

★ TWO MEETINGS ★ APRIL & JUNE ★  
★ ★ SEE PAGE 2 ★ ★

## *Editorial*

Aspects of religion seem to have crept up in this number, starting with Bill Keith's investigation into another of JCP's early mentors, W. J. Williams 'The Catholic'. Williams turns out to have been an active member of the Roman Catholic Modernist *vs* the Vatican controversy of the turn of the last century, which caused great heartache and hardship among those attempting to believe two irreconcilable things at once – something our multiversal JCP would have little trouble with. The letters of Margaret Powys, living in Bath where their son Littleton was a priest, to JCP in 1945–6 (when both were in their 70s, and JCP in hospital) cast a happily affectionate light on their (at least her) later years. Llewelyn's atheistical philosophy of course raised hackles, with James Douglas attacking *The Pathetic Fallacy* (1930) in Biblical eloquence rivalling Llewelyn's own.

The latest instalment of Theodore's letters (1924–36) to Ottoline Morrell leads to the portrait of TF by Augustus John which with modern technology we can now all view at a touch. Patrick Quigley goes on a literary pilgrimage to Phudd, and Stephen Powys Marks gives us a sidelight onto his parents' association with the painter Meninsky, together with other family photographs and portraits – young Isobel (on cover) regarding us with a truly Powysian penetration.

We have a nice anthology of JCP references, with associations from Mozart to

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Henry Green, from early Californian reminiscence to a Blog by a media tycoon. The usual preview of the Conference strikes into Glastonbury territory both familiar and new; and the two Spring meetings beckon to Cambridge (24th April) and Dorchester (5th June).

The *Newsletter* is a communal effort, and the Editor is especially grateful to all who have contributed and helped with this one.

## *Two Powys Days*

This year we plan to hold two Powys Days, in **Cambridge on Saturday, 24th April**, and in **Dorchester on Saturday 5th June**.

Anyone interested is welcome. There is no charge apart from lunch (optional), but a contribution to tea/coffee would be appreciated. Numbers for lunch need to be booked, so **please contact** the secretary, Chris Thomas, as soon as possible, to tell him you wish to attend either event (or both), or for more information.

E-mail to [chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk) or write to the address on the inside page of the *Newsletter*.

### ***Cambridge, Saturday 24th April***

The day will be held at Michaelhouse, Trinity Street, CB2 1SU – the former St Michael's church opposite Gonville and Caius College ([www.michaelhouse.org.uk](http://www.michaelhouse.org.uk)). Morning coffee, lunch and tea will be available in Michaelhouse itself. Space is limited and we need to book these **in advance**.

There will be talks by Theo Dunnet and by Chris Gostick, and we also plan to visit Sidney Sussex College (200 yards away), where the chapel was redesigned by Thomas Henry Lyon, John Cowper's college friend and brother-in-law; and Corpus Christi College (also 200 yards away), attended by many members of the Powys family and memorably described by John Cowper in *Autobiography*. Only a short distance further is the stone wall behind the Fitzwilliam Museum where John Cowper experienced his 'vision of "Living Bread", that mysterious meeting-point of animate with inanimate [...] a prophetic idea of the sort of stories that I myself might come to write; stories that should have as their background the indescribable peace and gentleness of the substance we name grass in contact with the substance we name stone.' (*Autobiography*, 199–200). We will read more, *in situ*.

### **Programme**

- 11.00 Arrival, coffee
- 11.30 Talk by Theo Dunnet: 'Curiosity: discovering John Cowper Powys and his contemporaries at Corpus Christi College in the 1890s'
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Talk by Chris Gostick: "John Cowper Powys and 'Lord Jim' - An Unlikely Friendship?" On Powys and James Hanley

15.00 Visit to Sidney Sussex and Corpus Christi Colleges and the “umbrageous purlieus” behind the Fitzwilliam Museum

16.30 Return to Michaelhouse for tea

### The speakers

Both our speakers have published on their subjects in the past, and promise to enlarge on them with new research and discoveries.

**Theo Dunnet** is a retired librarian at the Bodleian Library Oxford and principal library assistant at the Radcliffe Science Library, Oxford. Theo's research into the lives of John Cowper Powys, Littleton Powys and their contemporaries at Corpus Christi College Cambridge in the 1890s was originally published in *The Powys Review* in 1985.

**Chris Gostick** is a retired civil servant with a long-standing interest in both John Cowper Powys and James Hanley. He has edited the extensive correspondence between them, and is now working on a full biography of Hanley. He has published two monographs in the Cecil Woolf Powys Heritage series: *Lord Jim, Lady Tim and the Powys Circle* in 2000, and last year, *T F Powys's Favourite Bookseller* (Charles Lahr). Chris was secretary to the Powys Society between 1997 and 2001.

### Dorchester, Saturday 5th June

Powys Day in Dorchester is now a well-established spring event. The meeting will be held at the Dorset County Museum, High West Street, Dorchester DT1 1XA

[www.dorsetcountymuseum.org](http://www.dorsetcountymuseum.org)

There will be a discussion of T. F. Powys's *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, launched by **Michael Kowalewski**, curator of the Powys Society Collection at the Dorset County Museum, and **Jacqueline Peltier**, editor of *la lettre powysienne*, will deliver an informal talk on 'Powys Women'. The **Powys Room** in the Museum will be open, with an opportunity to view the Powys Society Collection and inspect some of its memorabilia. The day will close with a walk on Maiden Castle, the Iron Age hill fort outside Dorchester made famous by Thomas Hardy in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and which provides the title for John Cowper Powys's Dorchester novel.

### Programme

11.00 Arrivals, coffee

11.30 Discussion of T.F. Powys's *Soliloquies of a Hermit*, launched by Michael Kowalewski

13.00 Lunch at Number 6 Restaurant, 6 North Square (behind the museum). Advance booking is required.

14.30 Talk by Jacqueline Peltier: 'Powys Women'.

16.00 transfer by car (two miles) to Maiden Castle, for walk round its ramparts.

Jacqueline Peltier has written extensively about the Powyses and related subjects, over many years. Her bilingual magazine *la lettre powysienne* (now on number 18) complements and extends the Powys Society Newsletter. She has produced two Powys Heritage booklets in the Cecil Woolf series: *Alyse Gregory, A Woman at her Window* (1999) and *Two Powys Friends: Glimpses into the Lives of Bernard O'Neill and Ralph Shirley* (2006).

*Powys and Sufism* by Michael Kowalewski is in Newsletter 67.

Copies of T. F. Powys's *Soliloquies of a Hermit* can be obtained from Michael French (price £8, p+p inc).

## AGM 2010

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting** of the Society will take place at **11.00 am on Sunday 22nd August 2010 at the Wessex Hotel, Street, Somerset.**

All members are welcome to participate in the AGM whether or not they are attending the Conference.

### *Committee Nominations*

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

All paid-up and honorary members may submit nominations. Each nomination needs to be made by a Proposer and a Secunder in writing, accompanied by the Nominee's Agreement in writing. Nominations and Agreements sent by e-mail are acceptable.

Nominations must be sent to the Hon. Secretary at Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG **no later than Thursday 17th June 2010.**

#### **Honorary Officers**

The present Honorary Officers are as follows:

<i>Chairman</i>	John Hodgson
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Timothy Hyman
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	Michael J. French
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	Chris Thomas

The one-year term of all these Officers expires at the AGM on Sunday 22nd August 2010 and therefore **nominations are sought for all four officers.**

Chris Thomas is willing to be re-nominated as Secretary. John Hodgson and Michael French wish to stand down after 5 and 8 years of service respectively. We therefore require a new Chair and Vice-Chair, and a new Treasurer.

#### **Members of the Committee**

Michael Kowalewski (Curator) and Stephen Powys Marks (Publications Manager) have one year to run of their three-year term of office. Tim Blanchard and Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter* Editor) have two years to run of their three-year term of office. Anna Pawelko (Co-Conference Manager) and John Dunn will complete three years as members of the Committee and have indicated their willingness to stand for a further three-year term of office.

Nominations are also sought for a seventh member of the committee.

You may wish to know that Tim Hyman (our present Vice-Chairman) has indicated willingness, if elected, to take over as Chairman for a limited time.

Anyone willing to replace Michael French, please come forward !

CT

*The Powys Society Annual Conference 2010*  
*The Wessex Hotel, Street, Somerset*  
*Friday 20th August to Sunday 22nd August*

‘GRAIL VISIONS’

This year the Conference returns to the West Country, and to Street only two miles from Glastonbury, and suitably concentrates on what for many is John Cowper Powys’s greatest novel, *A Glastonbury Romance*. *Glastonbury* is certainly Powys’s most populous work:

I have the whole life of a community on my hands; with housewives, lawyers, doctors, chemists, innkeepers, procuresses, clergymen, servants, old-maids, beggars, madmen, children, poets, landowners, labourers, shop-keepers, an anarchist, dogs, cats, fish, and an airplane pilot ... There are no less than six major love affairs, one murder, three births, two deaths and one raising from the dead.

[‘*The Creation of Romance*’, interview with JCP in 1932, reprinted in NL46, page 11]

Philosophically, the book is equally speculative and wide-ranging, with its own home-made cosmology, the visions (or are they ‘creative lies’?) of Johnny Geard and Sam Dekker, the sceptical disenchantment of John Crow, and the scientific materialism of his industrialist cousin Philip. Its conclusion, ‘Never or Always’, strikes the characteristic Powysian note of ambivalence. I do not know what our speakers will say, but I suspect they will speak from very different points of view. **Paul Weston** is learned in the Arthurian myths of *Glastonbury* that Powys drew on deeply for his book, and which inform it, often in veiled ways, at every step. Paul will also lead us on a Saturday afternoon walk up Wirral Hill and to many of the sites made vivid in the imaginative world of the novel. **Anthony O’Hear** will bring an entirely different philosophical background to the book. **Harald Fawkner**’s talk on ‘modes of regeneration’ suggests the many ways in which, as John Geard might have said, the imagination ‘brings new life’ to a *Terre Gastée* – the ‘wasteland’ of desolation that was known to the medieval romancers, to T. S. Eliot, and to Powys himself. **Eivor Lindstedt**, speaking about Myrddin Wyllt in *Porius*, will take forward the story of Merlin, who is present in symbolic and allegorical form in *Glastonbury* itself.

Other Powyses will also be present: **Stephen Powys Marks** will talk about Caroline Powys (1738–1817), perhaps an exception among the country-bound Powyses, for when not in London, she longed to be in Bath. She was distantly related to Jane Austen, and her journals, spanning 52 years, provide vivid glimpses of upper class life in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth centuries.

The Saturday evening entertainment produced by **Chris Wilkinson** and **Louise de Bruin** will also provide insight in to the lives of unjustly lesser-known Powyses. Katie (Philippa) Powys, whose novel *The Blackthorn Winter* was recently republished by the Sundial Press, is increasingly becoming recognised as a writer to rank alongside her more famous brothers. The startling landscapes of Kenya, where the

youngest brother Will settled and farmed, inspired Llewelyn Powys to write *Ebony and Ivory*.

John Cowper Powys himself will also live and move and have his being: there will be a chance to see again the **Fox Movietone screen test** made in 1929, in which John Cowper prepares for his debate with Bertrand Russell, 'Is Modern Marriage a Failure?' This extraordinary and arresting piece of film, discovered by Antony Head, was last shown at a Society Conference more than fifteen years ago.

**JH**

### **Programme**

*Friday 20th August*

- 16.00 Arrivals
- 17.30 Informal reception; welcome by Chairman
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Paul Weston: 'A Personal Approach to *A Glastonbury Romance*'**

*Saturday 21st August*

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Harald Fawcner: 'Modes of Regeneration in *A Glastonbury Romance*', and**  
**Eivor Lindstedt: 'Myrddin Wyllt in *Porius*: "The Protean Herdsman"'**  
followed by coffee
- 11.15 **Stephen Powys Marks 'My Great-Great-Great-Grandmother Caroline Powys and her Journals'**
- 13.00 Lunch
- Afternoon:** walk up Wirral Hill, guided by Paul Weston
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.00 Presentation of **John Cowper Powys's 1929 screen test** for his debate with Bertrand Russell, 'Is Modern Marriage a Failure?'  
followed by  
**'The Untold Privilege: With Will in Africa' – an entertainment**  
devised by **Chris Wilkinson** and **Louise de Bruin**: the story, largely recounted in letters, of visits made by the Powys sisters to their brother Will in Africa

*Sunday 22nd August*

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Anthony O'Hear 'A Philosophical Interpretation of *A Glastonbury Romance*'**
- 11.00 **AGM** followed by a Powys Quiz
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 End of conference and departure in afternoon

## About the Speakers

**Louise de Bruin** joined the Society in 1976, having been introduced by her friend Gerard Casey, whom she had met a few years before while hitch-hiking through Africa. 'It was Gerard who introduced me to Will Powys, his wife Mary and mother-in-law Lucy Penny and gave me *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Soliloquies of a Hermit* to read.' Louise has been an active member in the Society since 1989, and is co-organiser of the Conference.

**Harald Fawkner** is Professor of English Literature at the English Department of Stockholm University. His scholarship includes literary criticism on Charles Dickens, John Fowles, John Cowper Powys, William Shakespeare, Gerald Murnane, and Mary Noailles Murfree. Professor Fawkner's research in recent years has concentrated on the factors of subversion that Husserlian phenomenology and Reformed theology have in common.

**Eivor Lindstedt** teaches English literature as senior lecturer at the Centre for Languages and Literature at Lund University in Sweden. In October 2004, she defended her doctoral dissertation, 'John Cowper Powys: Displacements of Voice and Genre', on the multi-voicedness and richness of genre in *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Porius*.

**Stephen Powys Marks**, grandson of A. R. Powys, is an architect, editor, indexer, writer, and typesetter. He was the Powys Society's honorary treasurer for many years. As publications manager, he has been responsible for producing most of the Society's publications, and has edited the third edition of the *Powys Checklist*. He has himself contributed extensively to Powys studies, especially to the history of the Powyses and other related families, in the Society's *Newsletter*, *The Powys Review*, *The Powys Journal*, and also in *Bath History* ix (2002).

**Anthony O'Hear** is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Buckingham, and editor of the journal *Philosophy*. His recent books include *Plato's Children* (2006) and *The Great Books: From The Iliad to Goethe's Faust: a journey through 2,500 years of the West's classic literature* (2007). *The Great Books* carries an introductory quotation from John Cowper Powys.

**Paul Weston** lives in Glastonbury. He is the author of books about Aleister Crowley, the Holy Grail, King Arthur and the Glastonbury 'mythos' and legends. His latest book, *Avalonian Aeon* is a continuation of a Glastonbury autobiography and his personal psychic odyssey. Paul writes that he 'sings the praises of the astonishing John Cowper Powys' and is fascinated by John Cowper's 'mystical creative genius'.

**Chris Wilkinson** has been a professional actor for most of his life, working mostly in theatres in the North of England. He assisted his father Oliver Wilkinson to edit *Jack and Frances: The Love Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg* (2 vols. 1994, 1996) and with Anthony Head has edited the correspondence between Llewelyn Powys and Chris's grandfather Louis Wilkinson, which still awaits a courageous publisher.

As a member of the Yellow Leaf Theatre, 'a producer of high-quality, low-tech small-scale tours', he has recently appeared in Vanessa Rosenthal's *Modelling Spitfires* at the New End Theatre, Hampstead. Chris has devised many entertainments and produced plays by John Cowper Powys for Society conferences.

## *The Collection*

The Chairman of the Powys Society Committee, John Hodgson, the Hon Secretary, Chris Thomas, and the Curator, Michael Kowalewski, held a meeting on 14th October with Jon Murden, the new Director of the Dorset County Museum. Jon was appointed Director in April 2009 to succeed the past Director, Judy Lindsay, and the acting Director Steve Garland. Matters discussed were the maintenance of the Collection, possibilities for additional space and access, and scope for raising awareness of the Powyses within the Museum.

### *Donations*

A substantial donation of books to the Society by Morine Krissdóttir was gratefully received; these were added to the successful Book Room sale at the 2009 Llangollen Conference.

The Ray Burnham gift (see list with last *NL*) has sold two-thirds by mail – late orders can still be accepted, and the remainder will be on sale at the next Conference.

Lis Whitelaw, executor of the author **Rosemary Manning** (who was born in Dorset in 1911, d.1988) has made a gift of books, including inscribed volumes by Llewelyn and Alyse Gregory, papers and notebooks. There are three JCP letters, presumably unpublished, that just fell out of a exercise book! (To be described in the next *Newsletter*)

The Powys Room will be open during Powys Day at the Dorset County Museum on Saturday 5th June.

CT, MK

## *The Diaries of John Cowper Powys*

The Committee has acquired from the National Library of Wales digital scanned copies of the diary of John Cowper Powys for the year 1940.

The Committee wishes to invite members to help establish a team which will make transcriptions of the diary using these digital scans. Members may wish to volunteer to help transcribe just one day or week of the diary or one or more months. Volunteers will be provided with electronic copies of original scanned material which will be sent to them by e-mail or if preferred A3 size printed pages can be mailed by post.

Transcriptions of the originals will be checked for accuracy by other members of the team and the whole process will be supervised by an editor in chief appointed by the Committee who will set down style rules and ensure team members follow a consistent approach.

This project is part of a longer aim, agreed by the Committee, to acquire digital scanned copies of the remaining unpublished years of Powys's diaries and to transcribe these also. Completed transcriptions will be deposited in the Powys Society Collection and made available to visitors on request.

If you are interested in joining the transcription team or would like more information, please notify the Hon Secretary by email, [chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk) or write to the Hon Secretary at the address on the inside page of the Newsletter.

CDT



## Discussion meeting on JCP's *Lucifer*

at The Friends' Meeting House, Hampstead, November 21st 2009

**John Hodgson**, by way of introduction, said that the poem was difficult to interpret biographically: when JCP wrote it (aged 32) he was still immature as a writer, experimenting with different ideas and forms; and his mentions of it in *Autobiography* – as ‘a monstrous epic poem, to be entitled “The Death of God”’ – are rather misleading. The poem provides some testimony to what was going on in Powys's head – his early unresolved internal stress and emotional conflicts. In *Autobiography* he gives the poem faint praise: ‘an extremely imitative poem, modelled on the blank verse of Milton, Keats and Tennyson ... [although] several passages in it really have a certain inventive, and even a flickering poetic, merit’. This comes in the ‘Burpham’ chapter, describing himself divided between the torments of his ‘sadistic’ voyeurism and joy in his little son beside the river in Norwich. The chapter leads on to JCP's abiding idea of Thought as the creative power in the universe – consistent with Lucifer's words at the end of the poem, ‘I myself am Fate ...’.

John H described *Lucifer* as a Cosmogonic adventure with an epic picaresque scope, in many ways like *Morwyn* and his late fantasies such as *Up and Out*. Although this narrative poetical style had an appeal for him, it was not something he would use again in poetry. But the poem does point to his later works in its use of the theme of rebellion (especially against conventional religion) and with the interplay between radicalism and running for cover, in a kind of creative tension.

*Lucifer* represents a spirited denunciation of Christianity and tainted Christian love, as in the ghoulish description of hovering saints in Part One. Powys stands for paganism, and Dionysian joys. It is a pastiche, relying on academic models, but there are portents of a future Powys. Satan going through the forest has imagery suggestive of *Porius*. The dryad fleeing from Lucifer is like Gerda running from Wolf Solent.

The poem raises philosophical issues about what makes rebellion ineffective. But it is the small things, the commonplace usages of life, that finally scupper the epic form and put an end to Satan's rebellion. It was these (like Wolf's tea) that became vehicles for Powys's imagination, making the mature John Cowper a novelist rather than a poet.

**Questions in discussion** wondered if this was why he couldn't finish the poem – the epic form breaking down in his imagination. At the end, do we feel anything has been resolved and achieved? Perhaps it's appropriate that it ends with the Milky Way – ‘Up and Out’.

But doesn't Satan/Lucifer triumph? ‘This is my hour’ – he banishes doubts – is still in control. He thinks he knows the truth. But *Lucifer* is not as strongly Nietzschean as we might expect, despite its pagan sympathies. Its hero is rebelling against a Victorian Protestant god, reflecting JCP's family background: against society, not the whole of life.

The poem is a mixture of myth and biblical legend, with Lucifer as a new god,

including (as with Blake) the positive powers of Satan. Revolutionaries are able still to hope for things, but he is saying to the revolutionaries, you are binding yourself in chains, don't claim your cause is exclusively just. The red flag is wrapped around the cross; both causes equally mistaken. But is JCP perhaps saying the doomed cause becomes the true cause – as with John Geard or Glendower: extremism doesn't get a good press in Powys. And unsatisfied desire is one source of creativity.

In the poem there are scenes of the 'City of Dreadful Night', and mention of Durer's *Melencolia* as the the earth mother. But like Stanley Spencer JCP mixes the mystical and the everyday, cosmic vision together with the friendly aspects of life. The gods become absorbed and he taps an authentic stream.

Cybele in *Lucifer* is ambiguous. As earth mother, is she a protest at a too male world? Or Goethe's Eternal Feminine? She is marble-like, like the giantess in Keats's *Hyperion*. But isn't the Cybele of *Glastonbury* with the headdress of towers really a male image, celebrating works of mankind rather than nature?

Is Lucifer himself a Powys hero? Perhaps a bit too successful. Buddha, at the other extreme, is an ineffective character – no help and too passive. But at the end, does the poem mean there is no need for a god? Satan is going to build his ideal modern city, but says he is contemptuous of fate – Chance will have its way. The feeling of resignation is Arnoldian (John read from Arnold's 'Resignation'), but there is more influence in the poem from the 'sensuality' of Keats.

JCP's *Lucifer* seems more heroic, and more creative, than other Satans in literature – Milton's devolving devil, from angel to snake ('Evil be thou my good') – Blake's invertedly wise 'Proverbs of Hell', with the Devil as 'God of this world', both right and wrong ('Truly my Satan thou art but a dunce') – Goethe's Mephistopheles, persuasive but ultimately powerless – Satan as the fourth member of Whitman's 'Square Deific' (a necessary opposite). JCP's *Lucifer* dreams like William Morris, of a new and purer world.

We are conscious in the poem of Powys's vocabulary, and choice of words he made his own: 'multiverse', 'glaucous', 'scoriac' (this one from Poe – another significant influence).

The cathedral at the end is Norwich. What did the beloved aunts think of *Lucifer*? Were they the fictitious Aunt Betsy Plantagenet to whom JCP dedicates, and excuses, his book *John Keats, or Popular Paganism*? In fact the Norwich aunts were very progressive, and probably would have been less appalled than he liked to imagine.

JH, CT, KK

**Eunice Theaker** writes:

I am really pleased to have read the poem in its entirety.

*Lucifer* is drenched in imagery and some of it is poetically beautiful. JCP refers to the influences of other poets on his work and I am interested that none of the metaphysical poets are on the list, given his ancestry, connections with the church and preoccupation with philosophy.

The poem is a *tour de force* and reads as though he wanted to get it off his chest at all costs, but it is found wanting in its inevitable comparison with 'Paradise Lost'. In spite of all the other poets he mentioned in the preface I think of it as Milton in the style of Homer's 'Iliad'. The encounter between Lucifer and the young girl in the forest is very reminiscent of Satan's encounter with Eve, and I did wonder why JCP portrayed it as he did.

Because JCP said Goethe was a source of inspiration I read 'Faust' again and I am always dipping into Milton. I think there is an interesting discussion to be had on Lucifer, Mephistopheles, and Satan, from the works of three very clever men from the Northern hemisphere influenced by strands of the same religion.

I shall be reading it again and again to winkle out the metaphors such as – 'and as a wasp, that for awhile hath from its peers emerged, where all confused they struggle within a jar of syrup, sinks soon backwards and is lost among the rest' – and also the little sayings of vintage JCP which are packed into the narrative:

By fate prefixed we fall:

Drink the mortal cup to the last dregs:

To renounce is oft to win.

Nothing highly original but you have to give him credit for having so many of them in his arsenal.

My favourite section is part II ... Of course you are reminded of many lines from other (mostly romantic) poets in the tenderness of its imagery.

Far from the haunts of men, at the world's edge

visited only by light wandering winds

that rose and fell, whispered and died away ...

If anyone delivers adverse criticism I think I know what they are likely to say.

**Eunice Theaker**

The complete text of *Lucifer* is available by e-mail from John Hodgson or KK.

## Autobiography in Swedish

It is excellent news to read in the (bilingual) Newsletter, of the **Swedish John Cowper Powys Society** (no 12, 2009 just arrived) that JCP's *Autobiography* has at last appeared in Swedish, as Sven Erik planned for so long.

The new/ revised translation by **Mikael Nydahl** incorporates the one started by Sven Erik, in a manuscript that suffered many adventures. A painting by Gertrude Powys is on the cover.

It can be obtained direct from the publishers, Ariel Forlag, at < [www.ariel.nu](http://www.ariel.nu) >  
Reviews will be translated in due course.

## MAURITIUS REFUGEES

*To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian*  
[9th November 1944]

Sir,—Will you allow me to express in your columns my wonder and surprise at what surely is an un-British line of conduct to refugees from Nazi cruelty, but a line of conduct all the same that has been going on now for no less than four years this autumn—in fact, since October, 1940?

I refer to the detaining in what amounts practically to an internment camp in Mauritius of the one thousand and six hundred Jewish refugees who escaped from God knows what horrors in Danzig, Poland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. These Jews escaped in 1940 in a Greek ship from a port belonging to Rumania from almost certain death. They were first taken under British escort to Haifa, but since in their desperate flight for their lives they could not procure the immigration certificates they were not permitted to proceed to Palestine as they desired but were deported to Mauritius, where for the last four years they have been detained.

The local Mauritius authorities have undoubtedly done their best to soften what is practically the internment of these unfortunates and to introduce ameliorating conditions into their life, but the psychological effect of being held in a tropical place where they have to struggle against malaria with uncertain success, and with the already long deferred hope of their release still indefinitely postponed, is not good for men, women, or children.

The mystery of these people's internment in Mauritius was not by any means solved by the answers given to recent questions in the House by Colonel Stanley, who confined himself to regretting that under present circumstances it was not possible to remove them.

It must be remembered that these particular Jews escaped from death under especially painful conditions, and it seems a shame that their longing to be given a chance to live a free and natural life should not be gratified. —Yours, &c.,

JOHN COWPER POWYS

*The surviving detainees were released at the end of the War and many helped by the Jewish community in South Africa. There is a memorial at the graveyard in St Martin, Mauritius.*

*Theodore and Lady Ottoline*  
(letters continued, 1924-36) ‡

The first letter below should be placed before TFP's reply of May 5th, 1924, printed in NL 68, page 35.

\* \* \*

*The Manor House, Garsington, Oxon*  
May 3 [1924]

*Dear Mr Powys*

*Is there any chance that you and your wife would be moved to come to see us? The lovely trees are beginning to look their loveliest and they ask to be admired. It would be such a great, great pleasure if you would come... Perhaps David Garnett could come too.... I should so much like to meet you.*

*Yours sincerely*  
*Ottoline Morrell*

[letter 11]

*East Chaldon, Dorchester*  
October 8th 1924

*My dear Lady Ottoline*

*Thank you very much indeed for the photographs.\* I think they are very good considering how frightened I was when you took them. Its a wonder that they weren't all rendered quite black by my [fear .... (?) page cut] You must know what a wife is in such matters. She thinks the one sitting upon the arm of the chair is the best. Only please don't worry about this now—any time would do.*

*Yours ever*  
*Theodore F Powys*

[letter 12]

*East Chaldon, Dorchester*  
October 30th 1924

*My dear Lady Ottoline*

*I was extremely interested in the letter you sent me to read. You have certainly waved your wand in the true manner of a fairy Godmother over the countries of Europe. I think you are quite wonderful. I am so glad that Maxim Gorky\* is better. I have written to the lady and have said that nothing would give me greater pleasure than that one of my books should be translated into German. Chatto and Windus manage these foreign rights for me so I asked*

---

‡ See also NL 66 pp.13-15 and NL 68, pp.33-7. The nine letters from TFP (11-19) are from HRHRC, Texas (with grateful permission); the two from OM are in The Powys Society Collection.

\* See notes to starred names and words starting on page 17.

*Baroness Budberg\* to write to them. I wish I had talked more about Maxim Gorky to you when you were here, I should have liked to have heard just what he looked like. I won't forget to ask you when you come again, and I hope you will. My wife sends her love to you and doesn't want to be a bother about the enlargement.*

*I am enjoying the Keats extremely. With kindest regards*

*yours ever*

*Theodore F. Powys*

*The Manor House, Garsington, Oxon*

*Nov 5 [1924]*

*Dear Mr Powys*

*I was so glad to receive the enclosed this morning from Augustus John. It's nice that he appreciates [your]work. So write and ask him to see you if you would like to see him! I am sure you would like him.*

*I wish he would do a drawing of you [that would be better than] my poor photos ...*

*Have you read Bernhard Gilbert's Old England? Someone recommended it to me but I haven't read it.*

*I am pleased you like Keats letters.*

*I hope you are writing hard.*

*My love to your wife.*

*sincerely*

*Ottoline Morrell*

[letter 13]

*East Chaldon, Dorchester*

*November 7th 1924*

*My dear Lady Ottoline*

*I am immensely pleased with your letter enclosing John's.\* I am writing to ask him to come any afternoon. I hope he will. I should enjoy tremendously meeting him. You have certainly performed wonders with these [sic] modest book, and have won me a reader of the first magnitude. I bow and kiss your hand. The leaves are getting a fine yellow now, but soon we shall have the bare boughs that I prefer to summer leaves. I haven't read Gilbert's "Old England".\* I go on with these novels but not so successfully as I could wish. However there are the two for next year, and in 1926 I think Chatto and Windus will begin with a Vol of short stories. I hope Augustus John will come in fine weather ...*

*Violet sends her love.*

*Yours Ever*

*Theodore F. Powys*

[letter 14]

East Chaldon, Dorchester  
April 28th 1925

*My dear Lady Ottoline*

*I was extremely glad to see your handwriting. It is a pity that you should have had such a worrying time. \* We have been pretty well but the winter has been a long one and the wind is dreadfully cold again today. I am so glad you liked the story in the Nation. \* I rather enjoy writing about good old Gentlemen, I think I should try to do so again. I suppose I shall never do anything again like Mr Tasker, It has sold a little better than the others, though the reviewers have spat so spitefully. I am delighted you were pleased with it.*

*I don't think we shall go to London this year, but it's charming of you to ask to know if we are going. If it had been possible, we should have loved to have visited you. I hope you won't find London too horrid. If you do you must break your visit and get Mr Morrell to drive you to East Chaldon in your car. There is a pleasant road through the New forest but I expect you know it. We should enjoy so much seeing you and Mr Morrell again. I expect it will be a fine summer, a cold spring often means that better days are to come.*

*Augustus John\* did speak of my giving him a sitting and one day I daresay he will arrive. We were tremendously impressed by him when he came. He has been to Germany I believe. I think I should be an extremely bad sitter. You know what trouble you found me with those photographs.*

*with very kind regards to Mr Morrell.*

*Yours ever*

*Theodore F. Powys*

[letter 15]

East Chaldon, Dorchester  
July 3rd 1925

*My dear Lady Ottoline*

*I am so glad that you liked Sylvia Townsend Warner's poems. She is a friend of ours and a very exciting person. She is an authority upon Tudor music and corresponds with all kind of queer people. A monk in a cell writes to her. Her father was a house Master at Harrow, he is now dead. Sylvia Warner has a novel called "LollyWillowes" coming out this autumn. She is fond of letting off dangerous fireworks in her back garden at 121 Inverness Terrace and she has a chow dog named William. Sylvia Townsend Warner is about 25 or so and is afraid of no one, and courage is a rare quality in these days. She has always been most kind and tender to us when she has visited East Chaldon so of course we love her. I hope you will soon be at Garsington again, you must long to be there. I don't wonder that you hate London. Do write when you have a chance.*

*Yours ever*

*Theodore F. Powys*

[letter 16]

East Chaldon, Dorchester, Dorset  
March 11th 1926

My dear Lady Ottoline,

*I am sending you the story. It was printed by the same people who publish 'The New Coterie'. They had a short story of mine in their first number and 'The Stubborn tree' in their second. I had nothing to do with it except to sign my name in each of the 100 copies privately printed. Yes it's nice to feel the Spring though there is a safety in dull winter days that the spring breaks in upon a little rudely I think. I am so glad that you liked "Ducdame". And I quite agree with you that "Lolly Willowses" is very good indeed. Sylvia Warner is very happy about her. Innocent Birds is out today. I hope Mr Morrell will write another letter to The Nation. I read his last with great pleasure. It's pretty of you to still invite us to Garsington. It's nice to think that we are invited. One day perhaps? But you must come here in the Summer and visit us as you did last year. I have been to Max Gate!*

[sideways at top] *With love from us both to you and to Mr Morrell*

*Yours ever*

*Theodore F Powys*

[letter 17]

East Chaldon, Dorchester, Dorset  
March 25 1926

My dear Lady Ottoline

*I wish I had written your name in "The Stubborn tree" I meant to. I thank you very much indeed for writing such a pretty letter to me about "Innocent Birds". I drink up your praise gladly you may be sure. I enjoyed my visit before Christmas to Max Gate. What a wonderful old man. And she was kind too. Perhaps I may go again another day. We talked about You. I fear I feel less and less inclined to move anywhere though it's always nice to be asked. I hope I say no as prettily as you say come. With love from us both to you and to Mr Morrell.*

*Yours ever*

*Theodore Francis Powys*

[letter 18]

East Chaldon, Dorchester  
May 25th 1930

My dear Lady Ottoline

*It gave us great pleasure to see you and Mr Morrell here again. I am so sorry I looked so cursed sulky in the photograph. I didn't mean to. Only I was afraid that you were getting yourself tired by taking so much pains. I am so glad that you sent me the article about Laurence.\* I enjoyed reading it very much indeed. He must have been very charming and what you say about him couldn't have been better said. I do not wonder at your feeling sad*



*being back in London at this time. Our Apple blossom is at its best now. We hope you will come again when you can.*

*Sylvia Warner's address is 113 Inverness Terrace W 2*

*Francis and Violet send their love and I send mine too.*

*yours very sincerely*

*Theodore F Powys*

*We both like the Photograph very much — very many thanks.*

[Photograph enclosed of TFP in chair, with thatched cottage in background.]

[letter 19]

East Chaldon, Dorchester

August 2nd 1936

*My dear Ottaline [sic]*

*Susie thanks you very much indeed for the lovely birthday present. The little imp likes to trick herself out like the young maids used to do that Isaiah was so angry with. It is awful that no friendly release can be invented for those who wish to quit life suddenly. I am so sorry about your friend. What thieves you have got in London! It was a wicked shame to take that [?lovely] little watch. Have you read 'Manon Lescaut' translated from the 1731 Edition by Helen Waddell? I enjoyed Philip's book extremely and will come to the others as soon as I can get my neighbour to get them for me. I never saw Darton\* but I believe he was a merry fellow. He will be missed at the Inn where he lived. I am reading one of his books now.*

[sideways top left] *We won't forget George Barker.\* But the hill up to Plush is as steep as a house. I might get out and walk up.*

*Love to Philip.*

*\* Yours ever*

*Theodore F Powys*

[sideways top right] *I must get the C. J. Fox by Lascelles\*. I shall like that I know*

## NOTES

*letter 11 8th October 1924*

**photographs** — these can be seen on the O.M. pages of the National Portrait Gallery's website. One (see letter 18) is included with the letters from HRHRC, in an envelope marked 1930.

*letter 12 30th October 1924*

**Maxim Gorky** (1868–1936) — the renowned Russian writer who had a complex off-on relationship with the Soviet Union. At intervals (including 1921–29) he lived in Italy, suffering from TB.

**Baroness Budberg** — Moura Budberg (1891?–1974) Russian writer and translator of legendary allure in inter-war London, associated with Gorky and H. G. Wells.

letter 13 7th November 1924

**[Augustus] John** — the **portrait** can be seen on the Tate Gallery website, with notes by AJ and letters from Will and Violet Powys, establishing the date as 1932. See Larry Mitchell, 'In search of T. F. Powys: the visual record' in *The Powys Review* 27/28 (1992–93), p.9.

The portrait was acquired by the Tate Gallery in 1958 and included that year in the Royal Academy exhibition of John's work. JCP wrote to Wilson Knight on July 14th 1958:

*I've got a wonderful photo of my brother Theodore, copied or photographed from Augustus John's portrait of him. So two of the Brothers Powys will be seen by the next and the next generation as this great artist saw them!*

There was no mention of the TF portrait when JCP described John's visit three years earlier, although JCP told Louis Wilkinson (14th December 1955):

*... His affection for Theodore is really a noteworthy thing & I have told him I know well, & unhesitatingly always say, that Theodore is by far the most original of us all ...*

**Gilbert's "Old England"** — *Old England: A God's-Eye View of a Village* (1921) by Bernard Gilbert.

letter 14 28th April 1925

**OM's worrying time** — health? money? The Morrells had to sell Garsington in 1927.

**story in *The Nation*** — probably 'In Dull Devonshire', published 18th April 1925.

**Augustus John** — see note above.

letter 18 25th May 1930

**Laurence** [*sic*] — D. H. Lawrence had died in France on 22nd March 1930. OM's loving tribute was in *The Nation and Athenaeum*, 22nd March 1930.

letter 19 2nd August 1936

**Darton** — probably F. J. Harvey Darton (1878–1936), author of books on Dickens, Arnold Bennett, J. M. Barrie and Baron Münchhausen. Possible connexion with nineteenth-century publishers, e.g. of 32 *Remarkable Places in Old England*, by John Adams (1818).

**George Barker** (1913–91) — his first book of poems was published by Faber, 1935.

**Lascelles** — *The Life of Charles James Fox* by Edward Lascelles (OUP 1936).



## *An invitation from the Hardy Society*

June 5th, our Powys Day in Dorchester, is also the date for the Hardy Society's Hardy Birthday celebrations, which they are sharing with the Larkin Society. In the evening they have a meal with poetry reading at a local hotel in Dorchester, to which the Hardy Society secretary says Powys Society members would be very welcome. As a gesture they will be happy to charge 'members' rates' of £14 for this event, which starts at 7.00pm on 5th June at the Wessex Hotel, High West Street, Dorchester. If anyone is interested please inform our Secretary Chris Thomas or contact the Hardy Society at [info@hardysociety.org](mailto:info@hardysociety.org)

## *News from Chydyok*

Chydyok, former home of Llewelyn Powys, Alyse Gregory, Gertrude and Katie Powys, has been much celebrated by Powys Society members who knew it from books or from having stayed there themselves, or enjoyed hospitality there on the Llewelyn Birthday walks. Since the passing of Janet Pollock, its doyenne, the future of Chydyok has been in doubt, so it is good to know that the cottage will be available to rent. We'll hope for reports on what remains of its former occupants – whether actual traces or in spirit. There will be Powys books and information provided for visitors.

**See Newsletters 62(Nov 07) and 66 (March 09).**

*David Simcox writes:*

After considerable negotiations with the Lulworth Estate, we have now taken over the lease on No 2 Chydyok Farm Cottage (Llewelyn's former home) and will be offering it for rental as a holiday cottage. During the autumn the property was re-roofed and the interior is currently being upgraded to meet fire regulations and to make it more comfortable, whilst maintaining its historic charm. We hope to have it ready by Easter and it will be available all year round.

I look forward to hearing from you

Kind regards

David Simcox

No 1 Chydyok Farm Cottage, Chaldon Herring, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 8DW

tel 01929 400865

e-mail: [david.simcox@btinternet.com](mailto:david.simcox@btinternet.com)

contact e-mail for the cottage is:

[chydyokcottage@btinternet.com](mailto:chydyokcottage@btinternet.com)

## *la lettre powysienne*

No 18 (autumn 2009) is as usual full of interesting things. JCP's 'My First Publication' (originally in *Mark Twain Quarterly*, 1952) recalls sitting under a groin on the beach at Hove in 1896, reading the galley-proofs of his *Odes*. He goes on to explain the 'sea change' in his novels between *Rodmoor* and *Ducdame* (as ever, tantalisingly, not mentioning *After My Fashion*). Bill Keith then explores the changes in historical perceptions of the so-called 'Dark Ages' – JCP's convenient 'historical blank' – in relation to *Porius*. The Hungarian connection continues with translations of letters by Béla Hamvas about John Cowper. Excerpts from the unpublished Diary of Alyse Gregory from 1946 to 1953 shed clearcut and sensitive light on Powyses and others.

There are letters from Alyse to a friend (Marjorie Ingilby, formerly a Phelps of Montacute House) and from Phyllis to Lucy, with a poem by Patricia Dawson to Phyllis; a French translation of the 1984 essay by Argentine Rafael Squirru on 'the Ichthyan Leap' in *The Art of Happiness* (an English version was in NL 56); reviews of JCP's *Happiness* and *Solitude* by Christine Jordis (1984) and by Michel Gresset of *The Inmates* (1976); and the usual informative news of publications and websites relating to the Powys world.

KK

## News and Notes

### from Geoffrey Winch

Would it be possible to give my new poetry collection a very brief mention in the next issue of the newsletter please? – there might just be one or two folk who would like to take a look – (I always live in hope!):

***Letting The Road-Dust Settle*** by Geoffrey Winch

(Indigo Dreams Publishing, 2009) 118pp.

From G. D. Winch, Dolphin Cottage, 65 Downview Road, Felpham,

West Sussex, PO22 8JA. £7.95 + £1.00 p&p (cheques with orders please)

Among many other matters these poems reflect on a fifty-year career as a highway engineer. The collection does include one TFP- inspired poem 'Waiting Now Has No Pleasure'.

I did enjoy my first Conference at Llangollen and the write-ups in the Powys Society *Newsletter*. Shall look forward to Street next year.

\*\*\*\*\*

***Literary Somerset, A Reader's Guide*** by James Crowden (Flagon Press) has pages on JCP, TFP, LLP and KP, and mentions the Society.

\*\*\*\*\*

### from Rob Timlin

While reading Berlioz expert David Cairns's excellent book *Mozart and his Operas* I came across the following reference and quotation. Cairns is writing about the setting of *Così fan tutte* which he describes as being 'a dream place, a sea coast "full of sounds and sweet airs"'. He goes on:

In this opera Arcadian beauty and the clinical investigation of human frailty coexist [breathing] a Cytherean air. Its deadly experiment is carried on in an atmosphere like the August afternoon evoked by John Cowper Powys in ***Weymouth Sands***, shining with "a marvellous heathen glamour that seemed to take it out of time altogether and lift it into some ideal region of everlasting holiday, where the burden of human toil and the weight of human responsibility no more lay heavy upon the heart."

To come across the words of JCP alongside those of Shakespeare used as a means of

providing greater resonance for his point I find very heartening. That it is not a leading literary critic but a celebrated music critic doing so gives matters a certain piquancy as it places JCP at the forefront of a more general cultural appreciation.

★ ★ ★ ★

**James Fergusson** in *The Book Collector* (Summer 2009) devotes no 2 in his series on 'Literary Societies' to The Powys Society.

★ ★ ★ ★

*from Paula Kuitenbrouwer*

**Tim O'Reilly** (of O'Reilly Media, born Cork 1954) brings JCP into his BLOG interview on 'The benefits of a classical Education' (the interview is part of 'a special report called Power, Ambition, Glory' ...

*Tell us about a time when lessons learned from the ancients contributed to your success.*

I love this question. As John Cowper Powys noted in *The Meaning of Culture*, culture (vs. mere education) is how you put what you've learned to work in your own life, seeing the world around you more deeply because of the historical, literary, artistic and philosophical resonances that current experiences evoke. Classical stories come often to my mind, and provide guides to action (much as Plutarch intended his histories of famous men to be guides to morality and action). The classics are part of my mental toolset, the context I think with....

[Should this Blog be responded to? —Ed.]

★ ★ ★ ★

**Cecil Woolf** sends a JCP reference at two removes: **Jeremy Treglown's** introduction to **Henry Green's** *Blindness* (reissued by Harvill Press in 1996) quoting **John Holloway** in the *Times Educational Supplement* (26th August 1977), 'making a comparison between *Blindness* and the work of John Cowper Powys: "What dominates is a sense of the individual's deeper consciousness, direct and raw, meandering into shape, created out of memory floating and flooding experience, formative even when disparaged; and of consciousness emerging into conversations."'.

★ ★ ★ ★

*The Spectator* (2nd January 010) has an article by **Michael Henderson** 'On Reading in Public Places' (especially Vienna) including the cryptic sentence: 'Wolf Solent by John Cowper Powys, pressed upon me by Simon Heffer as "the greatest English novel of the last century, mark my words", complemented the anticipation and afterglow of *Götterdämmerung* at the Staatsoper. The Earl of Chelmsford, a keen Wagnerian, would like that.'

★ ★ ★ ★

Finally, **Harry Kiakis**, a far-flung Society member from Laguna Beach, CA, has sent pages from *The Road I Came* (Caxton Press, Caldwell, Idaho, 1960) by **Paul Jordan-Smith**, an author and literary editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, recalling JCP's early American days. The author presents JCP as a wildly unconventional figure. In Chicago Powys introduced him to Maurice Browne, in whose theatre he saw Yeats, Ibsen and Hardy's *Dynasts*. In 1912 he met John Cowper at a University Extension lecture on Goethe, where the unknown Powys, 'said to have written a book on Keats',

‘lacked the appearance of an English scholar; rather he seemed to have just walked off a small Welsh farm’. Unkempt and shoddily dressed, ‘his gestures were even more disturbing than his costume. He strode across the platform cradling his chin in his right palm while his left hand supported his right elbow ...’ His accent was puzzling (w’s for r’s) but words flowed and he began to recite and improvise: ‘I have never heard so many adjectives poured out so rapidly or so many synonyms heaped up... a linguistic oratorical accomplishment I have never heard equalled. All of us were determined to hear him again ...’

In California, JCP stayed with the author in 1918, at his Claremont home ‘Erewhon’. He was glad not to have to spend money on a hotel. He amused them with his incompetent methods of packing a bag. He was an entertaining guest, good with children. They showed him the desert and the then peaceful beaches. They visited Reginald Pole, another Cambridge man, at little Palm Springs. They lit candles in the mission church at Los Angeles, and Powys wrote a seven-line verse about it in the author’s copy of *Wolf’s Bane*. JCP promised to introduce the author to his idol Hardy, and when Jordan came to England, after some embarrassment, JCP defaulting (‘he would never spend a pound if he could help it’) the author went to tea at Max Gate on his own. In 1923 he returned to America with John and Llewelyn on the *Aquitania*. The Powyses brought their own deck-chairs, with their names burnt on by a poker. Intent on paying no extras, ‘they carried their belongings on their backs in huge sacks, and presented the appearance of Russian peasants.’

I was happy to visit with them nearly every day. Llewellyn [*sic*] would be lying on deck talking to a pretty girl and absently stroking her thighs while he looked out at sea, reciting poetry and talking about Thomas Bewick’s wood blocks. He reproved me for missing so many things in the England he loved. A charming and curious man, Llewellyn Powys, much warmer and more human than John, who sat there like a disgruntled gargoyle until he got a glimpse of what his younger brother was doing to the lady’s thigh. Then he suddenly turned his back, crying out – “Good Lord, Good Lord!” And so, with the Powys brothers flinging conventions to the sea breeze ... I crossed the Atlantic ...

Back in California, Powys was staying with Colonel Erskine Scott Wood and Sarah Bard Field. Colonel Wood, a book collector, invented a gruesome tale of a book bound in human skin, at which JCP was duly appalled. JCP was at ‘Erewhon’ again in 1922, surprised that Paul Jordan hasn’t read *Ulysses* (then a rare smuggled item). It turned out that Powys hadn’t read it either, but was conning Jordan into paying \$100 for the last copy in California. They read it in turns, and Jordan was to give a lecture on Joyce at the home of Mrs Crane Gartz, a cultural patroness (she sounds like the Margaret Dumont character in Marx Brothers films). JCP went with him, making rude remarks (‘Another villa! Just like the suburbs of Weymouth!’). After Jordan Smith’s harmless talk, Mrs Gartz incautiously called on his English friend, who according to the author was not keen on performing without his usual big fee. JCP treated the audience of middle-aged ladies to a spirited reading of *Ulysses* chapter 1,

with Stephen Dedalus comparing the snot-green sea to the green bile vomited by his dying mother. Shock and horror. 'A little of that goes a long way, Mr Powys.' 'You are quite right, Mrs Gartz, it goes a long way.'

### *Patricia Dawson works*

Patricia Dawson is known to members as a poet, painter and sculptor. Her prints and other work inspired by Powys characters have been reproduced over the years, chiefly in *The Powys Review* (see numbers 4 and 21). She has lived and worked for years in South London. The sculptures, or models, are mostly in papier-mâché (some cast in resin). They have a remarkable liveliness and expressiveness, that grows with close looking (and, of course, familiarity with the characters in the books). Some from *Porius* – Merlin and the Owl, the Aunties mourning – are larger. The smaller groups from *Glastonbury* and *The Brazen Head* have been arranged on papier-mâché hills. Exhibitions for the Society and elsewhere have several times been planned but have not worked out – something may yet be arranged. Meanwhile Patricia would be glad to show her Powys-related work to anyone who shares her love of the books (contact her at 3, Albion Villas Road (flat 1), Sydenham, London SE26 4DB).



*Merlin's Head.*



*Merlin's Owl-Maiden.*

# THE POWYS SOCIETY CONFERENCE

## Llangollen August 2009

A DVD of presentations from the 2009 Conference is available.

If you would like a copy (2 discs) the cost is £6. Please order from  
Raymond Cox, 4 Lulworth Close, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2UJ  
(Cheques to R E Cox, **not** the Powys Society)

### DISC ONE Total time: 111mins.

1. Tim Blanchard: 'I must have some tea': drink, drugs and defiance in the novels of John Cowper Powys'. c27mins.
2. Janet Foulis: 'The Eternal Feminine: John Cowper Powys, Dorothy Richardson, and the two silent spouses ... and Frances'. c55mins.
3. Charles Lock: 'Dostoevsky as Revelation: on John Cowper Powys and Rowan Williams'. c27mins.

### DISC TWO Total time: 112mins.

4. Angelika Reichmann: 'Dostoevsky and John Cowper Powys — Influence Without Anxiety'. c53mins.
5. Reading of scenes from John Cowper Powys's stage adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*:

Rogozhin	Richard Graves
Prince Myschkin	P. J. Kavanagh
Ganya, the General's Secretary	Richard Maxwell
Aglaia, the General's daughter	Penelope Shuttle
Nastasya, Afanasy's mistress	Kate Kavanagh
General Epanchin	Timothy Hyman
Afanasy Ivanovitch	Peter Lazare
Dostoevsky	John Hodgson
John Cowper Powys	Kieron McCann

Devised by John Hodgson c59mins.

Combined total time: 3hrs 43mins.

### Family names and pictures

*Among the guests at the wedding breakfast of ARP and Dorothy (see note inside front cover) were the very close family friend Dr Bernie O'Neill and his wife Belle. Now her name was **Isobel**: I have just realised that this is why ARP's daughter, my mother, born a year later, was given this name. The revealing sketch of the six-year-old on the back cover has only just come to light.*

**Stephen Powys Marks**



*Margaret to JCP — Four letters, 1945–6 ‡*

Sept 3. 45

30 Oldfield Road  
Bath  
Som<sup>t</sup>

Please note to leave with St Joseph's N<sup>s</sup> Home

My dearest

Thank you so much for your lovely letter written, & sent to us, while we were at Frome. The Picture of L.A.P. fishing is lovely. I am so glad you both had such a peaceful time together. Our (almost) fortnight at Frome was a great success, such a nice Hotel, good food, & every one so kind. Very nice people keep it. They gave me an early cup of tea without asking—& my breakfast willingly. So I got on nicely & we spent nearly all of every day in the car out about 2 couple of miles into that lovely country bordering on the Mendips. They look quite heavenly from every turn & corner of the lanes & we found a wonderful farm with a beautiful little old Church with a chantry right in the heart of it all, by a big pond—& with the biggest yew trees I have ever seen.

30 geese marching about like soldiers—with a Mersander Goose for a General. He never mixed with them but kept them near & in sight. He made a great 'pose' of their obedience to his orders and that he had them well 'in hand'—but really we came to the conclusion he was distinctly nervous of his formidable white-uniformed Regiment, so much larger than himself, & shuffled off in as dignified manner as he could muster, at any sign of trouble between his soldiers & the cows, when they came down to drink & walked right into deep water which the Geese treated as their prerogative exclusively—

(I seem unable to spell today & write words I don't mean!!)

Sept. 9 This must go. I have been out so much this week since I came back. Down to 'St Alphege'\* & a weed or two—and a chat to an old fellow on the other a-lot-me<sup>a</sup>nts<sup>(??)</sup> (he meant 2) (Bill says there is only one t & it should be hyphenated—so as to be clear how it is me<sup>a</sup>nt to be construed, i.e. 'That an a-lot-me<sup>a</sup>nt means-a-lot, to an a-lot-meant holder'—[D])

...

Littleton is confused & sad at the sudden snatching away by the Bishop of his nice fellow curate P. Macdonald!! without any warning. Litt. will now be senior curate & change room—and have to do lots of showing him about etc—

I must now 'buckle' to & write a letter to Dr. Beatty the Procurator of Upholland College\*\* giving thanks for their really marvellous kindness in letting us have a large room high & dry, free of any charge for our furniture to be stored in, since 1943

‡ Photocopies of these letters were among the material received by Paul Roberts from Syracuse and other American archives, now given to The Powys Society.

\* See notes to starred names and words on page 30.

(June)—now 2 years & 2 months! Litt.<sup>n</sup> is (or has been this week) in the 'thick of it' disposing of it in various ways. I feel it that I am unable to help him very greatly. Still his complete rest with me at Frome, plus his restful week with you, will stand him in good stead—It is wonderful that we can have a whole day's rest from 12.30 to 6 pm, out in the car in the country every week, for we both sleep for an hour under some hedge, parked in a quiet lane—or by an exquisite canal & then picnic for tea in the car (if wet)—sitting on a bank (if warm). The scenery round Bath is quite exquisite wherever you go—The Gloucester Road (we get very soon just into Glos.<sup>re</sup>) is high down —& oh such views & flowers & lanes—An orange dragonfly visited my lead roof, where I can walk out, yesterday, & sat for a long time for me to admire—(see page 1) [*at side*]  
—there were turquoise blue ones at Upholland, but an orange one I have not seen since we were at Bontddu together so I was thrilled. I like to hear all your news. My dear very much X

your devoted wife & son

[*On back of envelope*: So pleased with what you say as to L. and boyhood! I suspect I shall never 'grow up' myself & it is my only influence over him!!!

My feeling about the atom [*bomb*] was absorbed by thankfulness that we got it first! It may be sacred in Japan but are we sacred to him?!!



*Margaret Powys and Littleton Alfred  
in earlier days.*

Sept 21.45

30 Oldfield Road  
Bath

My dearest—I am vexed indeed to hear from our Littleton that you have had to go to hospital for treatment. It is a place we neither of us have any penchant for—The whole regime is horrors to me, but I can only hope you don't mind it quite so much ... & that you will soon get relief & an acid cure, which will make up for all irritating incidents—I am so very sorry & sad, but I hope all my daily prayers for your health (for years & years & years said), will again avail to set you on your feet again & that soon ... & that I can once more think of you a-roaming on the hillside in fresh morning air.

I am sending this via 8 Duke Street as I have not your address & it will be I think the quickest way.

Sat. I am so very thankful to hear from our Litt.<sup>n</sup> that you are getting on well—It is a great relief. I hope now all will go on straightforwardly & well, & that perhaps a bit cautiously for a time, you will be walking by your stream—

From the great height of the Down N. of Bath up the Gloucester Road & where 6-700 ft up we are just in Gloucester.<sup>re</sup>, on a Wednesday we spied a Sparrow Hawk hovering below, silhouetted against the brilliant green precipitous slopes of the glorious, wild, almost uninhabited [*country*], except for wonderful old (some of them Pre) Elizabethan farms, tucked comfortably into the hillside & alone with peaceful cattle browsing on the luscious grass below them on these slopes ... It is enchanting! & oh it is difficult to come back to 'houses' again & roofs however pleasant. We make our tea up there with a Meth. Stove & can do this in the car, if it rains—

The rain storms scudding along below us winding round these great interlacing Valleys, make light & shade beyond description beautiful—You need a car in Bath & then! Well! it is the centre of most glorious English scenery. There are down flowers too, in a little lane with high banks. Eyebright, tiny poppies, marjoram, scabious (large pale blue, & scabious small intensely blue (one of my favourites) sort of 'sheep's bit' blue.—Knapweed & Rampion etc.

I will write again before long. But you must not answer this. Littleton will keep me up in news of you & dear Uncle L ... will phone him—as he did on Friday (& had a chat with Canon Hackett!).

Very great love to you my dearest. May this treatment be very successful & set you up well again is the hope & prayers o

Ever y<sup>r</sup> devoted wife & Son

[*On separate piece of paper enclosed:*] 25/9/45 Good luck my dear + God bless 'ee  
Thy Son Littleton x who loves thee well

Easter Day [Postmarked 22 April 1946]

28 Oldfield Road

My dearest—I cannot let the day totally expire without telling you I am thinking a lot of you ... & hoping & praying you still progress to better health & strength—I send you heaps—Universes full—of love & good wishes—which you will well believe—

Alas—this has been a sad week for me I told you C [*rest of name indecipherable—Cin?*] was sadly ill—and I could not help being agitated & apprehensive at the news I got from J[im?] & a friend who was with her—Nell James—She suddenly died on Tuesday—I cannot say I was absolutely surprised—but it was a shock as it always is when it comes. Mind you I have almost prayed she would not live on, if she were to suffer as she has done these last 2 months,—& she must have been a cripple with arthritis amongst other things. So I do my best to take it calmly for as you know I have a Faith that makes death a gateway to a far greater life, & I am convinced of the truth

of it—for at ones lowest ebb in losing people, it still holds good—it is in every way a ‘reasonable’ belief as well as an Act of Faith—and if you have that faith people don’t seem dead -- though the blank loss of their bodily presence is very severe —

You will forgive me for pouring out to you for I always find comfort from it—and I have been meditating on it alone at St Alphege’s this week & alone I always am able to go to the bottom of my convictions & test them by a little mental & spiritual hammer to see if they ring true—Doing this satisfies my love of truth, & my faith in what I can’t see with human eye—and I get my ‘vision’ by this clearer than ever & am full of joy every time—It is in great catclysms [*sic*] of events that one can do this tapping & testing best, your soul cries out for it.

.....

Well I know your love & sympathy will be mine.

We are hugely looking forward to our 4 days at Malmesbury at “The Bell Inn” on Monday 29th a week tomorrow—The Canon has given us an extra day for the after Easter break—he is a gem—

Our son came up just now looking well & not over tired with Holy Week and Easter—he was wearing a bottle green wool-knitted Pullover, a beauty I got him for Easter from a little shop up on my hill—and he looked so smart in it. I only gave 9/11 for it—it is Pre-war. (I have used nearly all my coupons—horrid things. They make one so mean.[ ]) I heard a willow wren up on the hill last Tuesday—and a chiffchaff—Oh I do wish I could hear & see a wryneck again—They are so thrilling twisting their heads about like Chinese dolls or snakes, & elongating their necks like snakes & drawing up ants with their tongue—Do you ever see one in Wales—they make a queer bleating noise like a bad tempered sparrow. Oh! I’ve got a blue-tit building in my chute or rather just in a crack under it—but the wind is so cold today it is not singing its twitter twitter cheese-ese song—I hope all is well. I am (so is Litt.) longing to keep white goats—the milk is lovely & not rationed & it makes good butter. Gertrude ought to keep them—there are a lot at Malmesbury.

I find from Yarrow that the Bee-eater bird visited “Chyok in Dorset” in 1858!!—I have told her it will probably come again in 1958 — & eat all her bees.

I must go to bed—oh dear—

Very much love my dearest & an Easter hug & Kiss  
from y<sup>r</sup> everloving wife & son

17 Nov. 46

28 Oldfield Road  
Bath

Your essay on Don Q is a masterpiece.

I also love “The Greek Drama”

My dearest—I have been longing to get a letter on to you for we did both so enjoy your last letter—and though extremely sorry you should have the boredom of having

to go for walks in spectacles, yet we were convulsed with laughter at your most amusing description of how things looked to you—especially the Heifer—It was extraordinary funny—& no doubt help[s] to relieve your boredom this grotesque representation of things you had regarded so differently—

I must tell you I am so enjoying your book ‘The Pleasures of Literature’ and especially & above all your Essay on my Beloved Don Quixote & Cervantes—Perhaps its odd of me but I actually feel that Cervantes is greater than Shakespeare for Shakespeare with all his wealth & magnificence & humour & tragic Genius never exactly hits me so much from rock-bottom & give[s] me a queer mystic delight as does Cervantes in Quixote—Every word you say about it is echoed by me for the vision of the old fellow haunts me & gives me a clinging vision in the brain—It is Religious in a wide sense and I say if I see a wonderful Courtyard of an Old Inn with great arches—& stables!—such as we go to on Wednesday where the old coaches from London to Gloucester used to halt—I say “I can simply see Don Quixote here, & Sancho humbly behind on Dapple”—No he never seems mad to me ... or if he should I just want everyone to have some touch of his so called madness—for without it no real ‘intellect’ in its best sense can exist.

I can only wish that you could have seen St Paul in this same light, & based your Essay on Pilate’s “Much learning, Paul, hath made thee mad”—For I see him as a Knight-errant, this time of the Soul, battling against the powers of darkness that destroy humanity body & soul. He too had his sudden vision, & was thought by all sober-minded good citizens to be ‘crazed’ ... Whereas he was never more sane than when following his vision by the way. He took all the buffetings & torturings with the same humble elation as did Old Don Quixote.

His would be a simple, outside-of-a-Revelation such as led him (as we feel through the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost [ ]) to propound to the Church of Jesus, then existant, the fuller Revelation & Knowledge of “all truth” [( ] which Jesus himself promised to His Church before He left it )—and just charmingly & appreciatively recognize his genius in the simple form of a “Knight Errant of the Soul”—for to understand St Paul as an apostle of Revealed Doctrine, you have to have belief in the Doctrine first. He no more created Theological Doctrine any more than Don Quixote ‘created’ Knight-Errantry—in both it was an inspiration.

And “thats that”—& a criticism which will anyhow amuse & interest you & perhaps seem comic to you—but its the way I see it. Anyhow you will be able to laugh at St Paul & Don Quixote coming under the same umbrella so to speak—I have no one to exchange ideas with here, & my brain gets to want to express itself somewhere as it reads & discovers for itself—& may I keep such a faculty for discovery on my own, & its invigorating power to chase away the dreary round of dressing & undressing & heating hot water bottles on long days of cloud & drizzle outside—It is good also to listen to Beethoven, & Mozart, Bach & Mendelsohn & Brahms etc on the wireless (Thanks to Canon Hackett) when I am doing all this—

Moral—Dont mind me—or ever bother to answer my cogitations—Its unneces-

sary—I think ‘The Catholic’ would be tickled & pleased at my placing St Paul & Don Quixote in the same category.

Now for bed—& bottles—the bottle I like best is my little whiskey bottle!!—I get it filled at the very old coaching Don Quixote Inn, eleven miles up 500 ft—in the Gloucestershire-hills towards Malmesbury in Wilts—.

I will tell you an amusing incident one day between Lord Westmoreland whose property the Inn is—& who is to be found in the bar—(often) & our son—

.....

I had a wonderful time with Nell James. We were so excited to meet again after 8 years—in the Old School City—We were so gay we quite frightened the sedate & static young men & maiden[s] of the lounge—a Hotel Lounge now is awfully like M<sup>me</sup>Tussauds.

Best love—& a Kiss—I saw a tortoiseshell butterfly on Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>.—They seem to survive all weather—it looked extra brilliant sitting on a white stone wall with the sun shining bright on it—& all the trees gold & red & crimson & orange behind it over the wall.

Littleton goes on well—a bit tired just now, so I am seeing he sleeps by the Inn ‘Peat’ fire after lunch at Cross Hands (which is the name of the Don Q. Inn)—& he is going slower with work till he is quite vigorous again. He is so sensible now—Canon H is such a saintly character & yet sensible & careful for all who work with him—He has much impressed Littleton in consequence.

Ever y<sup>r</sup> loving wife & son

#### NOTES

\* *The Church of Our Lady & St Alphege, Bath* (architect: Sir Giles Gilbert Scott).

\*\* *Upholland College—the Roman Catholic seminary St Joseph’s College (BEDA) at Upholland, Lancashire, where Littleton Alfred got his training as a priest. It closed down in 1987.*

*Margaret (Lyon, b.1874) and JCP married in 1896 but saw little of each other after about 1910. She lived with or near Littleton Alfred (born 1902) until her death (28 February 1947). She too had converted to Catholicism. Littleton was curate at St John’s, Bath, where Canon Hackett was Rector. Littleton died in 1954: both are buried in the Perrymead cemetery, Bath.*

**See:** The Diary of John Cowper Powys for 1929, ed. Anthony Head (Cecil Woolf, 1998), and in Cecil Woolf’s *Powys Heritage series*, John Cowper Powys, Margaret and Lily, by Paul Roberts (1998), and John Cowper Powys, the Lyons and W. E. Lutyens, by Susan Rands (2000); also (on Littleton Alfred) The Powys Review 27/28 (Susan Rands) and Newsletters 59 and 60. JCP’s diaries mention letters from and to Margaret and record her birthdays.

*With thanks to Paul Roberts and Louise de Bruin.*

W. J. Keith  
*'The Catholic': A new source of information*

In 1894, when JCP moved to Sussex after coming down from Cambridge and began lecturing at various girls' schools, he was, in Kenneth Hopkins's words, 'enriching himself ... by deep-rooted and long-lasting friendships with several remarkable men'.<sup>1</sup> Of these, with the possible exception of Albert de Kantzow, W. J. Williams, nicknamed 'the Catholic' in the Powys family, is the one about whom we have least information. I therefore decided recently to search for further details in the extensive academic literature devoted to Catholic Modernism at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and in the course of this reading came upon a virtually unknown article about him, 'W. J. Williams, Newman, and Modernism', by John D. Root of the Illinois Institute of Technology.<sup>2</sup> The following account summarizes the relevant material gathered there and supplements it with details appearing in scholarly sources since its publication in 1982.

First, however, it is important to correct two pieces of misinformation contained in *Autobiography*. Writing some thirty years after the period of their closest friendship, JCP manages to reverse Williams's initials, J. W. instead of W. J., (William John), a practice continued by his several of his biographers, including Hopkins, Herbert Williams, and Morine Krissdóttir. In addition, he reversed the first two names in the title of Williams's single book-publication, which should read *Newman*,<sup>3</sup> *Pascal*,<sup>4</sup> *Loisy*<sup>5</sup> and *the Catholic Church*. But this may not be entirely JCP's fault. Father George Tyrrell, a close friend of Williams and one of the main figures in English Catholic Modernism, whom JCP knew slightly, refers to it while commenting on the manuscript as '*Pascal-Newman-Loisy*' (Root, 91), and since parts of it are known to have been written at Burpham,<sup>6</sup> JCP could well have been remembering Williams's working-title.

Root gives Williams's dates as '1868[?]-1930', though the question-mark should also apply to the date of death, since he is here dependent on *Autobiography*, which is not specific. (JCP is also the sole source for Reigate as Williams's place of birth.) He was brought up as an Anglican and matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a few years before JCP. However, he converted to Catholicism in 1890, and transferred to Queen's College, Oxford, for his B.A., after which he began studies for the priesthood in 1893 and 1894, but was never ordained.

At this point, further possible confusion needs to be set straight. Williams lived for most of his early life with his mother, brother, and sister (Dora) at Eastbourne, though the brother fades out of the story early. But M. D. [Maude] Petre, the first biographer of Tyrrell, refers to a 'Mrs. Williams'<sup>7</sup> and this seems to have misled Nicholas Sagovsky, a more recent Tyrrell biographer, into making a reference to 'W. J. Williams and his wife'.<sup>8</sup> I am aware of no other reference to a wife; an early marriage sounds most unlikely given his beliefs and circumstances, and also given JCP's bizarre plan to marry off Williams to Gertrude Powys in 1914, as reported by

Krissdóttir.<sup>9</sup> Sagovsky is almost certainly mistaken. 'The Catholic' and Dora are both in the photograph taken after A. R. and Dorothy Powys's wedding in 1905 (along with 'Lily' in her enormous hat). Dora's address (16 Somers Rd, Reigate) is noted among others in JCP's diary for 1940. On 14 Sep 1940 JCP writes to Louis Wilkinson: 'I've just heard from Dora Williams, & the most spirited letter for years! She says the bombs have cured her of nerves completely!'<sup>10</sup>

We cannot be sure precisely when JCP and Williams first met, but it was most probably after JCP moved into Court House early in 1895, by which time Williams would have returned to Eastbourne after his abortive attempt to enter the priesthood. We learn from *Autobiography* that Williams used to come for prolonged periods to stay at Court House, JCP referring to one occasion when he left him – 'to guard my castle in my absence' while he spent a fortnight in Paris with Bernie O'Neill (Powys, 309).

Vivid as it is, JCP's portrait of Williams gives only a partial impression of the whole man. It fails to convey the respect that Williams, even when still young, commanded in intellectual circles. One would hardly suspect from the references in *Autobiography*, for instance, that in 1896, at about the time JCP met him, Williams had become a founding member of the Synthetic Society, a select philosophical and religious group formed for the reading of papers and discussion of issues aimed at establishing 'a working philosophy of religious belief' (Root, 86). Wilfrid Ward,<sup>11</sup> Baron von Hügel,<sup>12</sup> and Tyrrell<sup>13</sup> were all members, but Williams would also have mixed with such figures as Arthur Balfour (later Prime Minister), Henry Sidgwick (Cambridge professor and champion of women's higher education), F.W. H. Myers (prominent in the Society for Psychical Research), J. E. McTaggart (a respected philosopher), William Temple (later to become Archbishop of both York and Canterbury), and G. K. Chesterton. By the turn of the century, while he was a regular guest at the Powys household, he also visited in his role as 'peripatetic scholar' (Root, 88) the Wards, von Hügel and Tyrrell, on a regular basis.

None the less, praise for his intellect was qualified by amusement or concern about other aspects of his character. According to Maisie Ward, daughter of Wilfrid, Newman's official biographer, her father admired Williams as 'a man ... of rare metaphysical acuteness' but considered that his 'contact with the material world was of the slightest'.<sup>14</sup> Tyrrell, who used to refer to him as 'helpless little Williams' (Root, 91), acknowledged that he had 'a very fine and delicate mind', but described him in 1907 as 'mooning and swooning', unaware of 'where he was; or who I am; or what century we are in' (Root, 110, n76, and 90). Von Hügel, writing to Ward, thought him 'sensitively perceptive and distinguished in mind and feeling' (Root, 85), but later complained to another correspondent that he was 'a *hopelessly Unreticent* person'.<sup>15</sup> There is evidence to suggest a strand of instability, including mental instability, in his makeup, which is caught in kindly fashion by JCP in his positive but somewhat caricatured verbal portrait.

Whether JCP fully understood Williams's argument in his main work, *Newman*,



*Pascal, Loisy and the Catholic Church* (1906), is very much a matter for debate. Certainly his account of it in *Autobiography* leaves readers with a decidedly confused impression of Williams's position in the Modernist controversy, perhaps because by this time 'Modernism' indicated a literary rather than a religious movement. JCP describes the book as projecting 'a defence ... for the traditional scholastic position which cut the ground under the feet of the very cleverest modernists', and later asserts that it 'anticipated, as well as refuted the subtlest reasonings of modernism' (Powys, 282, 416; *my emphases*). Ironically, it was the contemporary Papacy that defended 'the traditional scholastic position', which was regarded by Catholic Modernists as a diehard, blinkered conservatism that needed to be challenged in the light of current intellectual thinking. It was, moreover, in the name of Scholasticism that the Church officially rejected 'the "modern" philosophical tradition that began with Descartes'.<sup>16</sup>

This is no place to offer an elaborate summary of Williams's book, nor am I properly qualified to do so, but two main thrusts of his argument are clear enough. First, he presents an exhaustive defence of Newman's theology as dependent on a theory of development – expressed most notably in the *Essay on the Development of Doctrine* of 1845, the year Newman was converted to the Catholic Church. What Williams calls the need for the 'organic development of Christianity' as well as his 'assimilated mass of religious experience' over time,<sup>17</sup> inevitably drove Newman away from Protestantism with its concern for a turning back to the essence of the 'Primitive Church'. Second, Williams launches a bitter attack on papal infallibility, only officially promulgated in 1870. In a protest that would be extended in the coming years, he insists that 'the basis of infallibility ever remains in the mass of catholic peoples and ultimately depends on their consent' (294). A challenge to the Vatican indeed!

Williams saw himself as a religious polemicist defending the particular achievements of English Catholic intellectuals. He was concerned with the Church's clamp-down on 'liberal' thinking and its attempt to prevent Catholics from engaging with modern scientific methods, an attitude which he regarded as endangering basic liberties. Although Albert Loisy is not as prominent in his book as its title might suggest, Williams laid emphasis on the fact that Loisy's meticulous scholarly contribution to Biblical criticism was being muzzled by papal interference. (Loisy was forced to resign from teaching, his books were placed on the Index, and he was eventually excommunicated, a year after Tyrrell, in 1908.) Williams saw the treatment of Loisy, whom he had visited in 1897 and 1898, as clear evidence that the current Vatican dictates were betraying some of the most important intellectual developments of the nineteenth century.

Williams's book was well received by all those sympathetic to his approach. Maude Petre thought it 'splendid', and Wilfred Ward praised its thought in a review as 'absolutely genuine, honest and impartial' and in a private letter as 'the deepest book on Newman's thought that has ever appeared' (Root, 97, 111 n109). Tyrrell,

though he considered its first draft badly constructed and had reservations about Williams's interpretation of Newman, was none the less influenced by his arguments; he told von Hügel that the book represented 'a far deeper apprehension than Wilfrid Ward's', and described Williams as 'out and out the best interpreter of Newman's unconscious philosophy' (Root, 98, 104). Unfortunately, however, the book has remained little known, probably because of its combination of originality and complexity. Even more unfortunately, three of the best general studies of the topic, A. R. Vidler's *The Modernist Movement in the Roman Church* (1933) and *A Variety of Catholic Modernists* (1970), and Marvin O'Connell's *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (1994), do not discuss it and present Williams as no more than a decidedly minor participant. Root is entirely justified in asserting that he still 'awaits recognition as a significant intellectual figure' (85).

At the time of the book's publication, however, Williams was about to step temporarily into the limelight, so far as Catholic Modernism was concerned. Events were clearly moving towards a climax. In February of 1906, Tyrrell had been dismissed from the Society of Jesus, and stayed on several occasions with Williams and his sister during the next two years. In September 1907, the Encyclical *Pascendi* appeared, announcing unequivocally Pope Pius X's determination to stamp out the whole movement. Tyrrell was excommunicated two months later, primarily as a result of writing a number of letters about the Encyclical to British and Italian newspapers. Those to *The Times* (30 September, 1 October 1907) were comparatively mild in tone, but caused considerable offence because he had discussed the matter in a Protestant journal. But it was Williams (possibly nudged by Tyrrell) who launched the strongest protest in two letters, also to *The Times* (November 2 and 6). Tyrrell believed that Williams's letters 'frightened the Vatican more than ... my antics' (Vidler 1977, 388). However that may be, they stung the *Catholic Times* sufficiently to make reference to 'the revolting Mr. Williams'!<sup>18</sup>

Williams's protest, perhaps the strongest to come from an English Catholic, was in many respects an extension of the argument in his book. To suggest that Newman was being condemned alongside such writers as Loisy and Tyrrell may be seen as a shrewd political move, since it would clearly be a potential source of embarrassment to a Church that had made Newman one of the first English cardinals since the Reformation. Two orthodox Catholics duly denied the allegation in subsequent letters to *The Times*, invoking 'the highest authority' (Root, 100, 101), but the identity of this 'highest authority' was never revealed, and most Modernists accepted Williams's argument. The effect of this renewed attack on the principle of papal infallibility was not only to cast doubt on the credibility of the Church in the modern world but to reach far more readers than it had found in the pages of his erudite book.

Root comments justifiably that little is known of Williams's later life, and much of what we know is indebted to JCP. Clearly, both indifferent health and alcoholism were problems. We do know that with his sister he attended Tyrrell's funeral in 1909.

However, he wrote comparatively little after 1907, though in 1910 he dispatched a stinging letter to the *Spectator* at the time when the anti-Modernist oath was announced in that year. He was apparently ‘the only lay English Catholic besides Maude Petre to announce publicly that he never would sign his adherence to *Pascendi*’ (Root, 105). Outspoken as ever, he lamented ‘the reckless way in which the present Pope has condemned almost every movement of intelligence and almost every man of intellect in the Church’<sup>19</sup> and went on to question the encyclical’s legality, even suggesting that it was itself heretical. As Root notes, adherence was never officially required of him; still, one feels that he escaped excommunication only because he was not considered important enough to justify taking an action that would attract further publicity. The last recorded Williams publication was a positive review of Ward’s *Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (1912), which appeared, late and somewhat obscurely, in the *Irish Journal of Education* in 1914. Root concludes his article by observing: ‘His death went unnoticed in the English press’ (106).

Two further oddities deserve to be recorded. First, Lester R. Kurtz, in *The Politics of Heresy: The Modernist Crisis in Roman Catholicism* (1986), though listing Root as a general source, bewilderingly confuses ‘The Catholic’ with the Williams of the publishing firm of Williams and Norgate. The second concerns the episode related by JCP in a letter to Llewelyn on 11 June 1926 (from Burpham):

I had a wonderful day and night with the Catholic and I found him quite like his former self and drinking nothing but port and beer ... But his year in Dieppe a year ago must have been an extraordinary episode, very agitating to his sister who was with him, for he frequented circus-people and people with tame bears and harlots and soldiers and I can’t tell what happened at the end—he stopped telling me; but he crushed his hand somehow and has his first finger of the right hand amputated, which gives a queer feeling when you shake hands with him ...<sup>20</sup>

Richard Perceval Graves [*The Brothers Powys*, 197] places this episode in Spain; but this was a country that according to JCP ‘The Catholic’ never saw, as ‘he was reluctant to go till he felt himself “ready”’.<sup>21</sup>

JCP was clearly fascinated by Williams for many reasons, and could not resist, as so often in *Autobiography*, creating a selective and not wholly fair portrait in the interests of a good story. Similarly, in *Wood and Stone*, the character of Taxater is certainly based on Williams, but contains more invention than accuracy. Williams was not a Jesuit, nor did he show any of the characteristics popularly recognized as Jesuitical. None the less, in *Autobiography* he fits well into JCP’s picture-gallery of eccentrics as ‘the first real Papist ... whom I had ever spoken to’ (Powys, 277), and comes across as a puzzling, lovable, and essentially human figure – a product of art with all the inconsistencies of life.

**W. J. Keith**

*for notes, see over*

## NOTES

- 1 Kenneth Hopkins, *The Powys Brothers* (Southrepps, Norfolk: Warren House Press, 1972), 17.
- 2 John D. Root, 'W. J. Williams, Newman, and Modernism', in Ronald Burke and George Gilmore, eds., *Modernist Uses of John Henry Newman* (Mobile, AL: Spring Hill College, 1982), 85–113. Subsequent references in text as 'Root'.
- 3 John Henry Newman (1801–90), English religious writer and reformer, converted in 1845, made a Cardinal in 1879, now likely to be canonised.
- 4 Blaise Pascal (1623–62), French scientist, philosophical and religious writer, anti-Jesuit, associated with the Jansenists; famous for his *Pensées* (1670).
- 5 Alfred Loisy (1857–1940), French RC theologian, standard-bearer for Biblical modernism, condemned and excommunicated 1893, later professor of religious history.
- 6 John Cowper Powys, *Autobiography* (London: Macdonald, 1967), 416. Subsequent reference in text as 'Powys'.
- 7 M. D. Petre, *Life of George Tyrrell from 1884 to 1909*, volume 2 of *Autobiography and Life of George Tyrrell* (London: Edward Arnold, 1912), 157. Subsequent references in text.
- 8 Nicholas Sagovsky, 'On God's Side': *The Life of George Tyrrell* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 154.
- 9 Morine Krissdóttir, *Descents of Memory* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2007), 124.
- 10 *Letters to Louis Wilkinson 1935–56* (Macdonald 1958), 73
- 11 Wilfred Ward (1856–1916), RC ecclesiastical historian, biographer of Cardinal Newman.
- 12 Baron Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925), Austrian RC religious writer, lived in England, naturalised in 1914.
- 13 George Tyrrell (1861–1909), Jesuit theologian expelled and barred for his controversial writings, especially critical of the traditional attitude to Hell. JCP wrote a memorial poem to him, printed in *The Occult Review* (ed. Ralph Shirley), September 1909. See below.
- 14 Maisie Ward (1889–1975), daughter of Wilfred, biographer of G. K. Chesterton, co-founder of the RC publishers Sheed and Ward. Maisie Ward, *The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition*. 2 vols. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934), I 260. Subsequent references in text. Maisie Ward recalls WJW and his family as neighbours in Eastbourne during her childhood there. They joked that he failed his seminary exam owing to his 'inability to put boots on while absorbed in thought'.
- 15 A. R. Vidler, 'An Abortive Renaissance: Catholic Modernists in Sussex', in Derek Baker, ed., *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1977), 387.
- 16 Marvin R. O'Connell, *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 39.
- 17 W. J. Williams, *Newman, Pascal, Loisy and the Catholic Church* (London: Francis Griffiths, 1906), 148, 158. Subsequent references in text.
- 18 Michael De La Bedoyère, *The Life of Baron von Hügel* (London: Dent, 1951), 90.
- 19 W. J. Williams, 'The Encyclical *Pascendi*?', *Spectator* (24 December 1910), 1033.
- 20 Malcolm Elwin, ed. *Letters to His Brother Llewelyn* (2 vols. London, Village Press, 1975), II 45.
- 21 See Richard Perceval Graves, *The Brothers Powys* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 197, and *Autobiography*, 342.

See also Derek Langridge, *John Cowper Powys, A Record of Achievement*, 42–3: Cambridge University Local Lectures, 'Syllabus of Twelve Lectures on Representative Prose Writers of the Nineteenth Century, by J. C. Powys, MA. (1902), Lecture XII: Newman'.

WJK, KK

## IN MEMORIAM: GEORGETYRRELL

by John Cowper Powys

Lo, sinks the dust of our debate!  
The smoke of our confusion falls!  
Before this shadow of the gate –  
Before the writing on the walls –

A power more drastic and more stern  
Than man's revolt or church's law,  
Hath poured thy lot from out of the urn,  
Hath pushed thy vessel from the shore.

In the large weather of such doom  
We hear the eternal time-piece tick,  
And watch the same grass deck the tomb  
Of Protestant and Catholic.

Lo, we are put to silence: shame  
Weighs on us: from the Midnight rolls  
The Requiem needing not a name,  
The Mass-bell that for all men tolls.

Yes! We are hushed; as men who've drawn  
Leagues nearer where the stream they sail  
Into the great salt sea is borne,  
Each thinks the other's lips so pale!

How slight our quarrels when there blows  
From out the dark this dreadful wind!  
Kiss quick! And pardon all! Who knows  
Who least or most of us hast sinned?

"He battled for the truth!" so they  
Who strove against him; yea, they too –  
And we who peradventure stay  
Outside the outer courts he knew,

We also strive; yet who should cry  
Among us all, lo! there! lo! here!  
The old impenetrable sky  
Looks down and hears – or does not hear –

*from The Occult Review, September 1909*

## *'Even a totem-pole!' — JCP and Religion*

John Cowper famously contained multitudes, and his admirers have frequently objected to his being claimed exclusively for particular schools of thought, political or religious or unbelieving. Michael Hanbury's gentle tribute in *The Month* (November 1963), 'John Cowper Powys and some Catholic contacts', makes no claims but sympathy. Hanbury mentions Williams and his 'deep and subtle book', and contains this nicely off-the-record view by (and of) JCP's son:

J. C. Powys' only son, the late Fr. Littleton Alfred Powys, a holy and very popular priest of the Clifton diocese, wrote me a letter in 1952 (two years before his untimely death) in which he said:

*My Dad is quite frankly pagan and a polytheist (much more fun than being a Pantheist) though his Gods are not of the tiresome, overdone Classical variety, but earthy and primitive. He has a strong liking for Jehovah as long as he remained a tribal deity! O dear what fun I get out of my family! ...*

As we know there is much religion in paganism, and, if largely pagan, John Cowper Powys was at opposite poles to the self-satisfied materialist or to the man who thinks that modern science has solved the riddle of the universe ... He was a man with an irresistible urge to worship, and many Gods, for that reason, are limited in power and so in responsibility. So by choosing Polytheism he evaded having to reconcile an

Almighty, All-holy Ruler of the world with the existence of the evil that so distressed him. John Powys favoured me in the fifties with a number of very kind and characteristic letters. In one he said he was “a terrific believer in prayer” ... He threw some light on his choice of a religion by saying: “I think Polytheism is the natural instinctive religion of all creatures who enjoy worshipping something—even a Totem-Pole!!”

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## *The stone God of Phudd* *Patrick Quigley goes on a literary pilgrimage*

Hundreds of ladybirds swarmed in red and yellow patterns over the porch at 753 Harlemville Road in upstate New York. I stood before the white-painted door screen as the tiny creatures flew against my face and settled on my arms. At last I was on the porch of Phudd Bottom, the house in Columbia County where John Cowper Powys retreated from New York City in 1930 to create some of his greatest works – *A Glastonbury Romance*, *Weymouth Sands* and the *Autobiography*.

I had come from Albany on a sunny day in late autumn. The road twisted through intimate valleys and densely forested hills where the trees were in the final stages of shedding their leaves, holding the brightest golden banners to the last. Many of the trees had ‘No Trespassing’ notices pinned to the bark. We drove past shuttered wooden houses as we searched for Phudd.

When I read *Descents of Memory* I was entranced by the way Powys invested the land around the cottage with his mythology. He called it a means to re-imagine his beginnings – ‘a Calypso’s Isle where he could recreate his Ithacan home’ (288). I wanted to discover if any trace of that magic still lingered in the place. ‘I have named every stone and post and hedge and stream and spring around here’, he wrote in March, 1932. ‘Old Wordsworth himself didn’t name so many!’

The house had been extended since the 1930s, but it looked remarkably similar to the dwelling in the old photographs. Walls, windows, doors and fence were painted an immaculate white, emphasising the patterns made by the ladybirds. The stone steps were covered in layers of fallen leaves. There was nobody home, but I could imagine a long figure in a corner with a writing board on his knees. Did the little valley covered with trees and bushes look the same as it must have appeared to Powys and Phyllis all those years ago?

The naturalist writer, Alan Devoe, bought the house from Powys and wrote about the area in his 1937 book, *Phudd Hill*: ‘So green are these hills, and so round and so many, that they suggest the massive tumuli of some gigantic and immemorially ancient race of man. I have walked upon them and extracted from their timeless earthiness the profoundest peace which it is possible to know.’

Across the road I explored the lawn-like field with its garden seat and street lantern. Some of the withered trees could date from the 1930s. The dry stones of the creek shone like bones through the thinning foliage. Powys saw the effects of drought when trout were trapped in the drying pools and saw them crawl over the rocks in search of water. In between sessions on his *Autobiography* in 1934 he would use a net and pail to transfer fish into deeper water. Somewhere on top of Phudd Hill were the stones he named the Avenue of the Dead, leading to

the greatest stone he called the God of Phudd. There was another huge stone 'in a tangle of sumac alders' on nearby Wolf Hill, to commemorate the poet Arthur Davidson Ficke who loaned Powys the money to buy Phudd Bottom. Edgar Lee Masters of *Spoon River* fame once rented a barn nearby. Like Powys' previous home in Patchin Place in New York City, the area was a magnet for writers.

To Powys the trees, streams and rocks became hallowed ground, the key to the energy he needed to produce three gargantuan books. He was Adam in Eden giving names to living things. On Phudd Hill he would recreate the England of his childhood and make it serve as a resource for the deeply imagined landscapes in his later works set in England and Wales. He described the myth-making activity in his letters and diaries, which are available to those who want to use them.

The slope behind the house was more wooded and steeper than I had expected. My driver waited as I walked up the road in search of a chain-saw operator. Rick Bensman was cutting logs for winter, but turned off the saw to talk to the stranger. The house now belonged to a couple from New York who used it at weekends. I asked about Mr Krick who used to have a chicken farm. He said there were still working farms in the area, but many New York city-dwellers had second homes there. The Hawthorne Valley Association was doing a lot to promote local enterprise and had brought more people in. We talked about how hard life must have been in the early 1930s. Rick's electricity was out for a week last winter, but he enjoyed the chance to use his survival skills. At least with all the timber around nobody would freeze to death.

Rick knew about the stones at the summit, but thought they were overgrown with scrub. A climb and search would take more time than I could spare. He recommended a visit to the poet, Peter Kane Dufault, who lived down the road. The 85-year old was also preparing for winter, chopping logs with an axe. He wasn't fond of John Cowper Powys 'too self-absorbed', but glad to talk about his experiences on a poetry tour in Ireland. It was a conversation that could have gone on for hours, but my guide was waiting so there was only time for a photograph before he gave me copies of his books. I had come to search for traces of a dead writer, but found a living one whose vision is not a million miles from Powys's sense of the cosmic: '*— I mean, not of you and me only/ but of elephants, trees,/ bugs, bi-valves/ even minerals;/ agree that each one is torn,/ because cosmos itself is torn,/ between All and Nothing — All/ dimensions and None —*'\*

We drove to Harlemlive and asked in the Red Maple bookstore if they had any Powys material, but the negative response was predictable. So many writers lived in this area, the woman said. As we left the valley the sky gradually darkened, the cloud solidifying into strange shapes in a colder world. My attention was drawn to a peculiar oval opening in the clouds. In the centre there appeared an elongated shape that resembled JCP in profile, looking over the landscape that had stimulated him.

I hadn't found the stones, but I had a sense that the link between creative imagination and this corner of the world was still strong. Marcella Henderson-Peal has suggested a Powys tour in America to places connected with the remarkable family. I doubt if it could encompass all the places they visited, but Phudd Hill should be on the top of the list. ... Maybe we could follow the track Powys climbed each day and see if we can find among the trees and bushes the hidden face of the God of Phudd.

**Patrick Quigley**

\* P.K.Dufault: 'Lacrimae Rerum' from Looking In All Directions. Peter Dufault's long poem about Ficke's stone and the vagaries of literary reputation is printed in the Powys Society Newsletter 65

*"James Douglas Battles with An Atheist"*  
*Daily Express, May 15th 1930*

The old atheists were crude and simple swashbucklers and braves. They lacked the subtlety and sophistry of the new atheists with their pseudo-scientific and psycho-analytical jargon. They bludgeoned the theologians, the doctrinaires, and the dogmatists, and derided their discords, contradictions, and absurdities. The new atheists are more artful. They explain Christ charmingly and reverently in order to explain Him away.

Bradlaugh was not nearly so crafty as his successors. His cudgel was not nearly so deadly as their poison gas. "**The Pathetic Fallacy**" (Longmans), published to-day, is a piece of atheistical propaganda which is more dangerous than its precursors because it is more plausible. Its dialectical brilliancy masks its shallow sophistry. Its literary glitter conceals its ignorance.

Mr. Llewelyn Powys dismisses Christianity as a "moribund religion." He assures us that "we have pretended long enough. Christianity is but a dream of savagery and pitifulness.

"Beyond the clouds that are blown about the earth's surface there is none that wots of it. It has no validity in the outer spaces. The wide, drifting stars of the galactic stream know naught of it."

\* \* \*

There is no dogmatist more dogmatic than your highbrow atheist. How does Mr Powys know that the spiritual teaching of Christ has no validity in the outer spaces? He has not been there. He has no title to talk about the vision of truth in the galaxy. "There is none to save," he chatters; "there is none who cares to save us. Generations will pass, centuries will pass, and Christianity will dissolve back into mist. Even though we are frightened, even though we are broken, even though our heads are bowed, it is prudent to disregard it. Christianity is impotent. Deliverance cannot

come of it. A wise man can do no better than to turn from the Churches and look up through the airy majesty of the wayside trees with exultation, with resignation, at the unconquerable unimplicated sun."

New dogmas for old! After assaulting all the old dogmas which Christianity has sloughed, this new dogmatist spins a fresh set of dogmas which are in reality as old-fashioned as the old ones. He poses as a prophet, and, like all false prophets, he allows his vague predictions generations and centuries to play in.

The short retort to him is that Christianity is a living religion which has lived for 2,000 years in the living experience of mankind, which has survived the errors of theologians and creed-builders, and which renews itself perpetually in age after age.

The truth is that Mr. Powys is only a tourist who trudges over ancient battlefields where dim battles were fought that have now no relation to our time. He grubs among the relics and ruins of outmoded polemics.

\* \* \*

He mumbles the musty bones of discarded and discredited superstitions. He digs up the fossils of beliefs that only traditionalists and archaeologists are interested in.

Christianity has marched over the ancient pots and potsherds which he excavates. It is not defending the crumbling walls which he scales. It is not entrenched in the mouldering trenches which he bombards with his obsolete artillery.

It is pathetically humorous to watch his attempts to slay the slain. He is dismally unconscious of the fact that we have evacuated the untenable old forts which he so eagerly besieges. He blows his trumpets round mythical Jerichos that fell long before he was born.

It is comical to see him squaring manfully



up to the Latin Fathers and scoring body-blows at the expense of Tertullian. It is droll to watch him tackling the ghost of Calvin.

But it is reassuring to observe the wary caution with which he hovers round the spiritual teaching of Christ, vainly searching for a joint in the invulnerable armour.

Theologies may wither. Creeds and Churches may wax and wane. Institutions may outlive their usefulness. The husks and shells of religion may decay. But throughout the changes in the fashion of human thought, the modified theories and hypotheses of physical science, the power of Christ to heal and help abides.

★ ★ ★

Each age has its own outfit of thought, but His vision and revelation remain as the furthest goal that is to be striven towards by the individual man and by the Great Man, Man-kind.

Christ evades and baffles all human thought, because His thought reaches further than our thought and further than any thought that we can foresee. He cannot be superseded in our age and we cannot envisage an age in which He will be superseded.

Science may nibble at the cosmos for the next few billions of years, but it cannot invalidate the truth revealed by Christ which is verified in each life that puts it to the proof of experience.

★ ★ ★

The form of our statements of our knowledge of the truth varies from age to age. But the form is naught. It is the living reality that matters.

"The human race," says Mr. Powys, "has suffered three grave humiliations; when Copernicus showed that the earth was not the centre of the universe; when Darwin proved that man's origin was not the result of a direct creation; when Freud explained that man was

not the master of his own thoughts and actions." What sciolism!

★ ★ ★

Christ's vision ranges further than Copernicus, Darwin and Freud. It passes far beyond astronomy, biology, and psychology. It deals with the world of spirit, not the world of matter.

God is a spirit and man is a spirit, and the living truth is their joint quest of unity and harmony. After all, Mr. Powys is only one in the long procession of rhapsodes and rhetoricians who have said in their heart. "There is no God".

*James Douglas (1867–1940): British critic, editor of the Star and (till 1931) of Sunday Express. He supported censorship and banning of unsuitable books (e.g. James Hanley's Boy, prosecuted in 1934–5).*

*Charles Bradlaugh (1833–91): British political activist, co-founder of the National Secular Society in 1866. A famous atheist, he refused to take the Bible oath as an MP.*

*The Pathetic Fallacy (published in America as An Hour On Christianity) was one of the three books that came out of LIP's visit to Palestine in 1928. (See Bibliography by Peter Foss, p. 47.) It received generally hostile reviews, but James Douglas's article appeared not as a review but on the editorial page of the Express, surrounded by 'Should Hanging Be Abolished' [No] – 'Oppression [in India] "Bunkum"' – 'Hall Caine And Others' [Poets live to 80! Writers in their 60s preserve youthful vigour!] 'a great argument for using the brain and the imagination as hard as they can be used ...' – and several admonitions to women – 'Poor Little Rich Girl by "A Plain Man"', 'A Wife in a Million' etc. On the other side of Douglas was the zany non-PC 'Beachcomber' ['Why do conjurers never produce rabbits from straw hats? ("Anxious, Luton")'] ...*

## *How an artist used John Cowper Powys*

My parents knew well the painter Bernard Meninsky (1891–1950). His widow Nora, his second and much younger wife, lived into the 1990s; my mother and I saw her regularly, and when she died I inherited her books which included quite a number which had belonged to Bernard. Among these were nearly seventy which had been extensively marked and annotated by him, sometimes with pages cut or cut out. Almost all of these mutilated books I gave to the Tate for their Meninsky archive, but one of the three that I have retained was the 1935 Bodley Head *The Art of Happiness*.

I have reproduced here the first endpaper from *The Art of Happiness* heavily marked with page references, and gems copied out from the text, and on the last page is a typical example of an opening with the numerous sidelinings, underlinings, and signals, with which he showed how avidly and seriously he had read, marked and learnt from this work of JCP.

We would normally, of course, deplore such treatment of a book, but obviously it had some special messages for Meninsky, and is to be respected for that.

Meninsky did oils both of my mother and of my father Herbert in the early 30s; these now hang in our house. These are just two of quite a large number of Meninsky's paintings that my parents bought, but I now have only one other here.

Meninsky is now sadly underrated as a artist, but these two are excellent likenesses of Herbert and Isobel, which at one time people would ask if they were portraits of our own children !

**Stephen Powys Marks**



*Isobel Powys Marks (24 by 18 in) and Herbert Henry Marks (24 by 16 in)  
oil on canvas by Bernard Meninsky, early 1930s.*



The Art of Happiness, by John Cowper Powys:  
Meninsky's references on the front end-paper.

### THE ART OF HAPPINESS

the particular kind of attraction that women, who are not Lesbians at all, feel for each other. To be happy with that deep, fluid, pervasive, I might almost say *chemical* happiness, that is only waiting to brim over from the sacred fount and invade every nerve and fibre, a woman ought to feel her desirability first with regard to the elements, that is to say with regard to the cosmos, then with regard to herself, then with regard to other women, then with regard to her particular man.

However harassed and poor and haggard and ill-dressed any woman may be no day should pass without her letting herself love herself and feel soft and delicious and lovely *for* herself. She may be mending stockings, washing at the sink, digging in the garden, baking bread in the oven, suckling her child, lighting the fire, laying the table, but if she has not allowed all the magic of life to drain away from her by misuse and abuse, she ought to be able to yield herself up to that mysterious embrace of the universe, in which she feels that she loves everything in the world and is loved by everything in the world.

Those extraordinary feelings of rapturous happiness that come sometimes to women, when, thinking of "something else," they suddenly see their whole life in a new perspective and feel as if it were overpoweringly lovely, have to do, not with her mind at all, but with an elemental reciprocity that exists between life itself and the feminine senses.

And let her extend this voluptuous secret life of the senses, wherein she loves herself and feels herself

### WOMAN WITH MAN

loved by inanimate things, into all her human encounters, whether with men or women. Every woman ought to be a bride of the universe in that same mystic sense with which nuns—who with all they renounce never renounce their essential femininity—are brides of the Mystery behind the universe; and this mystical radiance, this emanation of magical happiness that she draws from life—and in a sense from death too, for every woman is a Persephone caught up between life and death—she ought to have the power of transmitting in the subtle chthonian smile with which she greets everyone who approaches her.

A woman who understands the art of arts, the art of being a woman, will never have need to cuckold her mate with any particular man. There is not a human being who looks her in the face to whom she does not give a life-restoring drop from the sacred fount, to whom, in a psychic sense, she does not offer herself. She offers herself in her smile. She offers herself in her expression. She offers herself with every movement and with every rest from movement.

And what above all this woman offers, this woman who has learnt the oldest of all arts, the art simpler than literature, more magical than poetry, the art the lack of which in the Creator of our cosmos "brought death into the world and all our woe, with loss of Eden," is the gift of being happy after past tragedy, with the possibility of future tragedy, and while tragedy is going on around.