under focus, a step that I regarded as an essential beginning to any stylistic analysis. CLOC reduced, if that is the right word, *A Glastonbury Romance* from half a million words to 26,000—a mere bagatelle. ... In due course this was done and I was the proud possessor of a print-out of the word list. Retirement, here I come!

Alas, time to work with this material hasn't happened, for me at any rate. Ill-health intervened, and that was it. But it seems clear enough that if the material I

commissioned is available in the Fisher Library, anybody can use it. And that notion has prompted me to add these two printouts to the Handscombe Powys Collection.

Richard Handscombe
Professor Emeritus, Senior Scholar, York University.

NOTES

1 John M. Sinclair (Ed.), Collins and the University of Birmingham, *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, Collins London and Glasgow, 1987. *A Glastonbury Romance* is cited on page xxiii of the Corpus Acknowledgments.

2 The CLOC software program is on the York University, Toronto, computer. I must thank Dr J. Benson, of the Glendon English Department for acting as go-between in my introduction to working with CLOC.

The University of Toronto Powys Holdings

The Powys Collection in the **Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library** of the University of Toronto cannot lay claim to any substantial manuscript material (though it does contain a modest collection of letters); nonetheless, it includes a remarkably comprehensive gathering of books, pamphlets, and articles (among others, some very scarce limited editions) relating to all members of the Powys circle. Most of the holdings (and virtually all of the rarer items) belong to the **Handscombe Powys Collection**, which was generously presented to the Library by the late Professor **Richard Handscombe** of York University (also in Toronto). Many of the books contain inscriptions, and a number of binding variants (not always recorded in the bibliographies) are also represented.

This is no place to offer a full check-list of the holdings—I am not, in any case, a qualified bibliographer—but it seems useful to draw attention to some of the more unusual items, many of which are unknown even to specialists. I shall begin with the letters, and then consider each of the most prominent Powyses in turn.

Letters

The collection of letters includes eight from John Cowper (one of them in a carbon copy only), two from Littleton, three from Llewelyn, and two from Theodore. Several are of virtually no interest (three are replies to autograph-hunters), but a few are worth brief mention. One letter from John Cowper to a **Paul Williams** (17 June 1941) adds something to what we know of **Mabel Hattersley** in accessible sources. She was the 'Ann Veronica tart' (*Letters to Llewelyn* I, 212), who 'fleeced him of £50' (R. P. Graves, *The Brothers Powys*, 69), and later turned up coincidentally as a fellow lodger with JCP at Dr Thomas's in New York (*Letters to Llewelyn* I, 210, 212). Her presence there is now explained by the fact that, as John Cowper tells Williams, she eventually became a 'woman doctor', kept in correspondence with him, and even

sent him 'powders' that helped his numerous ailments. Another letter to **Hal W. Trovillion** (31 August 1958), though it contains little new, is of interest since it does not appear in *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Hal W. and Violet Trovillion*, published by Cecil Woolf in 1990.

The carbon-copy is addressed to Max Schuster, of Simon and Schuster, John Cowper's New York publishers (28 June 1942), and is important in that it lists several possible non-fiction books that he was considering writing at the time. These include *Imaginary Letters* (in which John Cowper proposed to correspond with various eminent people from the past) and *My Family*, described as 'a sort of Proustian analysis of each one of the eleven children'. One wishes that these had come to fruition.

Two letters from Littleton and one from Theodore are to **Richard Heron Ward**, author of the first book devoted to the three literary brothers. There is also a leather-bound notebook (stamped *Where is It?* on the cover) containing addresses (John Cowper's at Phudd Bottom, Llewelyn at Patchin Place, and many others) that appears to have belonged to **Theodore**. It contains, for example, a list of short-story titles sent to **K. S. Bhat**, who published some of his work in limited editions.

This is a decidedly small collection compared with others in England and North America, but research scholars should at least know of its existence.

John Cowper Powys

Among the 'association' copies are a copy of *Confessions of Two Brothers* inscribed to '**Emma Goldman**/ with/ admiration and respect/ from John Cowper Powys/ "Bon espoir y gist au fond"/ Rabelais/ Good Friday/ 1916'; a copy of *Samphire* where, added to the printed dedication to **Llewelyn**, are the inscribed words 'and/ humbly & admiringly/ presented/ to/ Gamel Woolsey/ August 1926/ Patchin Place, New York/ John C. Powys'; a first edition of the *Autobiography* inscribed to 'D.M.R. and A. Odle/ from their devoted/ admirer and lover/ John C P/ Oct 1934' (these were, of course, the novelist **Dorothy Richardson** and her husband); and a copy of H. G. Wells's *The New Machiavelli* (New York, 1910) inscribed 'To **Marian Powys** from J.C.P.'

A signed copy of *Poems* (1899) contains the list of errata (normally printed in slip-form) corrected in the text, and also written out in the front papers. In addition to the printed list, on p.33 'Tis' is corrected to 'still' in both places. On p.8, 'Seeing' in the penultimate line is struck through, though without addition or explanation. All these annotations are apparently in JCP's handwriting. This copy had the dubious distinction of being involved in a major fire at a Toronto Post Office in 1978, while it was en route to Handscombe. It suffered severe water damage from fire-hoses, but was vacuum-dried and now seems no worse for its adventure. The accompanying files contain a long correspondence covering his efforts to get compensation from the Post Office authorities.

One little-known item, only listed briefly in an addendum by Derek Langridge and not mentioned at all by Dante Thomas, is **Elspeth Douglas Reid's** *Verses*,

containing a two-page foreword by JCP. This is a modest book of decidedly conventional and sentimental poems mainly advocating kindness to animals (characteristically overpraised by JCP) published by the **Anti-Vivisection Society** of London. The book is undated, but, since it contains one poem dated 5 November 1957, and another focused on the dog sent into space by the Russians in Sputnik II during the same month, JCP's contribution must be one of his last productions. Another poem is entitled, interestingly within this context, 'Blackthorn Winter'; yet another, 'Stigmata', contains the following epigraph: '*Let none count themselves wise who have not with the nerves of their imagination felt the pain of the vivisected*/ JOHN COWPER POWYS.'

Another fascinating item, though not from the Handscombe collection, is the copy of **Jacob Hauser's** *Green & Golden Rhymes*, with a preface by JCP, which I discovered on the main library's open shelves and which has now been transferred to the Rare Book Collection. This was published in 1977, though JCP's preface had been written forty-two years earlier for another book, and seems to have been reproduced in a number of Hauser's publications over the years (see my article in *PSN* 54 and Anthony Head's follow-up in *PSN* 55).

T. F. (Theodore) Powys

This collection contains specimens of a high percentage of the many signed, limited editions of short stories produced between the wars, but it also includes a number of presentation copies. Several of these contain the bookplate of the popular writer **Dennis Wheatley**, who was also a book collector, and some presentation copies also derive from this source. It is clear that Wheatley either sent or brought Theodore a number of books for signing and inscription, at least six of them being dated 'April 11 1936'. Items from Wheatley's library include *Mockery Gap* (1925), *An Interpretation of Genesis* (1929), *The Only Penitent* (1931), and three extremely scarce limited editions of individual stories: *Feed My Swine*, *A Stubborn Tree*, *A Strong Girl and The Bride* (all 1926), and *What Lack I Yet?* (1927, no 23 of 25 copies, uncut). Another copy of the 1929 *Interpretation of Genesis* is inscribed 'For Francis/ with love from Theodore Francis Powys/ August 6th 1929', clearly Theodore's son. A third copy, with no personal inscription, reads: 'This Interpretation of Genesis was/ written 1905–1907, when the/ Bible was my chief study/ Theodore Francis Powys/ East Chaldon/ September 25 1929.'

Other items of more than routine interest include a copy of *The Left Leg* (1923) presented to **Roger Senhouse** by **Sylvia Townsend Warner**; and a presentation copy of *God's Eyes a-Twinkle* 'To Vera/ Theodore Francis Powys/ Mappowder/ April 16th 1949'. This will be **Vera Wainwright**, who then lived near Theodore at Mappowder (an earlier address is listed in the *Where Is It?* notebook), and was also a friend of Llewelyn's. One item of particular interest is a copy of *The Tithe Barn and the Dove & the Eagle* (50 copies, 1932), in which the printed 'This is No. —' is crossed through and written in are the words: 'Presentation/ to/ Mrs. T. F. Powys/ as a token

of gratitude for great and/ unfailing kindness, from **K. S. Bhat**.' Bhat was the publisher. In addition, a copy of **James Cotter Morrison's** *The Service of Man: an essay towards the religion of the future* (1887) is signed by TFP and presumably once formed part of his library.

Llewelyn Powys

The Llewelyn Powys holdings are also of considerable interest and importance for several of the 'association' copies. A copy of *A Pagan's Pilgrimage*, signed '**Littleton A. Powys**/ St. Stephen's House/ Oxford/ June 6th 1931', contains the inscription: 'With the love of Llewelyn/ to his favourite nephew'. This, of course, is JCP's son, 'favourite' despite Llewelyn's annoyance when he decided to enter the Church, '*Pagan*' serving as a reminder of his own views. More elaborate is a copy of *The Glory of Life* (1938 edition) inscribed on the end-papers: 'For **Wyndham Goodden**/ from/ his devoted friend/ Llewelyn Powys/ who/ also has climbed/ the walnut tree in/ the glebe of Montacute Vicarage/ and eaten of the [illegible] love [?]/ apples of the tree of life'. There follows a six-line doggerel poem and a drawing of two trees with figures marked WG and LP between them. Goodden, son of C. F. Powys's predecessor as Vicar of Montacute, was a doctor and a photographer, and illustrated both *Dorset Essays* and *Somerset Essays*.

Two books are inscribed to **Hildegarde Watson**, wife of Dr J. S. Watson with whom Llewelyn had gone on an expedition to the Rockies in 1924. She later visited Llewelyn at Davos Platz, and *A Baker's Dozen* is dedicated to her. (For her own account of her meetings with Llewelyn, see *PSN* 37.) An inscription pasted into a copy of *Love and Death* merely reads 'Hildegarde/ with the love of Llewelyn/ May Day/ 1939', followed by his Ankh sign, but two years earlier a similar inscription (October 1937) in *Rats in the Sacristy* is followed by another doggerel poem, of seven lines, beginning: 'Down in yonder meadow where the green grass grows,/ Pretty Pollie Pillicote bleaches her clothes ...', once again accompanied by the Ankh sign.

A second copy of *Rats in the Sacristy* is inscribed 'To Gerald/ with love/ from Llewelyn/ Clavadel, Davos Platz/ Switzerland, 1937', and is presumed to be addressed to **Gerald Brenan**. Yet another doggerel poem (nine lines) follows. Finally, a copy of *Thomas Bewick* (the Gravesend Press edition of 1951) contains a signed inscription, again for **Hildegarde Watson, from Alyse Gregory,** Llewelyn's widow, whose 'Letter from England' also appears in the volume.

For those interested in the texts and editions of the Powys brothers (as distinct from manuscripts), this must be one of the best-equipped collections in North America. I am indebted in the compilation of this article to the obliging staff of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, and for permission to quote from its holdings to its Director, **Richard Landon**. Full details may be found on the Library's website: <www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/ >

W. J. Keith

SHERBORNE PREP SCHOOL RECOGNIZES ITS FAMOUS SONS
Opening of the Powys Library

The **Powys Library** at **Sherborne Prep School**, opened on 28th November 2005, celebrates the huge contribution made to English literature by one of Dorset's most famous literary families, the Powys family.

Three of the Powys brothers, John Cowper, Llewelyn and Theodore, who attended The Prep in the late 19th century, wrote over 100 books in their lifetimes, a combination of essays, fables, novels and autobiography, one of which (*A Glastonbury Romance* by J. C. Powys) was described by Margaret Drabble as 'the most important novel of the 20th century'.

Chris Woodhead with the Librarians in the new Library.

For eighteen years, another of the brothers, Littleton Powys, was an innovative and inspiring Headmaster of The Prep, later writing of his experiences in two volumes of autobiography *The Joy of It* and *Still the Joy of It*.

The library was opened in a small ceremony by **Chris Woodhead**, former Chief Inspector of Schools and devotee of the writing of John Cowper Powys. Chris Woodhead told the audience of guests and children how he had first read the novel *Wolf Solent* while at school (he later lectured on the enduring appeal of the novel at the 2002 Powys Conference at Glastonbury), and had become a life-time collector and student of Powys works. With a collection of photographs and other memorabilia (including a bust of John Cowper Powys), the Powys library has become both the focal point of learning in the School and a celebration of its literary past.

Peter Tait, Sherborne Prep.

With thanks to Peter Tait (Headmaster) and to Jane Yates for this publicity announcement.

★

A. N. Wilson's lively history *After the Victorians* (i.e.1900–50) does JCP proud—with a photograph ('*surely the greatest English novelist of his generation*'). Powys is an example of 'Englishness' intensified by exile ('*the four magnificent Wessex novels ... perhaps the greatest,* Weymouth Sands ... *incomparable explorations of the hidden human psyche, of relations between the sexes, of the mysterious and occult quality of the landscape and archaeological history of England itself ... With his finely attuned antennae, Powys understood better than many political and religious analysts what was happening to his*

native country ... He is infinitely old-fashioned, and yet more shockingly modern ...'—p.299–300). *Porius* too rates a page and a half (*'a huge, albeit flawed, masterpiece about the British past, about the actual physical being of the island ... about what happens when civilizations go through huge changes ...'*—519–21). Wilson notes that *Porius* was begun about the time of Dunkirk, when the civilized world seemed to be collapsing; also JCP's affinity with Max Stirner's philosophic anarchism: quoting Myrddin Wyllt's conversation with the pageboy Neb on the subject of 'obedience', and Myrddin's prophetic speech on Power.

★

George Steiner debated the value and role of the Nobel Prize ('Nobel Equality?') with Horace Engdahl, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, at the **British Library** in London, on 12th December 2005.

Christopher Thomas who attended the event reports: 'Professor Steiner vigorously defended the view that only 'time' can validate great art, not prizes or awards. When the speakers were invited to identify which writers they thought would still be recognised and read 100 years from now, Professor Steiner unhesitatingly picked John Cowper Powys and spoke admiringly of the place of *Wolf Solent* in world literature. What a profound pleasure to hear the name of John Cowper Powys mentioned within the walls of the British Library! What an even greater pleasure to hear his work and literary reputation publicly praised with such approbation by so eminent a critic!'

George Steiner has championed JCP over many years. The talk he gave at the JCP Centenary Conference in 1972 is in the first *Powys Review* (Spring 1977). 'Neglected Giant' (*Sunday Times*, 9.xii.1973, reviewing Glen Cavaliero's *John Cowper Powys, Novelist* with John Brebner's *The Demon Within)*, begins 'There is something wrong somewhere. With Melville, John Cowper Powys is the major religious novelist in the language. Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, and J. C. Powys are the three great modern English novelists ...' (continuing, predictably: 'To established critical opinion, however ...')

A footnote: **Leslie Booth** has a copy of George Steiner's 1959 book, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky*, with a dedication (March 5, 1966) from GS to **Frederick Davies,** 'both of us coming to Dostoevski through John Cowper Powys'. In the book Steiner refers to JCP's *Dostoievsky* (1946) and quotes JCP on Dostoevsky: e.g. his *'cunning pleasure that a mind will take in its own tenacity'* and his *'mysterious and profoundly feminine enjoyment of life even while suffering from life'*.

★

The publishers **Duckworth's** current list illustrates *Maiden Castle* ('the complexities of sexual and romantic feeling that bedevil an eccentric cast of characters ...') and *Owen Glendower* (*'brilliant re-imagining of the life and exploits of Wales's national hero* ...') as 'forthcoming paperbacks' @ £14.99 (both quoting recommendations from George Steiner). *Autobiography* is listed as 'recently published' (biography, hardback £20) but is now said to be again postponed, until June. **Overlook** in America features *Autobiography* (*'The moving and insightful memoir from one of 20th century's*

most ingenious and acclaimed authors ... A classic being restored to print for the first time in more than a decade ... a vital and uninhibited self-portrait by a major literary figure ...', and lists *Weymouth Sands* as well as the other two above. (Overlook books are obtainable through Duckworth.) There is no announcement yet of Morine Krissdóttir's book on JCP, but this is still expected later this year.

★

David Goodway's book on **Anarchists** (*Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward*) is to be published by Liverpool University Press in October. It contains two chapters on JCP, one the Llangollen lecture of 2003 which appeared in *The Powys Journal* XIV (2004).

★

Two long-awaited publications from **Cecil Woolf**—the letters of JCP and the early twentieth-century Russian-American anarchist activist **Emma Goldman**, edited by **David Goodway**, and the **JCP–Dorothy Richardson** correspondence, edited by **Janet Fouli**—will it is hoped be ready in time for the Conference, as well as a further instalment of Peter Foss's editing of **LlP's Diaries** (*Diary of a Reluctant Teacher*, 1908) in the **Powys Heritage** series. Also in the Heritage pipeline is an essay by Jacqueline Peltier on two Powys connections, Bernie O'Neill and Ralph Shirley. More news of these in the next *Newsletter*.

★

The **Society's three new publications** are selling to members and will be available to the public at the DCM and it is hoped at other Hardy sites.

★

Brendan McMahon, a practising psychotherapist and member of the Society, explores ancient Irish and Welsh world-views in his book *The Princess Who Ate People: the psychology of Celtic myths* (Heart of Albion Press, <albion@indigogroup.co.uk>). His thesis is that Freud's theory based on the story of Oedipus (murdering father, marrying mother) should not be taken as universal, its social origin being the nineteenth-century (Viennese) bourgeois family. In contrast, Celtic mythological tales take more account of (e.g.) extended tribal loyalities, un-humanising madness (as in 'wild men of the woods'—Myrddin Wyllt in one version among these), nature, poetry, and determined women.

Without wishing to force any Powys into categories, JCP's suspicion of Freudian analysis is well-known, and the world of his novels would seem closer to the Celtic patterns. (See JCP's pamphlet *Psychoanalysis and Morality* (1923, reprinted by Village Press 1975), and 'The Unconscious' (1949) in *Newsletter* 45.)

★

A forthcoming publication (probably in the spring) is ***Wild Flower Walks in Dorset*** by Peter and Margaret Cramb. It will contain excerpts from **Llewelyn**'s writings. They have a previous book, *Wild Flowers of the Dorset Coast Path*, which is available on <www.amazon.co.uk>

★

Graham Carey urges that descriptions of **Powys Voices** should be sought and collected while there are still first-hand recollections—and even the very faint

possibility of a sound recording not be lost sight of. 'It *is* the sort of unlikely project which JCP might countenance, even though he hated mechanical contraptions ... Somewhere in the US or UK, in state or private sound archives, university, culture club, anti-vivisection society, Welsh broadcasting ... there might be indexed something ...' He has compiled a list of sound archives, if anyone else would be interested in pursuing this.

*

Marcella Henderson-Peale, a recent member of The Powys Society who is currently working on her thesis on JCP in Paris, enquires about the whereabouts, if any is known, of correspondence between JCP and his son.

*

Falcon D. Hildred, a painter, lives and has an exhibition space at **Pant-yr-Ynn Mill,** at Bethania near **Blaenau Ffestiniog**—The mill is a pleasant 15–30 minute walk from the town centre and about ¼ mile from JCP's Waterloo. Blaenau's earliest surviving slate mill is now the artist's home—'Waterfall, fine view, 24 ft working waterwheel, live coal fire'—and open by arrangement (£2), telephone 01766 830 540.

Falcon Hildred knew Phyllis Playter only slightly, but 'I was told that John Cowper Powys often came and sat by the [mill] wheel. I can fully understand why. It's a lovely spot, which is why I chose to live here. And altho' the once quiet lane is now lined by bungalows and cars, the mill still enjoys one of the finest views in Wales, & is a lovely place for quiet contemplation.' (*Thanks to Graham Carey also for this.*)

John & Philip — A Civil Partnership

On a biting cold foggy Monday in January I made my way by public transport to Hackney Town Hall, for the ceremony for John Hodgson and Philip Yeeles. The large municipal building was approached by grand steps which encircled the front façade.

Once inside the atmosphere of the day was transformed. It was suddenly warm and welcoming. Guests convened—musicians from Portugal, interpreters from The Hague, colleagues from Vienna, friends and family coming together to celebrate.

We were then ushered into a grand, auspicious room with chandeliers and suitable flower arrangements. The order of the ceremony was both dignified and familiar. After 'if any of you know cause or impediment ... etc.' the pregnant pause was followed by the relief of laughter which could be allowed here. No objections were found and all ended harmoniously with one of Philip's friends performing a tender and serene passacaglia by the seventeeth-century composer Biber.

We returned to 66 Kynaston Road for champagne and food. It was a most enjoyable occasion and we wish them well.

Sonia Lewis

John Gray and 'Straw Dogs'

Excited by Oswald Spengler's prediction of the collapse of Western civilisation, 'when we shall wander among grass-green cities that have lost their wealth, and remnants of scientific mechanisms that have lost their inventive secret', John Cowper Powys wondered whether 'such a prophecy as this' was 'too good to be true'.

John Cowper might also have enjoyed the cosmic perspective and disconcerting prophecies of *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, by John Gray, Professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics, who will talk to the Society's Conference in Chichester this year on 'Three Powys Philosophies'.

The title of Gray's book comes from Lao Tzu, 'Heaven and earth are ruthless, and treat the myriad creatures as straw dogs'. The book's argument develops through extended aphorisms in a style that recalls Nietzsche. Gray presents a world view to which human beings are not central, and are indeed no more masters of their destiny than any other animal species. The deeply anthropocentric religion of Christianity has collapsed, yet mankind continues to console itself with a vestigially metaphysical quest for its own salvation through abstractions such as 'progress'. Modern humanism, in fact, is 'a secular religion thrown together from decaying scraps of the Christian faith'. Meanwhile, the world faces a crisis of overpopulation and its attendant ecological devastation. There is very little that humanity can do to avert what, seen from a local perspective, is a very grim future. For a start, 'humanity' has never acted in concert over anything whatsoever. Indeed, it is itself an abstraction which in Darwinian terms does not exist. Human advance has always brought ecological disaster in its train. For instance, the arrival of man in the American continent 12,000 years ago led to the extinction of about 70 percent of the continent's large mammals. 'Green' political action will be of little account, because the idea that man can assume positive responsibility for the future of the planet is merely another anthropocentric myth that flies in the face not only of history, and human nature, but nature itself. The new technologies will be used in the same way as the old technologies throughout history—to harm, enslave, and kill, as well as to feed and cure.

Faced with a plague of excess human beings, and there is no way that the earth can support a predicted population of eight billion by the year 2050, nature will right itself, but in ways that offer little immediate human consolation: famine, genocide, or wars over scarce resources are likely to restore the world's population to a sustainable one billion or so, and the population explosion of the twentieth century will have been a mere blip on the demographic graph.

Gray describes this prospect with awe and a sense of cosmic drama, but also with the equanimity that comes from an acceptance of transhuman truth. Life is more than man. Escaping from human solipsism and mankind's self-absorbed and fruitless quest for its own salvation, Gray writes with eloquence and tenderness of other life forms, and of the forms of sensation and perception that exist throughout the

animal kingdom. If man no longer has dominion over the beasts of the field, but is in fact one among them, his arrogant moral underpinning for the exploitation of other species also collapses—elsewhere, Gray writes powerfully against the practice of vivisection. Above all, Gray responds to the natural world, precisely because it does not vibrate in sympathy with human concerns: 'It is only because nature cares nothing for us that it can release us from human cares.' Life may have no meaning, but this itself is a liberation: 'Spiritual life is not a search for meaning but a release from it.'

Despite Gray's transhuman perspective, he writes with a keen and urgent sense of the immediate political scene. *Straw Dogs*, and especially *Heresies: Against Progress and Other Illusions*, a collection of Gray's writing from *The New Statesman*, are as much about geopolitics, and the implications of world terrorism. What has all this got to do with the Powyses? Well, quite a lot. Although Gray's philosophy might at first sight seem closer to the cosmic grandeur of John Cowper, in fact he finds T. F. Powys the greater writer. In an article in *The New Statesman*, not included in *Heresies*, he writes of T. F. Powys: 'Very few twentieth-century authors have the knack of writing convincingly of first and last things. A religious writer without any vestige of belief, Theodore Powys is one of them.'

Lucid, comfortless, but liberating, John Gray will prove an exceptionally challenging presence at Chichester. And he is a good deal racier than Spengler.

John Hodgson

John Gray's Straw Dogs *(2003, ISBN 1 86207 596 4) and* Heresies *(2004, ISBN 1 86207 718 5) are published by Granta, at £8.99 each.*

Job, his Wife and his Friends, by William Blake.

T. F. Powys and Job

A Dialogue Concerning the Book of Job is the only one of T. F. Powys's Biblical Dialogues (written *c.*1906–09) to have been considered for publication in his lifetime, apart from *An Interpretation of Genesis* (private printing 1907, published 1929). The autograph manuscript text of *Job* is in three exercise books (totalling 124 pages) at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. They were acquired by the HRHRC in 1970, some years after the acquisition of the bulk of the biblical interpretations. Mrs Stracey's name is on the cover of Vol I and there are some pencilled notes by her on the text (*see the chapter on TFP's friend and mentor in Larry Mitchell's* T. F. Powys: Aspects of a Life). Each cover also has the name of C. H. C. Prentice (c/o Chatto and Windus) with the date November 1907. There are few corrections.

Larry Mitchell in his commentary (unpublished) on the HRHRC manuscripts writes:

Job is—far more than *Genesis*—the one book of the Bible that seems to 'fit' Powys, in the sense that Job's treatment at the hands of God, his suffering, confirms Powys's opinion of God. Job's God is Theodore's God—and that is why he both feared Him and denied Him ... No other biblical book received such attention from Powys ... In an (unpublished) short story, 'Merlin Stone', Powys even projects something himself into his protagonist, 'Job Peaty', who is described as a 'mystic'. There also exists a manuscript of 'Sheep's Clothing 5' which includes a twenty-two-page dramatisation of *Job* ... marked 'March 1912'.

In July 1906, Powys wrote to Louis Wilkinson, announcing that 'I have begun writing notes upon the Bible.' From the evidence of the dated manuscripts, it is clear that the books of the Bible were tackled in chronological order; that is, the 'interpretation' of *Genesis* was written first in June/July 1906, that of *Job* in November 1907, immediately after *Ezra, Esther*, and *Nehemiah* in October 1907, and before *Psalms* in February 1908.

Charles Prentice [of Chatto & Windus] read *Job* in manuscript in 1927, and wrote to Powys expressing unstinted admiration for it: 'I have not read "The Market Bell" yet, but last night I read Job. It is magnificent. I read with one eye on your script and the other on Job itself. I can hardly believe that you wrote the Dialogue twenty years ago. I shall give the ms. to Sylvia [Townsend Warner] this week' (CP to TFP, 27 November, 1927). After *Genesis* appeared, Prentice wrote: 'Harold [Raymond] has told me that Genesis has been oversubscribed ... Job is now a certainty' (CP to TFP, 16 June 1929).

Subsequently the work was advertised as 'in preparation' on the back of the dustjacket of *The White Paternoster* (issued on September 25, 1930):

> AN INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF JOB. *Uniform with* An interpretation of Genesis. *Limited edition of about* 500 copies *at about 15s. net. There will be no ordinary edition. Spring 1931.*

However, it was never published.

Elaine Mencher, in her list of the Biblical Dialogues in the Introduction to *Selected Early Works of T. F. Powys,* quotes the description from a sale catalogue of 'David J. Holmes Autographs' of Philadelphia of:

> the manuscript (with no corrections) of a play by Powys called Job, A Dramatisation, in which Job wrestles with such characters as the Law, Righteousness, Judgement, Elihu the Priest, a harlot, Death and Poverty. On the front cover is this note: 'Job. March 1917 [1912?]'.

Tantalisingly, the whereabouts of this play and of the 'Merlin Stone' story is apparently not known.

(*With thanks to Larry Mitchell, Louise de Bruin and Elaine Mencher for information given in the above. Elaine Mencher's* Early Works *contains other TFP treatments of biblical writings: among them extracts from* Exodus: a Dialogue *and from* A Dialogue about the Letters of John. *Glen Cavaliero writes on TFP's* Genesis *in his 'An Interpretation of T. F. Powys' in* The Powys Journal XI, *2001.*)

★

The *Job* Dialogue, as with *An Interpretation of Genesis*, is between 'The Lawgiver of Israel' (author/editor of the Bible) and 'Zetetes' (the Seeker). In TFP's philosophical scheme, the Mother (Nature, the world, outer, physical life) leads to the Father (mental and spiritual inner powers) and the Child-soul must evolve by its own efforts. Over all is 'The Truth'. There are also the elder and the younger Child to be incorporated in various guises: the Mother's and the Father's—Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob—Job in prosperity and Job questioning.

TFP's ***Genesis*** begins with the Lawgiver (composer/anthologist of the biblical text) pronouncing: '*In the beginning the Truth created the heaven and the earth ... from the Truth cometh our Fatherland, and our Motherland ... it came into my mind that through our Mother we must reach unto our Father ... my knowledge had been void and dark, but now that I had begun to see, there was light.*'

Later in *Genesis*, on the story of Jacob, the younger son, cheating his older brother Esau of their father's blessing, Zetetes comments: '*The blessing is upon the younger child, but man is offended and would have the elder blessed.*' The Lawgiver explains:

> The old life of man even from the beginning unto the end is within the life of these two children ... The two children are the heaven and the earth that the Truth created; man is the expression or outward consciousness of these two children. In man these two children are, but man is not. The creator and Father of these two children is the Truth, and the Mother is the body that surroundeth all forming life ...
>
> The earth in man is the elder child ... Heaven is the younger child, the true seed in man ...
>
> All the laws of the earth are good ... The earth in man is full of wonder, in the book of man the poet singeth of the wonder of earth ... The earth desireth itself, but the younger child that is heaven desireth not itself, it desireth the Truth. The earth is an end in itself, it willeth its own end; the heaven in man hath no end ... man saw that the earth in him died, but man knew there was that in him which was not earth. The babe

man called this his soul ...

Heaven is around and about man even as the earth is ... through the earth in man shall the heaven be made known to him ... But beware lest ye call the earth heaven, beware lest the earth desire heaven, for then is the earth filled with disease ... The disease of the earth cometh from man's willing the earth to leave itself and to become heaven ... as long as man desireth eternal life for the earth so long shall the heaven be hidden from him.

O man, how small a thing art thou, and yet thou art the earth and the fulness thereof. O man, how wonderful a being art thou, for in thee is heaven that is eternal.

By the time the Bible has proceeded to the more complex world of *Job*, Job is Man; his friends represent Judgement, Righteousness and Law. TF no doubt accepted the commonly held view of the Hebrew Bible, as reflecting an evolving conception of the relations between God and humanity (with the further extension for Christians of a God both more human and less worldly—the Lawgiver's 'son of man', the man of sorrows, the Second Child).

★

The biblical *Book of Job*, in the King James version a sublime poem, is (like *Hamlet*) 'full of quotations'. Its relevance to T. F. Powys seems clear. For those unfamiliar with the story:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil ... [*Job* 1.1]. He is rich and prosperous. His children spend their time feasting (Job offers sacrifices for them too in case they have sinned).

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Whence comest thou?' Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.' And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Hast thou considered my servant Job ... a perfect and an upright man? ...' And Satan answered, 'Doth Job fear God for naught? ... put forth thine hand, and touch all he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.' [1.6–11] Various catastrophes are made to befall Job—flocks and herds robbed, children killed in an earthquake, his men all murdered except for the bearer of ill tidings (*'and I only am escaped alone to tell thee'*). Job mourns, but still worships. *'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.* [1.21–22]

'You see?' says God to Satan. *'Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him, to destroy him without cause.' 'Skin for skin,'* says Satan, *'all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face ...'. So went Satan forth ... and smote Job with sore boils.* Job ends up scraping himself in the ash-heap. Job's wife tells him, *'Curse God and die.'* [2.3–9] But Satan fails. Job retorts: *'Thou speaketh as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?'*

Three friends come to commiserate with him. They lament. *After this opened Job his*

mouth ... and said, 'Let the day perish wherein I was born ...' He curses his day, but not God. In the philosophical (or theological) body of the book, the three 'Comforters', Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad, and a priggish younger man, Elihu ('the priest' in TF's interpretation), insist in various ways that Job must somehow have deserved this punishment. Job rejects them and their arguments (*'miserable comforters are ye all'*) and protests his innocence. He laments his lot as the lot of mankind. *'My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle ...'* [7.6]; *'I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister. And where is now my hope?'* [17.14–15].

He appeals to the Supreme Judge: *'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him.'* [13.15]. *'Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me ...'* [31.35]. *So the three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes* [32.1]. At this point Elihu (TFP's 'Priest') intrudes with a long sermon, but:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 'Who is this that darkeneth counsel with words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee ... Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? ...' [38.1–4] The answer Job gets is, more or less, Stop whingeing. Look at my amazing creation, my Behemoth, my Leviathan (my hippopotamus, my crocodile) ... You should be glad I notice you at all. Job capitulates. *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? ... I will proceed no further ... I know that thou canst do every thing ... therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me ... I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.'* [40.4–5; 42.2–6].

The Lord is not pleased with the three friends (Elihu is not mentioned): *'My wrath is kindled ... for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath'*. But: *the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.* He receives old friends, gold, sheep, cattle, seven new sons and three beautiful daughters, and lives to be a hundred and forty. *So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.* [42 to end].

T. F. Powys: A Dialogue Concerning the Book of Job (final sections)

Zetetes [on the sermon of Elihu]

'If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures.' [*Job* 36.11]

The priest remembereth the words of the poet and he heapeth scorn upon man, he knoweth well that man is past speaking else how could he dare approach him. Man is mocked by a terrible mocker, who biddeth man look upon the round worlds and the winds and the seas, and man's eyes are near closed in death.

Man hath turned to destruction for safety, but the priest would awake fear in him once more. So deep in the valley of the shadow is man that he hath lost his terrors,

but the priest would bring them into his mind again even in his last hour. The priest eve[r] mocketh man with false words. Shall man set a falsehood beside him and hearken to the words of a lie?

Shall he give shelter and food to the deceiver; to the priest that blasphemeth the Truth?

The Lawgiver of Israel:

'Then the Lord answered Job out of the Whirlwind and said...' [*Job* 38.1]

Lo a new thing cometh to pass and the poet hath kept the best song till the last.

Man's friends are silent and have turned aside from him, they look upon him no more, he has passed by Judgement, Righteousness and Law.

Man is silent and answereth not him who mocks and the mocker turneth from him for he believeth man to be dead.

Around man is a deep silence. He lieth as though he had never opened his eyes.

The outward life hath an end, and the inward beginneth and the inward hath no beginning and no end, man feeleth that the Fatherland is near.

The light within man hath pierced the darkness and a voice cometh out of the shadow.

'Thou hast come to me and I am with thee, my thought shall be with thee always.'

The full experience of the Mother is gotten by man and the poet doth question man to know whether he be full of the knowledge of the Mother.

The voice saith, ['] Art thou full of wisdom and of Truth? Do[st] thou understand how death is shaken out of the earth, and the temple of the soul made pure? [']

If thy thought hath reached hitherwards and if thine ear can believe no lie, then art thou ready to enter into the fullness of light.

At the word of life: ***All the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.*** [38.7]

Man is ready for the song of the morning for the darkness in the Mother is now lightened in [H]him, and all the secrets of the night are exposed to the sun. Man hath sounded the firmament and his mind hath seen the depth of the stars and he knoweth the law of the beasts of the field.

He seeth now why the Mother hardened herself against him, he knoweth why she taught him as though he were not her child.

He seeth strength and loneliness and understandeth wherefore they are.

When man casteth out falsehood, his child shall be born. [*pencil notes ?by Mrs Stracey: 'Job end here.'*]

Zetetes:

He that once reproved God may now answer him, man is now able to speak with the Truth. Alas pride remaineth in man, his body is brought low, but his mind still looketh upward toward Dominion and Power. Alas he doth not know his soul.

He looketh for God in Power, he answereth him as though he were upon a high

throne. The son of man is not yet born and man turneth his eyes back toward the darkness again, concerning the Truth man saith, 'He beholdeth all high things.'

Once man was near the Truth but now he is far from it, he is not ready for the true thought to come, for he looketh up even at greatness and strength. As his eyes accept Power as God, so the Truth hideth itself from him, and the Thoughts of the Truth are again silent within him. He boweth again before Power, because Power and Dominion are on high, he boweth himself and accepteth again the old God, and we that looked for the birthday of light, now behold the night of darkness again. Because of his pride man abhor[r]eth himself, he repenteth in dust and ashes for he knoweth not the Truth. The time is not yet ripe for the second child to come.

The Lawgiver of Israel:

Man returneth into his past life, and the elder child is crowned again in him, his substance is greater than before because he hath learned to keep more of the Mother to himself. [(? and he shareth not his seed with the poor?)]

He is a king and he worshippeth the God of power and Dominion, his friends are with him for his barns are full and he buildeth a palace for the priest.

Thou and I have followed man through his first travail but no child hath come.

Man hath tasted the cup of his sorrows but he hath not drunk the full measure thereof.

The Father call is too heavy for him to bare [*sic*] and instead he accepted falsehood that brought him content and ease.

The half of man's book is written, but death remaineth to end it.

If we shut the book here, where are we?

If this be our end, then is man not the true born, neither is the seed of Truth in him.

Man's book endeth not here.

It beginneth again.

And ever it beginneth, until the son of man is born. The son of man shall be born and he shall drink the full measure of the cup of sorrow, and the second child shall have life in man.

The end of Job.

(From the carbon TS copy in the Bissell Collection, now in the Powys Society Collection in the Dorchester County Museum. Some adjustments made to punctuation and paragraphing (KK). The TS has some minor oddnesses probably deriving from the original AMS. The original TS is in HRHRC.)

*

Would any Society members be interested in a proper reprinting of this Dialogue?

KK

from
Laurence Sterne
by Llewelyn Powys

The Bookman (*N. Y.*), *Vol. LVIII* (*September 1923*), *pp. 10–16*

(*This has been cut by rather less than a third, chiefly of Sterne's biography.*)

Laurence Sterne himself has put it upon record that while staying as a child with Mr. Fetherston near Wicklow he fell into a mill race. It was an accident odd and riotous enough and seems somehow strangely in keeping with the great eighteenth century humorist's uncontrolled and revoluting genius. Indeed, one is almost inclined to suspect that he owed the peculiar originality of his twisted whimsical mind to nothing else but a blow on his head given to him by one of the great tumbling fans of the water wheel.

Few writers have been privileged to rouse more hostility in the hearts of the ethically complacent than Laurence Sterne. From the hour of its original publication *Tristram Shandy* has been an ever present thorn in their flesh. But not only have Puritans decried its broad-mouthed humour. When Miss Monckton told Dr. Johnson that she was affected by the pathos in Sterne's writing, the old lexicographer, "after rolling himself about", is said to have exclaimed, "That is because, dearest, you're a dunce". Horace Walpole found *Tristram Shandy* "a very insipid and tedious performance". Goldsmith declared it "a pert novel" and went on to say that "a bawdy blockhead often passes for a fellow of small parts and pretensions." Coleridge hit it off as "a sort of dallying with the devil", while Thackeray, that champion and mouthpiece *par excellence* of bourgeois Victorian sentiment, had the temerity to dub it "cheap dribble" and to assert that "foul satyr eyes leered out of its leaves constantly."

But in spite of such hasty misprisals the value of this extraordinary work has never been questioned by that small group of robust intellectual epicures which, in each succeeding generation, carries forward the authentic tradition of great literature. Like a time-stained wooden cask of excellent, fruity red wine, mellow and palatable, *Tristram Shandy* stands in our libraries today as one of our most treasured possessions. And if our appreciation of its full-bodied twang required other support, we could summon some formidable names to set off against these others. William Hazlitt asserted that the character of Uncle Toby "was one of the finest compliments ever paid to the human race." Heine, Balzac, and Victor Hugo were admirers of the book, and no less a man than Goethe declared that "Sterne was one of the most emancipated spirits of his century" and went so far in his enthusiasm as to have a bust of Sterne set up in his house.

It is certain that Sterne himself had not the slightest misgiving as to the lasting worth of his writing, and in his own characteristic way he is by no means at a loss to make this fact clear to his critics. "Did you think the world itself, Sir, had contained such a number of Jack-Asses?—How they reviewed and reviewed us as we passed

over the rivulet at the bottom of that little valley. Prithee, shepherd! who keeps all these Jack-Asses? Heaven be their comforter!—What! are they never curried? Are they never taken in o' winter?"

Tristram Shandy was written when Sterne was forty-six years old. Till that time his life, which was to end in a whirl of social gaiety, had been singularly uneventful. He was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, eking out his meagre revenue while at the university, as many an honest man has done before and since, by sweeping the courts and serving his fellow undergraduates at table. There is still to be seen in one of the lovely quadrangles of that ancient red brick college which abuts so pleasantly on Midsummer Common, the famous walnut tree under the shadow of which he and his rollicking friend "Eugenius", or Hall-Stevenson of Skelton Castle, jested and drank.

After taking his degree, and being ordained as a priest in the Church of England, he settled down to the snug living of Sutton-in-the-Forest in the neighborhood of York. Little is known of his life during the next twenty years. He himself tells us it was spent with "Books, painting, fiddling and shooting." It is reported that, when he fell through the ice while skating, not one of his parishioners would come to his assistance. The story of such inhumanity naturally rouses our indignation, a legitimate emotion which, however, undergoes considerable modification when we learn that on one occasion he had kept these same people waiting in church for over an hour while he returned to his house to fetch his gun, in order to shoot a brace of partridge that he had put up in a neighboring turnip field ...

[...] [*more on Sterne's life, mother & wife*]

What particular quality or virtue is to be found in *Tristram Shandy* to commend it to so many minds both wise and foolish? I am of opinion that it consists in the wide, deep, generous humanism of its tone, which like that same monstrous hogshead of good liquor [*see para 3*] steadies the nerves, prevents one's growing costive, and puts one in a genial latitudinarian mood with all the universe. A man who reads *Tristram Shandy* is never teasing or mean, never testy or choleric. There is a certain blunt honesty about these pages which becomes infectious. They encourage a kind of moral and intellectual moratorium wherein the good becomes bad, and the bad becomes good, and squire and vassal alike cause the whole earth to quake with a prodigious merriment. Laurence Sterne of course is the lineal descendant of Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, and Burton, of all those great heroic minds who, without making any large spiritual claims, have somehow or another managed to liberate and restore our wavering souls more than all the peevish ethical teachers put together.

Here is a wisdom that smacks of the sun itself, of the upturned sweet smelling furrows of many a great Oxmoor, of land-weeds, and river weeds, and sea weeds, of great cottage loaves of home made wheaten bread, and of great leather Jacks of brown homebrewed beer.

"Heaven forbid", cried Sterne, "that the stock of chastity should be lessened by the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy"; and indeed the book is in reality

sufficiently free from prurience. When will the foolish understand that the God Priapus can never be worshipped with laughing lips? The devotees of lechery are as sour and vinegar-faced as the most wretched Puritans, nothing being more potent to put lewdness out of countenance than a twinkling eye.

But Sterne saw also, like many another wise man, "that there is not so much difference between good and evil as people are apt to imagine", and that a kind of magnanimous jollity is able to cure this "scurvy and disastrous world" of most of its evil vapors; and having once come to this conclusion, "his squirrel soul", as Nietzsche called it, danced and curveted it to a fine tune.

And what a realist the old rogue is! how with a touch here and a touch there he recreates for us the very atmosphere and visible appearance of Shandy Hall! We see it all. The look of the sun-warmed kitchen garden wall, with its greengages and wasps and thievish blackbirds, the look of the fish pond, of the tall yew hedge, and of the holly and thick-set flowering shrubs which stood at the lower end of the bowling green. The very animals associated with the place became as familiar to us as old friends: Yorick's *bidet* [*second-class horse*], Obadiah's "strong monster of a coach horse", and the bull "which had somehow got himself thrust into employment for general service in the Parish, and for whom as he went through the business with a grave face, my father had a high opinion". One comes to know the furniture of the old manor as well as one knows the appurtenances of one's own house—"the old set-stitched chair, valanced and fringed round with party-coloured worsted bobs", the old campaigning trunk filled with wigs and laced regimentals, the parlour door which "three drops of oil with a feather and a smart stroke with a hammer would have mended of its squeaking", and that "small crevice formed by a bad joint in the chimney piece" ...

And with what a deft and masterly stroke he has etched in his characters—the personality of Uncle Toby for instance with all its engaging idiosyncrasies! We can see him there by the fireside "smoking his pipe in mute contemplation of a new pair of black plush breeches which he had got on." We can see there this gallant old soldier, who had "never looked steadfastly into a woman's eye and would often tell my father in the simplicity of his heart that it was almost as bad as talking bawdy. 'And what if it is?' my Father would say." We seem actually to hear the simple intonation of his voice when the Squire, who was always hugely tickled by the subtlety of his own discourses, was explaining that according to Ficinas's comment upon Velasius there are two kinds of love, the one rational and the other natural. " 'Pray, brother', quoth my uncle Toby, 'what has a man who believes in God to do with this?' "

What inimitable scenes! How droll, how philosophical, how vastly humorous is the announcement of young master Bob's death in the kitchen.

> "—My young master in London is dead!" said Obadiah.—We had a fat, foolish scullion, my father, I think, kept her for her simplicity. "He is dead," said Obadiah, "he is certainly dead." – *"So am not I," said the foolish scullion.*

Take the dialogue again between Dr. Slop and Susannah when for reasons of modesty that maiden expresses herself as unwilling to hold a light for the old leech as he is busy with a cataplasm for that intimate portion of Tristram's body which has been injured by the fall of the window sash. "Hold the candle and shut your eyes," cries the exasperated sesquipedal homoeopath. "That's one of your popish shifts," cries Susannah. "'Tis better," says Slop with a nod, "than no shift at all, young woman."

There is a kind of downright outspokenness about Sterne's style which is peculiarly refreshing to certain readers. Consider how he describes the knots that closed so invincibly the mouth of Dr. Slop's green baize obstetrical bag. They were not bow-knots, "but by these knots I am speaking of, may it please your reverence to believe, that I mean good honest, devilish tight, hard, knots, made bona fide, as Obadiah made his."

How excellent also is the description of the predicament of the Abbess of Andouillets and Margarita the novice deserted by their "chirping joyous" muleteer who had sneaked into a wayside tavern for a "scantling of Burgundy and a little chit chat".

> By virtue of the muleteer's last stroke the mules had gone quietly on, following their own consciences up the hill till they had conquered about half of it, when the elder of them, a shrewd crafty old devil, at the turn of the angle, giving a side glance, and no muleteer behind her – "By my fig!" said she swearing, "I'll go no further'."—"And if I do," replied the other, "they can make a drum of my hide."

It is extraordinary with what a gay deportment Sterne confronted the final issue of life; though his lank lean figure was emaciated by consumption, he trod ever with a light and jocund step. "Death herself knocked at my door—ye bade him come again; and in so gay a tone of careless indifference, did ye do it, that he doubted of his commission." ...

And who shall doubt his wisdom? "Time", he cries "wastes too fast;—the days and hours of it more precious, my dear Jenny, than the rubies about thy neck, are flying ever over our heads like light clouds of a windy day, never to return more—everything presses on—whilst thou art twisting that lock,—see! it grows grey."

The last seven years of Sterne's life were as clamorous as the others had been monotonous. He travelled abroad. "*Qui le diable est cet homme-la, ce Chevalier Shandy*?" exclaimed the French, astonished by a wit and spirit "too free for the solemn colour of his coat". When in England, he spent his time between London and Coxwold. The latter place he called "a sweet retirement in comparison of Sutton". Sometimes he is happy driving about behind "his two long-tailed horses" or "eating my fowl and my trouts and my cream and my strawberries", and then again he is in but a pettish humour writing to his old friend Hall-Stevenson. "I rejoice you are in London, rest you there in peace; here 'tis the devil—a thin death-doing pestiferous north-east wind blows in a direct line fresh upon me in this cuckoldy retreat." ...

Back again in London he falls in love with his famous Eliza, whose husband was a certain Mr Draper, a counsellor of Bombay, and "a gentleman very much respected in that quarter of the globe". He writes a journal to her and several indiscreet letters. "My wife cannot live long ... and I know not the woman I should like so well for her substitute than yourself."

Eliza at last goes back to Mr. Draper in India. "Indeed it was high time she should be off," comments Thackeray ill-naturedly. Very different apparently was the ecclesiastical attitude of that day, for we notice that Sterne writes to Eliza that the Bishop of Cork, warm-hearted and generous prelate, had not only shown his goodwill by offering Sterne a living in Ireland but "only hopes to join us together forever". How Mr. Draper and Mrs. Sterne would have regarded a desire so detached from their interests must be imagined.

The return of his daughter Lydia to England "as accomplished a slut as France can produce" somewhat consoled Sterne for his loss. It was this young lady who did so much to damage her father's reputation by her haphazard publication of his letters and private papers after his death. That she should have taken her father's venial indiscretions over lightly is hardly surprising, since during her stay in France she had constantly attended Fetes Champetres with none other than the eccentric Marquis of Sade as her host. Eventually she married a Frenchman called Medaille—"they do say there were pressing reasons for it"—and with less good fortune than the exacting entertainer of her youth, died fifteen years later by the guillotine in the Revolution.

In January, 1767 [1768], Sterne was back in London, once more crowding his life with fashionable engagements. "My father's children were not made to last long," he had once said, and though his zest for life remained undiminished his health grew worse and worse. At last he was fain to take to his bed "at the sign of the Silk Bag in old Bond Street". "My spirits are gone," he wrote—" 'tis a bad omen!"

On the eighteenth of March, his name being mentioned at a crowded dinner table, a certain Mr. Crawford sent his footman to inquire how he did. The servant reached the sick man's chamber at the very moment of his death. With his wasted arm raised above his head as though to ward off the approach of something, the dying man uttered three words: "It has come!"

Sterne had always wished to die "in some decent inn where the few cold offices I wanted, would be purchased with a few guineas". It is reported that those whose duty it was to prepare his body for the shroud, robbed it of all its possessions even to the gold links on his lace cuffs. Already abandoned and forgotten as he was by his powerful acquaintanceships, only two mourners were to be found to follow his corpse to its resting place in the graveyard near Tyburn. Doubtless the mean appearance of the funeral procession was responsible for what happened later.

The great wheel of time had indeed one more ghastly revolution to make, the grave was rifled by body snatchers or resurrection men, who exhumed the body and smuggled it up to Cambridge. A week later, while an operation was being performed on a dead body by Mr Collignon, B.M., of Trinity, one of those present suddenly

fainted away. He had recognized in the subject under scientific examination the irresistible, whimsical, unmistakable features of the author of *Tristram Shandy*.

With thanks to Peter Foss, collector and cataloguer over many years of articles by Llewelyn for periodicals and newspapers. (See his definitive work on LlP, A Study of Llewelyn Powys: his literary achievement and personal philosophy (1991).) *Following last year's* Diary of a Sherborne Schoolboy (1903), *Peter Foss's editing of the LlP Diaries continues with the 1908 Diary due to be published this year (title* 'The Diary of a Reluctant Teacher'), *with the 1909–12 diaries appearing in due course.*

PF adds: Llewelyn's essay for the American *Bookman* was his only essay on Sterne. It has never been reprinted. Llewelyn first read *Tristram Shandy* in November 1910 at Clavadel, after his serious set-back of July-August of that year. He quotes extensively from it in his diary with occasional comments. On November 18th 1910 he wrote: "Read *Tristram Shandy*, was fortified and made brave by Sterne's courageous laughter." (Sterne was a fellow-consumptive.) Llewelyn's copy of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, given to him in 1904 by ARP, is in The Powys Society's Bissell Collection, now held at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester.

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JCP to Llewelyn

10th July 1930 (from Hillsdale)
... When your Epicurean volume [*Impassioned Clay*] is really off your hands I do beg and implore you to let your next book be in your *Skin for Skin* and *Bridlegoose* style, thus bringing back to you that large coterie of admirers who have rallied (tho' with some reluctance) but for your sake, round your controversial and philosophical books, but whose secret devoted part is all for Llewelyn as an essayist, a stylist, a Montaigne, a Lamb, an author who like Lamb or Stevenson or Cowley, or Sir T. B[rowne], 'endears himself', or like Chaucer or Sterne or Goldsmith in a rather different way, to a following who come to a personal feeling for 'm, deep and lasting. ...

3rd November 1935 (from Corwen)
... I do so like to think of your reading Rabelais, and also *Tristram Shandy*, which is so perfect where the skipping jester in tattered cassock doesn't try, with his chin into his critics, to expatiate in the style of Rabelais. What could be sillier, or less humorous, than all that Slawkenbergius business? Oh how sad it is when a great genius does not know his *rôle*! ...

(Letters to his brother Llewelyn, *vol II, pp.116, 203*)

JCP and Sterne

The two introductions to Sterne commissioned by Macdonald—welcome income, £200 for the pair—were written in 1947–8, the period following Rabelais, *of the end of* Porius *before revision, and the later essays in* Obstinate Cymric. *JCP's shorter preface to* A Sentimental Journey *contains more of Sterne's biography and references to other writers on Sterne, as does Llewelyn's essay for* The Bookman (*USA*) *of twenty-five years earlier. The excerpts from JCP's* Tristram Shandy *below are about one-third of the original. For reasons of space there has been some re-paragraphing.*

One Hundred Best Books (*1916*) had recommended Sterne's two books as ones 'to be enjoyed slowly and lingeringly', for the 'shrewd and ironical wisdom, gentle and light-fingered and redolent of evasive sentiment evoked from these digressive and wanton pages ... For the Epicurean in literature ... the unfailing charm and furtive beauty of his unanalyzable style ... its winnowed purity ... a kind of elfish grace ...' mixed with 'a certain homely, almost Dutch domesticity, quaint and mellow and a little wanton ...'

To his sister Katie (*July–Nov 1947*): My agent Mr P and my Publisher Mr Greenwood of John Lane Bodley Head have allowed me to accept M.Elwin's offer as the editor of Macdonald's Publishing House to write for the sum of yes for the sum of £50 a PREFACE to Sterne's Sentimental Journey with as many allusions as I like to Tristram Shandy!! I am thrilled by this as I've never written a word on Sterne and yet I like him very particularly well. He is my favourite author of the 18th century ... Walter Sichel's book dated 1910 on Sterne is very very very very good. In fact thrilling. It makes Sterne out to be a sort of queer & funny mixture of Llewelyn and myself! At least in certain peculiarities!

... I am ... reading carefully and putting markers in the best places of the vols—for it is Phyllis's old 1790 edition in 8 vols or 10 vols given by her father Mr Playter—of Sterne's Tristram Shandy ... for the Publisher (a Mr Harvey) ... agreed so much with my tone on Sentimental Journey that he doubled the money paid for it & now for the same double money orders me another essay ...

(Powys to Sea-Eagle *pp.203, 208, 210.*)

To Louis Wilkinson *(Jan–March 1948):* I've been struggling now for about a couple of months (Does that strike you as out of order and contrary to all proportion or not?) on writing what I do so want to be the best review or essay—It is of course really a Preface for Malcom Elwin's Publisher Macdonald on a new edition of 'Tristram Shandy', but when you think of my 1.Old-Maidish Fastidiousness 2.Idealism 3.Romanticism 4.Weakness for long thrilling exciting whatever's-going-to-happen-next Stories—Stories that are very spell-binding good narratives—can you imagine anthing more like a Tour de Force for a person like me? ... there is no really subtle or penetrating essay on Sterne's 'T.Shandy', so this is a challenge to my

innate Boswellism to try to fill the gap ... I pray [Mr Harvey] won't turn it down or hold it to be too airy-fairy ...
(Feb. 27th 1956) ... Yes, I'm a friend to every easygoing clergyman like Yorick Sterne and like Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield ... (Letters to Louis Wilkinson, *pp. 243–4, 352*)

To Ichiro Hara *(March 1957):* ... The humorous tone of Kwangtze strikes me as having its own profound wisdom ... there is something about the tone of Kwang that has long reminded me of the humorous passages—with their undertone of infinite pathos—in Sterne's Tristram Shandy ... (Letters to a Japanese Friend, *p. 62*)

John Cowper Powys

from
Introduction to Tristram Shandy *by Laurence Sterne*
Macdonald Illustrated Classics, 1949,
illustrated by Brian Cobb

If there is any book in English Literature harder to analyse, more difficult to dissect, more evasive under a critic's microscope, than *Tristram Shandy,* I have yet to learn its name. Some might even question whether it can properly be called a novel at all; though if not a novel it would surely be hard to decide in what technical category of writing it ought to be placed.

And there is reason for this. Deep in the most intimate fibre of its author's identity there stirs a wanton and wilful revolt against all the recognized rules usually observed in the writing of any kind of fiction, indeed you might almost say in the writing of any kind of book.

Allowing this queer creation then, whatever it may be called, to be a unique curiosity of English humour, in the sense of being a diverting epitome of the endearing freakishness and pathetic eccentricity of an insular race, it is a fascinating exploration to try to unearth the various compulsions, conditions, chances of which the fairy-muse, who watched over its birth, made so memorable a use.

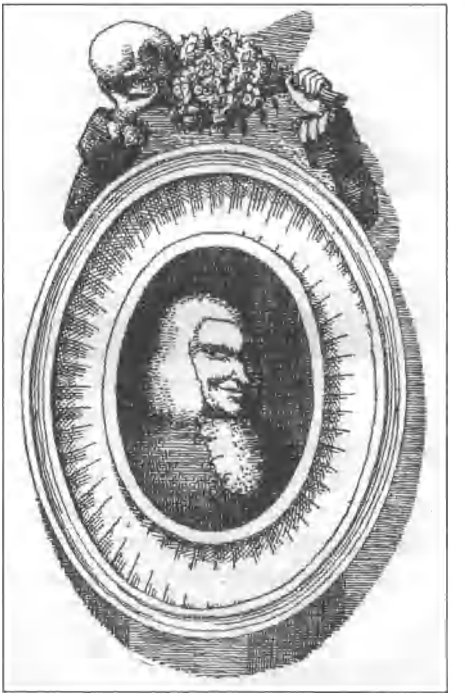
From the peculiarities of Sterne's parents and his adventurous barrack-room childhood we may certainly account for Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim; but my own secret feeling is that it was mainly out of the perilous stuff of his own nature that lie moulded the engaging and extravagant personality of Walter Shandy, while both Parson Yorick and young Tristram betray in every move they make the seed of their spiritual begetter.

But granting that Sterne's military engendering with the motley procession of simple and kindly soldiers that passed before his childish eyes account for Toby and Trim, while from his private reservoir of originality he fished up the figures of Walter Shandy and Parson Yorick, and even supplied what was wanting to enable the less substantial eidolon of young Tristram himself to bleed when the window-sash

circumcized him, and to blush when he rallied Maria about comparing him with her goat, there still remains a great deal quite unaccounted for. There remains in fact that undulant mass, that heaving Sargasso sea of metaphysical fantasy which second only to the appearing and disappearing of the human lineaments that show through it, makes up the chief bulk of the book's substance.

Now it is this portion of this unique work which owes so much to the particular fling of the dice that linked Sterne with the Church of England and with the University of Cambridge. A provocative essay could be written, rousing some of our most insular and most deep-lodged prejudices, on the debt owed by our literature to the Established Church; and owed to it just because it *is* "established" and its evangelical freedom and easy-going humanism safely protected from the raging wolves of both Protestant and Catholic orthodoxy by two such stalwart and secular watch-dogs as the Lion and the Unicorn ! Such an essay could surely draw as many witnesses on behalf of this debt from the sceptical eighteenth century as from the mystical century that preceded it.

It was at Cambridge too that Sterne met for the first time his fellow-Yorkshireman, Hall-Stevenson, the *Eugenius* of Tristram Shandy and the collector at Skelton Castle of the sort of facetiously erudite and ambiguously erotic curiosities of literature that have so often been an itching temptation to collegiate scholars of much leisure and



Frontispiece by Brian Cobb to Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey *(Macdonald Illustrated Classics, 1948), also with an Introduction by John Cowper Powys.*

little faith. But no amount of county or college or even cathedral influences piled up upon a childhood of military vagabondage can really solve this most fascinating of aesthetic riddles, the sudden appearance, full-blown and completely mature, in a sporting parson of forty-five, with less than ten years more to live, of such a perfect phenomenon of pure genius, as the style of Laurence Sterne.

One of our great stylists he undoubtedly is. You have not to read far in Lamb or Hazlitt, not to speak of some of the most felicitous of our moderns, to measure the hypnotic insidiousness of the man's daring and dainty touch. It *seems* so natural, so hap-hazard, so spontaneous, to write with this sort of ease. And yet, as Spinoza says of true philosophy, how infinitely difficult !

Well! if it cannot be regarded as inevitable that a childhood spent in camp-following Chudleigh's regiment of foot, a youth in the boon-companionship of the author of *Crazy Tales,* an early manhood in the fulfilment of a vicar's obligations, diversified by helping an over-beneficed uncle in the persecution of Jacobites, and finally a middle-age in matrimonial misunderstandings with a cousin of the great Mrs. Montagu, should result in a man becoming one of the most original writers of his age, in what direction *are* we to look for the clue?

In what direction indeed? How are we to explain the phenomenon that a fiddling, flirting, shooting, riding, amateur-farmer parson, whose only clerkly virtue lay in his decorous use of the Book of Common Prayer, had only to decide on finding a more congenial way of increasing his daughter's dowry than by fooling with agriculture, had only in fact to dip his pen in the ink, than the bewitching enormity of human eccentricity struck him with such force that in the inspiration of it he became the most fantastically *English* of all our humorists between Shakespeare and Dickens! How in fact did it happen that a good-natured vicar with a tendency to tuberculosis, whose practice with the pen, save for one not very amusing Cathedral-Close satire, consisted solely in the composition of sensible but extremely un-mystical sermons, proved himself, the moment he began writing, one of the great masters of our literature ?

How did he pick up this perfect style of his? Well, I think the answer that would come nearest to the truth would be that he had been all his conscious life struggling towards this style, only struggling towards it in other mediums than that of print. Hadn't he been approximating to it in his fiddling, in his lovemaking, in his soliloquies with himself, in his intercourse with animals, and above all in the unending flow of his high-spirited original talk ?

Hadn't he been all his conscious days, a rapturous and ecstatic life-lover, the peculiar sensitivity of whose nerves enabled him to respond to the spectacle of life with a feverish zest? I ought perhaps to say the spectacle of *human* life; for Sterne's response to the poetry of landscape and scenery was, in the strictest sense of the word, *classically* limited. What he liked best was what the mystical nature-lovers

have always liked least, a well-tilled and fertile plain! He admits this preference freely enough, nor feels the smallest shame about it. In fact he maintains that a cultivated plain, abounding in corn and fruit and milk and honey and oil and wine, together with freedom to wander at large across it, is the best of all the gifts that the "Bon Dieu," or as Sterne would say, "the Best of Beings," has bestowed on her children.

Never I suspect, has there been an instinctive Deist—for the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity were practically non-existent in his personal theology—with less mysticism in him, whether Christian or pagan, than the middle-aged vicar who in the year 1759 was brought to London from Yorkshire in Squire Croft's coach.

But the cough he is always cursing had already dug itself in. The seeds of death were entangled in the laurel-wreath that, led by Garrick, the whole world of fashion now flung into the lap of that dusty cassock. It was like one of those funereal symbols in monumental marble of which his epoch was so fond; a buxom angel on one hand lifting him Parnassus-ward while, on the other, some bony image of mortality, all ribs and polished horror, beckoned him to his tomb.

Cough or no cough the first thing he did when he reached London was to rush, without breaking his fast, and followed shortly by his host who peered into the window to see what reception he got, to the office of his Publisher. He got a rare reception; and came skipping out to assure his friends that his fortune was made. And in a sense it was.

Nine years, "nine little years, nine drops of time" were still left him; and then—well! *then* he had posterity, that is ourselves, to pay his debt to Charon, his sop to Cerberus, and, even if we cannot "relax Pluto's brow," to bribe Hermes to lead him straight to the feet of Persephone. For he was ever a Watteau figure, a Pierrot-Abbé, sighing to embark for Cytherean shores; and, from the moment he first "took orders" to the moment he made the climacteric journey in Squire Croft's coach, destiny had never ceased beckoning him.

Not all the great comedians have had a call so clear to allow their natural humanism to shake off so completely the gravity of divine discipline. "The man Sterne" was native-born to cap-and-bells. What in fact inspired him from the cradle was an urge to that sort of Dionysian self-expression the defect of whose quality betrays itself in childhood as "showing off," in boyhood as acting the fool, in youth as playing the devil, in middle-age as exhibitionism and in old age as what might be called "the dance of Tiresias". This orgiastic cerebralism, whose antics contain the vibrations of both tragedy and comedy, can express itself through other mediums than literature; and all his life Sterne had indulged in it. In his fiddling, in his sketching, in his talking, in his preaching, in his caricaturing, in all his quips and cranks, he had already tried to express what finally, in deliberate imitation of Rabelais' Pantagruelism, he came to call *the spirit of Shandeism*.

It was this element in his work that Goethe noted and praised just as he praised Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* for its "lofty and benevolent irony and serene indulgence to human faults and frailties"; but to express in a humorous and pathetic tale about obstinately eccentric people the ecstatic life-love, or *amor fati*, of a Dionysian embrace of existence is a much subtler undertaking than the handling of a well-contrived plot in a vein of benevolent irony. In fact the curious and unique quality of *Tristram Shandy* is that it is *not* ironical.

Sterne is the most artfully artless and the least ironic of all the writers of the eighteenth-century. In this sense he seems hardly to belong to that epoch at all. Indeed I am not sure that his peculiar brand of artless art, with its complete lack of anything approaching the sarcastic or sardonic, is not akin to certain transparent and realistic tones devoid of all mitigating atmosphere that with their horrible simplicity have recently startled us in certain modern literary experiments!

In considering *Tristram Shandy* as a unique work of genius it may be noted that where it differs from such a perfectly planned, cleverly developed, and neatly polished-off story like *Tom Jones* it does so, in spite of its so much less weight, as do *Pantagruel* and *Don Quixote*, those two books that its author was forever praising and quoting. That is to say it aims at the "organic" rather than the "architectonic."

There are in fact many passages in *Tristram Shandy* that could be called tedious and long-drawn-out, quite apart from Slawkenbergius and his Crazy Castle confederates. And yet such passages play the same sort of part in the general power of the work as certain dull passages do in *Don Quixote* and *Pantagruel*. Such tedious, undramatic and even ugly passages help indescribably in buttressing up the convincingness of the rest. They resemble heavily-jointed boughs, stretching out so clumsily, so awkwardly from the main trunk as to spoil *at first glance* the symmetry of the trees; and yet, after our knowledge of the magic of the spot has grown into familiarity, we begin to be aware that these blank spaces, these lapses into plain surfaces, are, and have always been, an essential part of trees' inherent identity.

The living growth that turns into *Tristram Shandy* has in fact much more resemblance to *Pantagruel* and *Don Quixote*, than to what Fielding so massively hammered out and knocked together in *Tom Jones*. This can be seen in the way the story expands and stretches backwards and forwards, shooting out in every possible direction from its earth-root in Shandy Hall. It was from this same Yorkshire domicile, for instance, that Tristram's great-great-grandfather in the very Jack-boots that Corporal Trim appropriated to cut into siege-mortars for Uncle Toby's mimic war, rode forth to fight in the real battle of Marston Moor.

Now we would be hard put to it I think to find any story, except a few of the world's universal fairy-tales and certain bible-stories from the Old Testament, whose main characters and chief events we are compelled to *take for granted* in the way we are compelled to take these things for granted in *Tristram Shandy*.

How has Sterne worked this? Largely I think by a method directly opposite to the one generally in use by what are called "realistic" writers. What he does is to waste no time establishing by elaborate description the appearance of his persons and their surroundings. He boldly assumes them to be there, and at once begins philosophizing about them *as if they were there*. He buzzes round their heads like a fly; he scampers about their feet like a mouse; he watches them as Reynold's Portrait of him watches us still, with the look of one who enjoys a comedy he has seen a thousand times.

A comedy? Up to a certain point. But there come moments when the rules of comedy are too strict for him and he turns the whole business into a Circus. But not always is he driven to this. He sometimes has recourse to another trick which is entirely his own. I refer to the "humour," as we English call it, of those aggravating moments when our personal dignity is impinged upon by some impish malignity, it almost seems, in the sub-consciousness of the Inanimate. Take the scene, for example, when the sharp angle of the old garden-wall causes the overthrow of Doctor Slop by Obadiah. But the book, like the domestic life of us all, is full of the sort of accidents that plague us the more rather than the less for being ridiculous and laughable.

I wouldn't dare to press the point unduly; but it seems to me, when you think of the portentous irony of Fielding and the diabolic sarcasm of Swift, that the humour of Sterne is revealed as something inherent in the cracks and pores and wrinkles and creases of the very skin with which life is covered. You cannot ironize it or diabolize it away. It inheres. It is the skin of the living stuff whereof we are made. Fielding mocks us. Swift flagellates us. But it is Steme, liking us the better for being the fools we are, who is the true humorist. Indeed if you were to eliminate from *Tristram Shandy* all its tiresome monkey-tricks, all its elaborate indecencies that are neither provocative nor comic, there would still remain, between the begetting of Tristram and the falling in love of Tristram's uncle, not a satire upon human flesh and blood, nor a denunciation of human flesh and blood, but a profoundly humorous representation of this queer creation.

[...]

... What effect does this great illusive whimsical book really have upon us over and above the entertainment? Does it not seem that for all our crafty and worldly reserve however artlessly or lightly, or with a head full of sophisticated conceit, we tap the Shandean cask, the effect of its contents on us must be to lessen whatever faith we possess in the power of moralists and to increase whatever faith we possess in the power of instinctive pleasures,—call them hobby-horses if you will—*to soothe the hurts of life*?

In Sterne's little microcosm of the world there is no need for any monstrous villainy nor for any egregious hypocrisy such as we are offered in Fielding and Dickens. Life in its most natural and simple accidents has the power to make us suffer quite enough. Nature's ordinary shocks and thoroughly good people's inevitable

blunders can do all that is required to test our endurance and turn us into philosophers or drive us mad.

If I dared risk the peril of drawing that ghostly and Puckish forefinger in Reynolds's portrait from the great humorist's own brow till it pointed in my direction by using such a term at all, I would say that just as his "message" warns us to "nurse no extravagant hopes" and to be indulgent and pitiful to all flesh; so the supreme device of his artistry as a man of letters, a device from which our younger writers can yet learn something, is the expression of the most intimate feelings through the movements and the immobilities of people's bodies.

Yorick riding "so lean, so lank, so sorry a jade", but noting how the world wags as he does so, Trim reading the sermon on Conscience; Slop, his thumb tied up in a handkerchief, pronouncing his Church's Excommunication on Obadiah; my father stretched motionless across his bed with one arm and one foot swinging loose, Trim dropping his hat on the ground in the kitchen; my Mother listening at the parlour-door; Mrs. Wadman looking down upon a slit she had been darning up in her apron, when "my uncle Toby ... in three plain words—though not before he was sat down—nor after he was sat down—but as he was sitting down, told her, *'he was in love'*"—these are only a few instances of a method of presentment which slides into our consciousness the moment we hear Sterne's name.

One beautiful example of the sort of farcical outrage to our fleshly dignity in which Sterne was such a master, and which concerns the kind of struggle with a recalcitrant garment with which most men—I mustn't speak of women—are only too familiar, is the scene where "my father"—and Tristram devotes more than a chapter to this incident—makes the mistake of

> taking his wig from off his head with his right hand, and with his *left* pulling out a striped India handkerchief from his right coat pocket, in order to rub his head, as he argued the point with my uncle Toby—

with the result that "when my uncle Toby discovered the transverse zig-zaggery of my father's approaches towards it"—that is say to the striped handkerchief—it brought into his mind the angles of the traverses of the gate of St. Nicolas where he received his wound upon the groin; and indeed if all the blood in my father's body hadn't "seemed to rush up into his face", the obsessed captain would have gone so far as to have rung the bell for Trim to bring him his map of Namur.

It is worth noting how Sterne refuses to allow that element of *complacency*, which we English know only too well in the literature of eccentric benevolence, to blunt the tragic edge of his response to life.

> But to think, may it please your honour, continued Trim, ... of two virtuous lads with hearts as warm in their bodies ... and fall into such evils!—poor Tom! to be tortured ... honest Dick Johnson's soul to be scourged out of his body, for the ducats another

man put in his knapsack! . . . these are Misfortunes . . . worth lying down and crying over!

— My father could not help blushing.

[. . .]

Few of us have a Trim to summon at these agitating crises, even if we have "a map of Namur" for him to fetch; but from the chronicle of these honest lives where one man gets off his hobby-horse the moment the other is seriously upset, and the other displays a Shandean indulgence to his relative's humours beyond the indulgence of philosophers, there reaches us a breath, an air, an atmosphere, that leaves behind it as it floats away nothing more definable than a few stray feathers and a wisp of thistledown; but gossamer-light as these indications are, they may keep us in heart better perhaps than weightier tokens, as we hope against hope for a kindlier world.

Thomas Merton
John Cowper Powys—In Praise of Books

A review of Enjoyment of Literature *by the 23-year old* ***Thomas Merton****, future Trappist monk, poet, and writer on Christianity and Buddhism, in* The New York Herald Tribune, *November 20, 1938. The cover of the original American edition of* Enjoyment *bore the slogan 'Adventures Among the Masterpieces from Homer to Hardy'.*

When Mr. Powys calls his book *The Enjoyment of Literature* he really means what he says. Not only does he take us through all the rich fields of poetry, drama, and fiction from Aeschylus to Hardy and from Job to Proust, but his introduction is, itself, one of the most delightful and enthusiastic essays in praise of books that it is possible to find anywhere.

Yet he has set himself not only the task of celebrating the wonders of great literature but also that of finding out the philosophies of the great writers he praises. These two threads of investigation and appreciation run through the whole book. He ties them together in the conclusion, where he speaks briefly of literature and life. So, rather than a collection of random essays, the work is a well-knit unity.

This, of course, gives him another opportunity to enlarge upon the philosophy, or rather religion, for which he is well known: that is, a vague paganism that detests all doctrine, all metaphysics, all scientific rationalism, and only seeks to enjoy sensuous

and emotional richness wherever it can be found. Now Mr. Powys is entitled to talk about his beliefs if he wants to, but we must remember that the judgments he makes, in its light, are not strictly speaking literary criticism.

So, when he tempers his praise of the *Divine Comedy* by calling it "wicked" and "diabolical" he means that the undefeatable logic which dooms pagans to Hell is distasteful to him because, as a pagan, he would rather see the pagans in Paradise. At the same time he does not speak of Goethe's Faust as diabolical, but on the contrary, he looks to it for "assistance in our mental and emotional quandaries." He prefers the way Goethe's vague pantheism understands the world to the kind of understanding offered, for example, by Dante's Catholicism or, on the other hand, by any positivistic or rationalistic system you would care to mention. Then the orgies of *Walpurgisnacht* and the whole dark mystical universe peopled with demons and satyrs are more congenial to his own unsystematized mythology than Christian orthodoxy or cold, scientific skepticism. But, of course, he does not decide the greatness of a work of art by the beliefs it expresses. In fact, for him, the three greatest of all writers are Homer, Shakespeare, and Rabelais. In Rabelais it is not only the man's boundless appetite for life that appeals to him, but also his bookishness, the delight in learning for its own sake that makes him truly what he is.

The task of discovering Shakespeare's message is, at best, an unrewarding one, but Mr. Powys embarks on it with the excuse that if we can determine what Shakespeare believed, we may, possibly, find out why his personality is completely submerged in his plays.

And the reason is, he says, that Shakespeare's philosophy was a mixture of agnosticism and superstition and was therefore so completely the philosophy of the common man that he not only easily projected himself into his characters but became entirely lost in them. By this token Shakespeare uttered his philosophy through Hamlet and through Polonius, too, and contradicted himself so often that we may wonder if he believed everything or nothing at all. And this is not very helpful.

From the first pages of the introduction the reader notices the similarity of Mr. Powys' style to Herman Melville's, and, indeed, in his essay on Melville the author claims to be a "congenital disciple of the particular kind of imagination, both mystic and realistic, both monstrous and grotesque, that was so natural to Melville". So his analysis of Melville is very interesting indeed. He dwells particularly on Meville's "humor," a humor that never aims at being funny but is rather a great naive buffoonery, expressed in rich, fantastic language, with undertones of inarticulate pessimism. He mentions the obvious comparison between Melville and Sir Thomas Browne: it is a pity he did not contrast him with Rabelais.

This is by no means a book that pretends to teach us how to read. It is addressed to those who already love books, and they will certainly enjoy it. It is not necessary to agree with everything he says: Mr. Powys has chosen a subject in which an author may say what he pleases, provided only he loves his subject and talks about it well.

Arnold Bennett
from
The Evening Standard Years : Books and Persons 1930

30 October 1930 : **Eve and the Lipstick**

In the English language a word may mean anything. For instance, "valuable" and "invaluable" are continually used to convey the same idea. For another instance you might suppose that "small" could mean nothing but small. But those experienced in receiving hospitality know with certainty that the word "small" on a party invitation card invariably means large. And take the word "sensuality", which may mean non-intellectuality or nonspirituality, or self-indulgence, or general carnality, or sexual carnality in particular. The last two are the usually accepted meanings.

Now **John Cowper Powys** (author of *Wolf Solent* and other exceedingly long novels) has just published a book under the title *In Defence of Sensuality* (Gollancz, 7*s.* 6*d.*), and the title is wildly misleading. Mr. Powys tries to defend it and fails. A far more suitable title would have been *An Attack on Sensuality.* After all, words intended to be read by the public ought to be used in the sense in which the public uses them. Mr. Powys's book is as spiritual and as disdainful of nearly all that "sensuality" signifies for the public as any new book I have read for years. It is a really interesting book, provocative, challenging; and in order to make room for a new ideal it cuts right across the leading ideals which inspire the activities of the majority of mankind. (Not that the new ideal is really new; it has merely been forgotten.)

Mr. Powys would minimise the machinery of life, to the advantage of genuine "living". He thinks that most of us never fully "live". He says: "Life itself, the purpose ... of life, does not even begin until both the tiresomeness of 'work' *and the tiresomeness of 'Play'* are laid aside, and we obtain leisure to *enjoy* those dreamy, sensual, imaginative feelings out of which our inmost identity or interior 'ego' weaves its unique material-spiritual cocoon." (My italics.)

There is a great deal in this theory, for both men and women. Men wear themselves out to obtain the means of physical existence, and they wear themselves out in trying to "keep fit", by dint of games and sports, and they have no time to live till they are old and safe. and then they are too tired to use either their brains or their emotions for the purpose of living. Then they die at the age of three score and fifteen, having been not alive for seventy-five years.

As for women, their case is more complicated. I have never understood them; nobody has, not even themselves. All I know about them is that they are apparently actuated by the idea of pleasing, the means to which seem to be chiefly physical and chiefly to concern the face. They "make up" before starting out on an evening of "living"—that is, pleasing. They ride with you for five minutes, then they vanish so that they may reconstruct the face again. Halfway through the meal they unfasten a bag of tools and reconstruct the face a third time, quite openly. It is as if they said:

"Kindly note that there is no deception. My lips are not in fact vermilion. I tint them, and I am honest about it." (We knew it already) ...
[*more about "revolting unguents"*]

To return to Mr Powys. He divides the universe into the self and the not-self, and he defines full living as the pleasurable, sometimes ecstatic, contemplation of the latter by the former. In other words living is thought. "The real purpose of life is simply and solely the arrangement of thought." And it is! Mr. Powys advocates egotism. He is against utter devotion to "humanity" as an end. (And surely it is true that nearly all "lovers of humanity" are very hard on individuals!) He admits that we "owe" humanity for food, shelter, protection. We owe it daily labour, honesty and kindliness. But "what we do *not* owe it is the thoughts, feelings and sensations with which we contemplate the universe. These are our own. These are thc raison d'etre of our existence."

Mr Powys has invented some telling phrases, such as "The bully-boys of the Status Quo". And he has some startling arguments, such as the argument against the disastrous effects of too much humour. (He points out that Jesus did not employ humour.) Finally, stating with correctness that every man is fundamentally lonely, he preaches the exploitation of this loneliness. "Alone, alone, alone! The grand secret of cosmic happiness lies in growing more and more deeply aware of this loneliness", and embracing it. I was reminded of that sentence when reading Mr Louis Bromfield's new novel, *Twenty-Four Hours* (Cassells, 7*s.* 6*d.*), in which the old hero has so completely missed life that he is afraid of loneliness, and to avoid it invites all manner of tenth-rate persons to share his table.

My account of *In Defence of Sensuality* is inadequate, necessarily. The book is full of original stimulation. It is a disturbing message to the age (which age, however, in the respects above indicated, is no worse than other ages), and it deserves to be read by those who possess any intellectual curiosity. The writing of it is a trifle over-elaborate, and hence the book is hardly one that "reads itself." Another disadvantage of it is that, in addition to being misnamed, it has neither table of contents, nor chaptcr-titles, nor page-headings. It is a sea shockingly uncharted ...
[*more about Louis Bromfield; the next piece also seems relevant*]

6th November 1930: **Long Novels—I Myself Am That Sinner**

Something must be said about the "modern" fashion of very long novels, which has lately become a favourite topic of journalism ...