

Newsletter 74 : ERRATA

Apologies once again for the errors in the previous (November) *Newsletter*, owing to a mix-up with the files sent to the printer. The corrected NL74 can be viewed on the website. *Other than typos, etc., please note:*

FRONT COVER – **drawing by Rosemary Dickens, of Friends of LIP meeting in *The Sailor's Return*.**

page 5 – BOOK ROOM managed by Trevor Davies **with Sonia Lewis.**

page 7 – THE ENTERTAINMENT–**Thanks to all readers! KK**

page 19 – [following letter from W. J. Keith] **TERRY DIFFEY explains that he was referring to his personal objection to being classified as a ‘professional’ academic, not to the attitude of the Society as a whole.**

page 20 – DIFFEY POEM V, lines 7–9: **Did he come by that falcon’s glance / strenuously, or was it his / natively endowed?**

page 44 [end of JCP on Proust] note – **Coleridge: ‘Dejection, an Ode’.**

Editorial

NL 75 is a near-one-horse number, with one year (1957) of JCP’s letters to Louis Wilkinson, edited by Louis as a sequel to the published *Letters 1935–56*. (An example of letters before editing is included for comparison). JCP at 85 is still entertaining, albeit not exempt from what he rather welcomed as ‘second-childishness’ (‘my pet-name for senility’) in the memory-lapses, repetitions and enjoyment of what might seem trivial – characteristics with which perhaps not a few senior members can sympathise. Editor would like views from readers saying whether they’d like more of these letters. We look forward to meetings in March (Ely) and Dorchester (June) and to our return to Street for an inviting Conference.

ON OTHER PAGES

Powys events: Oxford, Ely, Dorchester	2	News & Notes	12
AGM 2012 notice; subscriptions	3	Colloquy of the Ancients	15
Committee Nominations	4	John Cowper Powys to Louis	
Annual Conference & Speakers	5	Umfreville Wilkinson, 1957	17
Obituary: Dr Dennis Burton	8	— Transcript by R. V. Lancaster	44
NL 74: Answers to queries	9, 11	Reviews by Anthony Head &	
Wisdom of Samuel Johnson	10	Jeremy Hooker	44

JCP at Oxford, 24th March

John Gray (who spoke on ‘Three Powys Philosophies’ at Chichester in 2006) will be giving a **talk on JCP** at the **2012 Sunday Times Oxford Literary Festival** on **Saturday 24 March** (4 p.m. at Christchurch, the Blue Boar auditorium). **See p. 12.**

Two Powys Days

Ely, Saturday 31st March 2012

Our President, Glen Cavaliero, will lead a discussion of JCP’s novel ***Owen Glendower*** focusing on Chapter XII, ‘Mathrafal’. The meeting will be held at the ***Old Fire Engine House, 25 St Mary’s Street***, a restaurant and art gallery in the centre of Ely near the cathedral. **Welcome and coffee**, in the upstairs sitting room, is at **10.30 am**. We will commence our discussion at **11.00**. **Lunch** will be served downstairs in the restaurant from **12.00 to 13.00**. After a short break we will reconvene to continue our discussion in the afternoon.

Owen Glendower, written between 1937 and 1939, was first published in the USA in 1941 and in the UK in 1942. It is considered by many commentators to be one of JCP’s most accomplished works, especially in his evocation of its physical setting and the time period of the early fifteenth century. Our discussion will attempt to draw out the key features and achievements of the book including the novel’s genesis, its role in JCP’s life at a key period, its relationship to his attitude to Wales and Welsh culture, his imaginary depiction of the character of the real Owen Glendower and his view of Welsh history and mythology, as well as his handling of the conventions of the historical ‘romance’ narrative and the historical novel.

Owen Glendower was most recently reprinted, with an introduction by Morine Krissdóttir, by Rob Stepney’s Walcot Books in 2002 (a personal enterprise – see NLS 44 and 45), and with Overlook Press (2003) and Duckworth (2006). A useful introduction and overview of the novel can be found in Professor Keith’s *Aspects of Owen Glendower*, published by The Powys Society in 2008.

The event is free although a charge will be made for lunch which is optional. For details of menu choices for lunch and prices please visit the web site of the venue at:

[<www.theoldfireenginehouse.co.uk>](http://www.theoldfireenginehouse.co.uk)

Dorchester, Saturday 9th June

At the **Dorset County Museum**, Dorchester, in the library, at **10.30 for 11.00** start. Members are invited to bring their favourite Powys book or books, read selected passages, and discuss the significance or personal relevance of their choices with others at the meeting.

After lunch, at **2.00**, **Frank Kibblewhite** will present a talk, postponed from last

year, 'The Imaginative Worlds of Llewelyn and Theodore Powys'. Frank is the Society's webmaster and has a deep understanding of all the members of the Powys family as well as exceptional knowledge of Dorset and close acquaintance with places associated with TFP and Llewelyn. Frank's Sundial Press which has reprinted a number of Powys books including some scarce and previously unpublished titles – see <www.sundialpress.co.uk>

The **Powys Society Collection**, housed in the Dorset County Museum, will be open during the meeting. At the close of the meeting we will visit a place of local Powysian interest.

Coffee and refreshments will be available during the day. **Lunch** will be from **13.00 to 14.00** at No. 6 restaurant, North Square. **The event is free** with the exception of optional lunch.

Anyone interested is very welcome to join both events. If you wish to attend these meetings **please notify Secretary** by e-mail at <chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk> or by post to **Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG**.

Annual General Meeting 2012

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting of the Powys Society** will be held at **11.00 on Sunday 19th August 2012** at the **Wessex Hotel**, Street, near Glastonbury.

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

“Or, a lion's gamb in bend between two cross-crosslets fitchée (I don't know what that means) gules”

see JCP letter on page 23.



Subscriptions

In view of the increased cost of postage, etc., the Committee has decided that we must raise the subscription rates, to **£22 for UK members and £26 for overseas members** (this is in line with most other literary societies). New rates will apply **from next year, 2013**, and in the next *Newsletter* we will enclose a 'Change of Standing Order' form for members to pass on to their bank.

Committee Nominations

Nominations are invited for **Honorary Officers** and **Members** of the Powys Society Committee to take effect from August 2012.

All paid up members and honorary members may submit nominations for the Committee. Nominations must include the name of the **Proposer** and a **Seconder** and should be submitted in writing or by e-mail, accompanied by a statement confirming the **Nominees' agreement**.

Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary
by e-mail: <chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk>
or by post to Flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG.

Nominations must be received by Hon. Secretary by **Saturday 23 June**.

Current Honorary Officers of the Committee

<i>Chairman</i>	Tim Hyman
<i>Vice-Chairman</i>	Peter Foss
<i>Hon. Treasurer</i>	Anna Pawelko
<i>Hon. Secretary</i>	Chris Thomas

Nominations are sought for the **four positions of Honorary Officers from August 2012**.

Current Members of the Committee

Kate Kavanagh (*Newsletter editor*), Stephen Powys Marks, Michael Kowalewski (*Collection Manager*), Louise de Bruin (*Conference Organiser and Publications Manager*), Trevor Davies, Shelagh Powys Hancox, and Charles Lock (*Editor of The Powys Journal*) who serves as *ex-officio* member of the Committee. Kate Kavanagh's three-year term of office expires in August 2012. A vacancy has also occurred as Anna Pawelko has taken on the role of Hon. Treasurer.

Nominations are therefore sought for **two positions of Members of the Committee from August 2012**.

The Powys Society Annual Conference 2012
The Wessex Hotel, Street

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th August

‘MANY VOICES, MANY WORLDS’

This year our conference includes talks on JCP, Llewelyn, and T. F. Powys. Our venue is the Wessex Hotel in Street where we were made to feel very welcome when we visited here in 2010. The hotel, located a short distance from Glastonbury and Wirral Hill, provides a perfect centre for an exploration of *insula avalonia*. Here we are close to places which have a strong Powysian resonance. The names of places had a special meaning for all the Powys brothers. ‘Names are magical powers. Names can work miracles’ said JCP. ‘Is there in very deed some occult mysterious power in names?’ asked Llewelyn. When JCP visited Glastonbury in 1929 and saw the familiar shape of the Tor, crowned with its medieval tower, he immediately fell into a state of wonderment and reverie: ‘*The Tower, The Tower, The Tower. O Tower help me.*’ But the myths and legends that inspired *A Glastonbury Romance* seemed ultimately to JCP to have an enervating effect: ‘... they are all dreams, all dreams within dreams and the underlying reality beneath them is something completely different from them all.’ Yet he also thought of Glastonbury as a place of immemorial mystery, magnetic power, and personal inner change and transformation.

This Powysian fascination with the magical potency of words and the evocative power of names and places touches on the themes and subjects of our conference – the human reality of sacred and secular experience seen from the point of view of religion and theology; the link between local places and the wider cosmopolitan world; the mystery of the *multiverse*, and the creative relationship between writer and publisher. The ‘**Many Voices**’ are the many voices of the fictional characters that fill the books of the Powys brothers. But they are also ‘*our voices*’ as readers and critics. The ‘**Many Worlds**’ are the innumerable worlds and infinite spaces of the *multiverse* as well as the many imaginary worlds created by JCP, Llewelyn and TFP in their literary and philosophical works. **Michael Kowalewski** will explore JCP’s unique vision of the world and his sense of the ‘sacred’ in everyday life from the perspective of religion. **Arjen Mulder** will survey the life and work of **Llewelyn Powys** and look at the interaction between local and cosmopolitan elements in his writing. **Marcella Henderson-Peal** will explore the concept of plurality and the *multiverse* in the life philosophy of JCP. **Michael Caines** will examine the relationship between T.F.Powys, Sylvia Townsend Warner and TFP’s publisher Charles Prentice.

On **Saturday afternoon** there will be an opportunity to take a guided tour of the Powys family home in Montacute visiting the gardens, terrace and stables as well as the interior of the old Vicarage.

Our **Entertainment** on **Saturday evening** will be a reading of scenes from JCP’s unstaged play *Paddock Calls*. The play, written in 1922, is a far-fetched Freudian/

Ibsenish family romance which still has many things for us to enjoy, including a cast of recognisably eccentric Powysian character types and a host of familiar Powysian situations.

Recorded readings During the Conference we hope to be able to offer members the opportunity of making a recording of their own reading of passages from a favourite book by one of the Powyses. Our expert technicians will be on hand to assist. We hope, with the permission of members, to upload these readings to our website.

Please don't forget to bring along your donation of books for our **booksale**. The book-room will be open as usual, at special times, over the whole weekend.

Timothy Hyman
Chris Thomas

Conference draft timetable

Friday 17th August

- 16.00 Arrival
- 17.30 Reception
- 18.30 Dinner
- 20.00 **Michael Kowalewski** (on JCP)

Saturday 18th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Arjen Mulder** (LIP)
Coffee
- 11.15 **Marcella Henderson-Peal** (JCP)
- 12.45 Lunch
- Afternoon free. Excursion to Montacute.
- 18.00 ? talk by **Larry Mitchell**
- 19.00 Dinner
- 20.00 **Paddock Calls** reading

Sunday 19th August

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.30 **Michael Caines** (on TFP)
- 11.00 **AGM**
- 12.00 **Discussion ?**
- 13.00 Lunch
- 15.00 Departure

The order of the talks may be changed. We also hope to include a short talk by Prof. Larry Mitchell about the holdings of the Cushing Library at Texas A&M University.

From the Conference Speakers

Michael Kowalewski:

John Cowper Powys: The Sacred, the Secular and the Sexual.

JCP was not 'only' a great writer, he was fully engaged in the culture wars of his time, over the shape of society, the individual's attitude to it and the apparent death of God and fading of religion. He experienced modernity as a great disaster and loathed modern science which he found incarnated in the practice of vivisection. But he could not fall back on either his father's orthodox Anglicanism or his friend The Catholic's faith. He was drawn to Taoism but knew he had to find his own answers – or rather questions. His solution was to create his own cult – his 'mythology' as it is called in *Wolf Solent* – out of historic memory, ancient places, natural settings and personal cultic acts and psychic obsessions. His erotic nerve he used as a source of magic power, akin to Tantrism, which propelled him into a multiverse of the imagination. Both mystic and sceptic he was traveller of the road of the magical quest, nurtured on the romances of the mediaeval period more than the bourgeois novels of the nineteenth century. We should not make a cult of him but acknowledge he did make his own cult from which he drew to create his unique world of fiction.

Arjen Mulder: *Into the world and back again.*

Llewelyn Powys started as a cosmopolitan writer and ended as a local writer, the opposite direction of the one every author has to take nowadays to become a success, both artistically and commercially. What did Llewelyn lose and what did he gain in this journey? And what are we losing and gaining if we follow the opposite route?

Marcella Henderson Peal:

Unruliness and Synchronicity in John Cowper Powys's multiverse.

A map of JCP's multiverse approached through mythology, Jung, and quantum science.

Michael Caines: *A holiday with Theo (and his publisher).*

From the 1920s onwards, T. F. Powys enjoyed the support and friendship of his fellow writer Sylvia Townsend Warner and his publisher Charles Prentice, of Chatto & Windus, who stood by him despite his relative lack of commercial success before the publication of *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. 'A holiday with Theo (and his publisher)' will trace and celebrate the evolution of this artistically productive friendship between three very different people.

About the Speakers

Michael Kowalewski is the current Manager of the Powys Society Collection at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester. He is a practising artist who explores Powysian themes in his paintings, with a special interest in religion and theology. He has lived in Bhutan and travelled widely in South Asia. He studied art history, archaeology and anthropology at Cambridge University and Buddhism at London's

School of Oriental & African Studies. Michael says that he decided to relocate to Dorset to fulfill his obsession with Powys books and ideas. He has published articles on TFP in the Powys Society *Newsletter* and most recently on JCP in *la lettre powysienne*.

Arjen Mulder is editor at V2 Publishing in Rotterdam, teaches at the Utrecht School of Arts Master Program, and has published a series of collections of essays in both Dutch and English. His latest publication in English is *From Image to Interaction: Meaning and Agency in the Arts* (2011), a survey of continuities and disruptions in (mostly) twentieth-century art. This followed a biography of Constance Dowling, a Hollywood personality whose life gives a portrait of mid-twentieth-century media revolutions.

Marcella Henderson-Peal lives in Paris and teaches English at UPEC-Paris 12 University. She is currently writing a PhD dissertation on 'Spiritual Tension, Sensations and Realities in John Cowper Powys's works'. at the Sorbonne (Paris-3) and has been a member of The Powys Society since 2005.

Michael Caines is literature and fiction editor at the *Times Literary Supplement* and, many years after leaving university, recently went back to pursue a PhD on a part-time basis at King's College London. He has edited books on eighteenth-century theatre and acted as a consultant for the National Theatre on their current production of *She Stoops To Conquer*. Last year his review of the Faber Finds reissues of T. F. Powys appeared in the *TLS* (see N&N page 14) He also helped to adapt T. F. Powys's novel *Unclay* for the Bagg Theatre at the Young Vic in 2010.

Professor **J. Lawrence Mitchell's** *T.F. Powys: Aspects of a Life* was published by The Brynmill Press in 2005. The J. Lawrence Mitchell Literature Collection in the Cushing Library at Texas A&M University 'is one of the largest and most diverse literature collections in Cushing. While its core remains English writers between the World Wars its material extends to book history and publishing, illustration, and a large grouping of books about boxing. ... In addition the collection contains extensive material from two literary dynasties, the Powys and Garnett families.'

Obituary

Dr J. Dennis Burton (1931–2011)

From Jacqueline Peltier

I have the great sadness to announce the sudden death of Dr Burton, aged 80, at his home in Southampton, on December 19th 2011.

I had the privilege of meeting him in 2006 at St Deiniol's, Hawarden, during a George Borrow conference organised by Dr Ann Ridler, which Anna Pawelko and I



attended. Dr Burton was a distinguished and highly respected member of the George Borrow Society which he joined in 1999 and to which he devoted much of his time.

As I quickly realised when I talked to Dennis in Hawarden, he was also remarkably knowledgeable in Powysiana. Soon after our meeting, he became a member of The Powys Society, and in 2006 he attended the Chichester Conference. He was a modest and unassuming man, and I am not sure how many people noticed his presence; on the other hand I know he took great pleasure in being among us.

Prior to his retirement Dennis had been specifically concerned with chemical oceanography (such topics as the acidification of the oceans), and was very widely travelled at sea; in 1999 a special commemorative issue of *Marine Chemistry* was published in his honour. According to Dr Ridler, who knew him well, 'he was the most remarkably widely read person in modern English literature that I've ever come across, with a particular interest, beside Borrow, in George Gissing, W. G. Sebald and the Powys brothers. He was also widely knowledge about film.'

I am proud to add that my *lettre* 13 includes a short note by Dennis, who of course knew and loved *Weymouth Sands*, about the location of the 'Dorothy Restaurant'. Dennis will be missed; is already missed.

Newsletter 74: Answers to queries, I

Theodore, Llewelyn, and Dr Johnson

Theodore to Katie, May 10th 1941:

Will you tell Gertrude and Alyse how much we have enjoyed Lulu's Book [*A Baker's Dozen*]. And Gertrude's pictures which we think very good indeed. Please tell Alyse that I liked especially Lulu's quotation from Dr Johnson that falls in well with my own Ideas and as I do not remember it in Boswell, nor have I ever heard it quoted before I read it with great pleasure and very much admired Lulu's wisdom in putting it there. (*Newsletter 74, page 25*)

Llewelyn Powys, 'Herring Gulls' from A Baker's Dozen, 1941

page 71: Boswell during his journey to the Hebrides complained of a bad night, attributing his insomnia to the fact that the pillow upon which his head rested was fitted with the feathers of sea-fowl.

James Boswell, Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides. Tuesday, 24 August 1773

I had a most elegant room; but there was a fire in it which blazed; and the sea, to

which my windows looked, roared; and the pillows were made of the feathers of some sea-fowl, which had to me a disagreeable smell: so that, by all these causes, I was kept awake a good while.

page 74: ... How startling is the irrepressible vigour of life manifested on every plane! Dr. Johnson once remarked to Boswell, *No, Sir, to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive.* If such a view can be taken of our tentative altruism, what room for disinterested action could possibly remain for these birds whose wilful yelps of self-assertion break so violently each day against the ceiling of the heaven?

Boswell's Life of Johnson, April 26th 1776 (at Bath):

A literary lady of large fortune was mentioned, as one who did good to many, but by no means "by stealth," and instead of "blushing to find it fame," acted evidently from vanity. JOHNSON: "I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence, as she does from whatever motive. If there are such under the earth, or in the clouds, I wish they would come up, or come down ... No, Sir; to act from pure benevolence is not possible for finite beings. Human benevolence is mingled with vanity, interest, or some other motive."

If the chalk promontory of Bats Head be visited in the spring at the nesting season it is a moving sight to watch the desperate swooping flights that the birds make at the approach of a human being. A new note of trouble in their crying tells clearly of the selfless anxiety they experience for the welfare of their hatched nestlings, who, with quaint grey backs humped and fluffy, stand unsteadily on precipitous ledges blinking at their immemorial inheritance of earth, air, and water.

Wisdom of Samuel Johnson

'The incursions of troublesome thoughts –'
(*The Idler* no 72, c.1760)

It would add much to human happiness, if an art could be taught of forgetting all of which the remembrance is at once useless and afflictive, if that pain which never can end in pleasure could be driven totally away, that the mind might perform its functions without incumbrance, and the past might no longer encroach upon the present [...]

But to forget or to remember at pleasure, are equally beyond the power of man. Yet as memory may be assisted by method, and the decays of knowledge repaired by stated times of recollection, so the power of forgetting is capable of improvement. Reason will, by a resolute contest, prevail over imagination, and the power may be obtained of transferring the attention as judgment shall direct.

The incursions of troublesome thoughts are often violent and importunate; and it is not easy to a mind accustomed to their inroads to expel them immediately by putting better images into motion; but this enemy of quiet is above all others weakened by every defeat; the reflexion which has been once overpowered and ejected, seldom returns with any formidable vehemence.

With reference to JCP's techniques of mind control

Answers to queries, II

Poor Old Horse

NL74, page 26–2, Theodore to Katie:

[...] Littleton sent Susie a book about Animals. A bad selection of Poems. But an eighteenth-century or early Anonymous one I copy for you at least a verse or two ...

(One verse follows, in a rather nicer version, then a page of the letter missing. The version below, collected in Somerset, is from Cecil Sharp's 'Folk Songs of England', deriving from the hobby-horse drama widespread in rural England as a springtime ceremony, 'a genuine survival of ancient pagan fertility rites'.)

My clothing it was once of a linsey woolsey fine,
My mane it was long and my body it did shine
But now I'm getting old, and going to decay,
My master frowns upon me, and thus they all do say:
Poor old horse.

My living it was once on the best of corn and hay
As ever grew in England, and that they all do say,
But now there's no such comfort that I can find at all,
I'm forced to nab the short grass, that grows against the wall.
Poor old horse.

O once all in the stable I was kept so fine and warm
To keep my tender limbs from all aching pain and harm,
But now I'm getting old to the fields I'm forced to go,
Let it hail, rain or sunshine, or the winds blow high or low.
Poor old horse.

My hide unto the huntsman, so freely I will give,
My body to the fox hounds, I'd rather die than live,
Although these gallant limbs, they have run so many miles
O'er hedges, ditches, bramble beds, likewise o'er gates and stiles.
Poor old horse.

News & Notes

John Gray has an article on JCP in the forthcoming Spring issue of *Slightly Foxed*, “the Real Reader’s Quarterly”. His talk on JCP at the **Oxford Literary Festival** on **Saturday 24 March** (see page 2), is introduced thus:

Political philosopher and author John Gray champions the work of 20th-century poet, lecturer, popular philosopher and novelist John Cowper Powys.... John Gray is emeritus professor of European thought at the London School of Economics. He now writes full time, is the author of *Straw Dogs: Thoughts on Humans and Other Animals*, *The Immortalization Commission: The Strange Quest to Cheat Death* and many other books, and is one of Britain’s most talked-about thinkers and philosophers.

Slightly Foxed is also a publisher and has a bookshop at 123 Gloucester Rd, London SW7.

★ ★ ★ ★

Stephen Powys Marks’s transcription of the **Journals of Caroline Powys** (1738–1817), with much extra material, is now available as a CD. Copies have been given to the British Library and the Society’s Collection, and a few copies will be available in return for a contribution to the cost of the exercise (details in the next *Newsletter*).

★ ★ ★ ★

A second edition of **David Goodway’s** *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* has been published by PM Press in California. This is a genuinely new edition, fully revised with an afterword of 27 pages, 4 or 5 of them relating to the **chapters on JCP**. Tim Hyman’s review of it in NL 60 (March 2007, page 25) calls it a ‘**powerful, potentially life-changing book**’, and A. N. Wilson (in the *Daily Telegraph*) ‘a **splendid survey** ... [it] has given me hours of delight and interest.’

★ ★ ★ ★

Florence, Mistress of Max Gate, by **Peter Tait** (headmaster of Sherborne Prep), a novel based on the life of the second Mrs Hardy, was published by Sundial last November and is reviewed on page 45.

★ ★ ★ ★

Harald Fawkner writes: I’m currently in the process of completing a book on JCP—this time not with a Christian angle but with a new outlook on the writer. The book is called *John Cowper Powys and the Five Elements*, and is a comprehensive study of *Maiden Castle*. It is a follow-up (in terms of size and style) on *John Cowper Powys and the Soul*.

★ ★ ★ ★

Paupers’ Press, in Nottingham, has announced the forthcoming publication (Summer 2012) of *OutsiderWriters* by the English novelist **Adam Daly**. The book is No.20 in the series, ‘**Colin Wilson Studies**’, published by Paupers’ Press, and includes an analysis of JCP’s novels *Wolf Solent* and *Porius*, in an 80-page chapter, ‘**The Evolution of the Ichthyosaurus-Ego into the Cosmic Celt**’.

In 1992 Paupers’ Press published *Becoming Mr Nobody – The Philosophy and Poetry of John Cowper Powys*, a booklet by **Paul Roberts**. This is still

available from the publishers. e-mail: <books@pauperspress.com>

Morine Krissdóttir's life of JCP, *Descents of Memory*, is now available for £9.99 from <www.psbooks.co.uk>

Charminster Book Club has a review of *Ducdame* on Amazon books (10 Nov 2011), rating it with 4.0 out of 5 stars. Several readers bought copies from 'Faber Finds'.

Charminster Book Club decided to read *Ducdame* as it was a story reputedly based on our own village, just north of Dorchester, the county town of Dorset. While some of the story brings Charminster to mind, it would be truer to say that Cowper Powys used certain elements of the village as his inspiration. We found it difficult to pin down the period depicted, but decided on 1880–90. Powys' love of nature was evident and we enjoyed the way he used landscape and elements to affect the emotions of his characters; the never-ending circle reflected by the book's title. We were grateful to be able to refer to notes and opinions from members of the Powys Society as we accompanied Rook Ashover on his somewhat weak-willed journey through the women in his life. These notes gave us an added insight into a thought-provoking tale of rural Dorset.

la lettre powysienne (no. 22, autumn 2011, bilingual) contains notes on JCP's 'The Ridge' (it sounds good in French too, as 'La Crête') with a commentary by **Robin Wood**; a long letter from JCP to Alyse Gregory at Christmas, 1933; and continuing from *lettre 21* the theme of **JCP and Russia**, a substantial essay by Jacqueline Peltier on JCP and Dostoevsky, with an interesting article on the various versions of *Note(s)* (or *Memoir(s)*) from (the) *Underground* that JCP may have read and written about. Chris Thomas's extended account of visiting the National Library of Wales is in French only. As usual *la lettre* informs usefully of references and treatments of Powys abroad, and ends with a poem ('Crests' – 'Crêtes') by the recent Nobel Laureate Tomas Tranströmer, in Icelandic, French and English.

(from *Michael Caines*)

Jonah Jones: An Artist's Life by Peter Jones (Seren, 2011) includes (p.85) Jones's visit to JCP at Blaenau in 1957, to make a portrait head. A few details differ from the account in NL 54 (April 2005).

An even briefer reference to JCP is in *Night Thoughts: The surreal life of the poet David Gascoyne* by Robert Fraser (newly published). A few pages early on in the book are about Gascoyne's attempt in 1933 to write something along the lines of Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* saga, which he called *Study in the Third Person Singular*. Its main character (and Gascoyne's alter ego) is called Leon Bristow, and his 'swollen capacity not simply to appreciate quite different spheres of art, thought, and life, but to cross-lace all of these sensations, produces in him a spontaneous variety of synaesthesia that is sometimes barely under his control. The fructifying

influence in this respect is less Richardson than John Cowper Powys, whose essay *In Defense of Sensuality* of 1930 had been an apologia for a life saturated in sensual appreciation of every kind, especially for the interpenetration of different modes of sensitivity: towards music, towards art, towards words. What is fullness in Cowper Powys, however, here becomes an intense sensibility of a potentially unbalancing kind ...' (p. 55, not p. 54, as in the index).

Michael Caines's article, 'TFP – An English Tolstoy?' in the TLS of 24 October 2011 can be read online, as can the resulting Blog (see **internet**, below)

Internet-searchers can find various Powys-related routes.

Among recent ones (pointers only) are

<**the-tls.co.uk**> (Michael Caines on TFP, 24 Oct 2011.

<**timescolumns.typepad**> (TLS BLOG – the prolific Powyses – readers' comments on Caines article, and on Faber Finds.

<**gorsedd-arberth.blogspot.com**> (comment on Feb. 2011 article mentioning Mathrafal & JCP).

<**thelectern.blogspot**> (on *Porius*).

<**hvfarmscape**> (Conrad Vispo on flora and fauna of Hillsdale, NY, including JCP's Phudd Hill).

from Tim Hyman

A serendipitous find from Eric T. Moore's bookshop in Hitchin, Herts, was *Lyrics of Love and Death* (Fortune Press, 1943) by **Arnold Vincent Bowen** (1901–47) of whom JCP wrote in the *Liverpool Daily Post*, 'the most melodious lyrics I have heard of as actually being written on the move in a British Expeditionary Force.' (the author was a corporal in the RAMC). The book contains 'A Prayer to Twelve Peach Stones' dedicated to Phyllis Playter (*Seeds sown in a Northern land / By a lovely lady's hand / Build, for her sheer deed of love / In days to be, a budding grove ... This prophecy, this praise, this prayer / I cast on Corwen's living air ...*) and 'He Falls From Grace – for my friend John Cowper Powys' (*When first we met, oh God! the glow! / The heavenly stars stood high and wild ... / Ah what has happened to us now? / Aloof I fly – a frightened child ...*).

Bowen was a friend of **Muriel Spark** ('AVB and some of his lovely disreputable friends have just left this [Poetry Society] office where they have been making noisy pronouncements about realism in poetry' – from her 2009 biography by Martin Stannard, p.82).

from Max Peltier

In the December 24th letter to Gertrude (NL 74, p.23) TFP writes: *I am afraid the Germans may come to England ... Do you think they will come?* JCP is more nervous about those Little Men.

No year was given, and 1940? is proposed. I suspect not: the 'Little Men' would to my mind be the Japanese who had just attacked Pearl Harbour, on December 7th

1941. I was in India at the time, and so (even age 7) was quite as sensitive as JCP to the situation. Indeed, we all spent several nights of December (including Christmas Eve) in the somewhat waterlogged trenches dug in the garden of a family friend we were staying with just across the road from the Calcutta aerodrome which the Japanese were trying to bomb, with a Bofors AA gun in the next garden firing merrily away.

Geoffrey Winch has been ranked Number 1 UK Small Press Poet for the 12 months up to September 2011 on the lists compiled and published by *Purple Patch*.

Colloquy of the Ancients



JCP's letters in his mid-eighties to his old friend Louis (ten years younger) have a lot of the 'second-childishness' that at this stage he rather rejoiced in, both in the manner of his self-clowning in *Autobiography* (Louis's favourite JCP book) but also in doubtless unpremeditated forgetfulness, repeatings, meanderings ever farther down memory lane, one turning or suggestion leading to another. Recapping, as he always

does, the letter he was answering ('O my dear I am so thrilled by what you say ...') he follows Louis's lead into the esoterics of the English class system and the Powys family tree, with many shared memories familiar to us from other letters and diaries, and *Autobiography* itself. The only major happening during 1957 was the sudden death of Louis's much younger fourth wife Joan (they had married in 1953).

What makes these letters always a pleasure – faithful to 'enjoy and endure' — are their relish of small things, 'as on his couch he lies' – the photographs by his side, bare twigs outside the window – and his gratitude for what, he repeats, are the happiest (less eventful?) years of his life – thanks to Phyllis.

The letters printed here are taken from the versions edited by Louis Wilkinson on the lines of *Letters 1935–56*, which was published to good reviews the following year. They are edited, sometimes rewritten, rather more than was at first thought, as also probably were those in the printed book, although in his preface there Louis says 'there is nothing on my part that can properly be called revision'.

There is however a full transcription of the original letters from Colgate University archives, made by Robert V. Lancaster sometime before the early 1980s, with full and detailed (pre-Google) notes, and extracts from Louis's own letters, also at Colgate. (It is hoped eventually to make these available – contact with Mr Lancaster has been lost). A sample of Lancaster's 1957 versions has been included here for comparison.

LW abridges and condenses, eliminates repeats, and rearranges more coherently. He cuts down on underlinings, capitals and exclamation marks, omitting a good many teasing childishnesses, occasional indelicacies, and the signing-off endearments and frequent compliments to himself. Names of living people mostly go, as often do domestic details.

The result, as edited by Louis, is to make JCP less eccentric (less embarrassing?) but also less varied and uninhibited – as he is in the Diaries – though it has to be said, for most people, even edited he would seem singular enough. JCP, however, seems in no way to have objected to this editing and was delighted with the published *Letters*, considering the book as much the work of Louis as of himself. (As is the case, maybe, with all edited letters.) In all his personal letters JCP gives the impression of simply wanting the person he's writing to to be happy; and this must especially have been the case with Louis, by then the oldest surviving close friend of the family, with whom he felt free (as Louis says he said) 'to say *anything* that comes into my head', but nevertheless wished to please. In 1957–8 JCP wrote huge numbers of letters, and he could write more carefully if he wanted to, but a licence to be spontaneous is one of the pleasures, if not of *growing* old, of old age.

KK

John Cowper Powys to Louis Umfreville Wilkinson, 1957

All letters are from Blaenau Ffestiniog. Some notes by LW abbreviated or omitted.

27th December 1956 [*end of the published Letters 1935–56*]

[.....] I love that name Grosvenor — “Great Hunter” — the name of the best of all possible Dukes [*LW: the Duke of Westminster who held the title from 1899 for more than fifty years*] and I know that no other Duke in Britain was so careful about selecting the best people to look after all the cottages, houses, and persons on his estates. Yes, I know from contact with someone — I forget who now — who got the benefit of it

Love from your old Jack.

January 5th, 1957

..... The Good Duke as I call him — who was succeeded by the Mr Grosvenor who didn't at all want to change his way of life — was familiar to us at Corwen because he had a vast estate round about a little village called Landrillo

We may have seen him walking about in the fields and perhaps potting at wild ducks and wild geese in those low-lying meadows on the way to Bala and Bala Lake. A young man we know very well, called Hywel Davies, lived in the heart of the Duke's huge, spreading estate and worked there, and he bore witness to what they all said — and on one occasion when some cottage-girl was in trouble with some internal complaint of a mysterious character, the Good Duke sent for a specialist of his own to come by train from London to doctor her. Every roof was carefully mended, every wall, shed, barn, fence built up. He was unique in the history of Landowners

His successor's chief interest was in a collection of wild ducks — not to be shot but to be preserved

Our Water Fall here is now bigger than we have ever known it, for it has been raining steadily for 3 days & nights!

always your old Jack.

Aye! my dear, but I am most interested in your using Crowley's watch as well as your own. I too have 2 watches — one, my father's, given to him by the parish of Montacute, and the other my own, bought for 8 dollars at Toledo, Ohio.

No, it was that lady [*Elizabeth Myers*] who attacked Marian just because Marian treated her as she treats us all, as she treats everyone, with that commanding force & spirit that gave her the power to run her lace shop & write her unique book on lace.

January 14th, 1957 [*see unedited version on page 42*]

..... That Shylock passage you quote makes me feel as if I were standing with you and Lulu on the Rialto and suddenly saw the Gondola of you know whom coming towards us!

Love to you both from P and me —

Jack

[*LW note: [it was the gondola of] Francis Rolfe, 'Baron Corvo', whom we met in Venice in 1912. An account of the incident that abruptly concluded this acquaintanceship is given in Welsh Ambassadors and in Seven Friends.*]

January 21st, 1957

My dear, I am very impressed by this quarter-deck turning inside out of the whole Ship of State as us do skid and scud!

[*LW: changes of Prime Minister and of other Ministers.*]

You should see our waterfall at this moment — it is still raining raining raining raining! Our stream is foam-white & on a level with the top of the wall that holds it in. And where the waterfall comes down is no longer a ‘where’, for the whole Mountain, towering above that Cloth Mill, turned into one great descending Wave of rushing Water. The whole of the Cloth Mill or Woollen Mill is lit up with blazing lights inside! Are they dancing a pas de Shawls Cymraeg before being swept away?

As to that outburst of Shylock, Shakespeare has a way of imitating exactly, of knowing exactly what fierce emotions make people do & say when they’re beside or outside themselves with love or rage. I can almost imagine myself crying out just like Shylock, in such words, if I had a lovely young daughter and a sleek handsome young Christian carrying her off with my ducats and diamonds

Then that “Excellent wretch! Perdition catch” etc etc of Othello sums up all that a man so often — O! O! so so often! — feels for his Best Girl!

Damn! I wish that when old Littleton & I went off in Littleton’s car to Northwold to stay in the then empty Rectory — I think it was in 1929 for Aunt Etta met us from Norwich at Brandon — I wish we had taken Theodore with us, for I associate him too with those rivers & that garden, tho’ not quite so much as I do old Littleton. In Grimm’s Fairy Tales and in T.F.P.’s own stories the “little Claus” who has proud Elder Brothers is always the one — the Third Brother! [*LW: T.F.Powys was the third brother in the family.*]

Yes indeed I do fully agree, & thankful indeed am I that it is so, that Phyllis’s judgments & decisions are wiser & better-balanced than mine. I wouldn’t be alive & here if it were not so. And this epoch of my life is far the happiest I’ve ever had! O far! Yes, “by Gis and by Saint Charity”. Who the Hell is “Gis”?

your old ballad-monger

J.C.P.

January 29th, 1957

..... Our Leeds professor, G.Wilson Knight, has been getting good reviews for his Byron. What a demon Byron’s wife was to persecute Augusta so remorselessly, and how Mummy Uncle-Tom’s-Cabin did swallow everything she was told. Prof. Knight is a good Detective! I’ve known that about him ever since he visited us in Corwen.

O my dear! My Memory is getting really awful. It doesn’t worry me much — naturally — because my method of life is to live absolutely in the present. With my motto “Endure, Enjoy”. And as for others, don’t “help”, for that always makes things worse, but console — that is, stop their crying with a penny-bun or a threepenny bit or a Quid — and go on with your own “enduring and enjoying”

This loss of Memory, which has really become comical, doesn’t interfere with my writing because it doesn’t interfere with my inventiveness, nor with my looking up Greek words in my Homeric Dictionary [*LW: for his paraphrase of the Iliad*]. I was reading clear thro’ the Welsh Bible but I’ve stopped that little job at the 47th chapter of Isaiah. And now I am reading nothing but the Iliad and my Homeric Dictionary, except of course literary articles in Magazines — with which we are flooded just now

Doesn’t it speak well for us Britishers, Welsh, Saxons, Dane, Normans and all, that nobody has meddled with that Cerne Giant?

It has been exciting to hear from them all the details about Alyse’s House and Katie’s House

your old Corn-Crake Jack.

[*LW: Alyse Gregory and Philippa (Katie) Powys had each of them recently bought a house, with the intention of leaving Chydyok and living elsewhere in Dorset.*]

February 4th, 1957

I am profoundly tickled & fascinated too by your hatred of Church Bells! Isn't it funny that I should adore them as I do? I am simply thrilled when I hear them on my morning walk between 8 & 9 on Sunday here. They come either on the East Wind from our Manod end of this town — Manod means thin snow — or from the Tan-y-Grisiau end of it, which means "under the Steps". Under the steps to the Moelwyn Mountain tops.

Phyllis and I are now always arguing about the possibility of a life after death, and she takes your purely agnostic view whereas I take Lulu's view when he was most dogmatic against any after-life, & I argue on — then — on the other side!

But Lulu's influence, reaching me now from I doubt if heaven knows where, seems to make me as dogmatic as he was in favour of everlasting nonentity, called by Catullus — probably because he enjoyed going to sleep more than anything else in the world — "nox est perpetua una dormienda".

We've just had a heavenly gift from old Augustus John & his daughter Mrs Vivien White, namely a colossal metal cask — we call it a Magnum, if that's the word for a lot of booze of any sort — of real Olive Oil. I shall no doubt live till I'm ninety with this Olive Oil to keep me going — if not till I'm a hundred!

O my dear but your mother's memory proved how true what Dr Johnson said about memory is — & my own memory proves it too. I can recite almost all the poetry I knew before I was 18, but not later. Later than 18 I've forgotten forgotten forgotten!

Yes! Lulu did say true about every day — O he did, he did! — being a New Day for me. [*LW: Llewelyn Powys was referring to his oldest brother's habit of, or instinct for, living almost entirely in the present.*]

Well, it's eleven p.m., so I must stop and go down to bed. But Phyllis she do stay up writing letters & reading till one — two — & even three now & then!

Your old Jackshoop totterhoop.

February 11th, 1957

..... It is such an exciting topic, how you take and how I take each day as it comes. I am quite ready to admit that the intense dogmatism of my way of taking each day — "enjoy every second as if it were isolated and all you are ever going to have" — is connected with second childhood — which is the pet name for senility or dotage

There is no doubt that the last 4 years of my life have been the happiest years of my life — largely of course due to Phyllis — for our chief peculiarity is that we are so curiously alike & yet with such a difference that I am always so fascinated to hear her reactions to people & things & writers & poets & novelists and philosophical ideas. I've never been so interested in anybody's reactions to life, and that's a great piece of luck for a man over 80 & girl over 60!

But it's very odd indeed, the mania I have for babies and toddlers, and it's still odder, the mania they've got for me.

I made friends with a baby of 8 days of age the other day so that he put out a tiny finger, thro' his Mummy's shawl, to touch my hand! And when I went to the Doctor's Surgery yesterday there were about a dozen people all sitting round, and a very stern little child with its Mummy sitting on a bench, looking extremely cross & reserved opposite me — he can't have been more

than Two — and directly I waved at him across the Surgery he waved back with such a whimsical smile as much as to say “Aren’t grown up people a crazy set!”

I had to go because I’d got into such a furious wind as I passed the big open rubbish wagon, and the wind blew some speck of sharpness into my dead blind eye so that it gave it a little cut. But our excellent Doctor Jones, a real Rabelais of a Doctor, squirted stuff into it & gave the squirt to Phyllis to use on it and that has completely healed it. It is cured. But now I’ve got some sort of Lumbago in my spine that can hurt like hell when I move in certain ways, and Doctor Rabelais-Jones has been to see us this morn & has given me some fizzy salts to take, so I expect he’ll cure this also. It’s O.K. when I’m standing or walking. It comes on when after lying on my back for a while I move this way or that.

Well, my dear, both our loves to Joan —

your old John Jorum of Jaw.

I think I enjoy what’s enjoyable to me so much as I am that if this life has to end I prefer to sleep forever. I don’t like the idea of a future life. It gives me the Jitters!

There’s a toddler just passing this window & waving & laughing as I wave to him. I’ve become a sort of Grandad Guy Fawkes in Blaenau!

Oh yes! I’m all in favour of including the more recent letters. [*LW: his letters to me of 1956. I had suggested that, if practicable, these should be published with the 1935–1955 letters.*]

February 16th, 1957

How nice of you and Joan, my dear, to be so sympathetic about my old dead eye Well! It’s quite entirely cured — thanks to our perfect Doctor Jones who confirms me in my idea that when Rabelais’ Mummy put him aged 8 into a monastery of Breton Monks he got something of the peculiarly especial Welsh aura which is absolutely different from anything Scotch or Irish or Cornish or any other Celtic Fringe!

My new trouble, sharp neurotic stabs at the bottom of my Spine, defined by Doctor Jones as Fibrositis, is better today. It doesn’t interfere with my morning Stalkings up and walkings down our little road, up up up past the derelict cottages mixed with inhabited cottages where a nice girl-child taps on her window from the upper storey to greet me, towards the tall Slate Piles beyond the white & the black Houses side by side, overlooking the lower portions of the Town where the Hotels and Stations and Schools and cinema and churches are. Here where two paths ascend a steep ascent there is a Stone which recently I have named the Rolanda Stone after an eccentric lady — a magic terminus to my morning walk which I tap alternately with the Stick called Saviour and the Stick called Sherborne every day, and on the last day of the month with the sacred Stick called Expectation, and on the first day of the month with the African ebony Stick called Hoo-Doo.

But this “fibrositis” made me make faces between 3 and 4 last night for about three quarters of an hour or perhaps only half an hour, but it has been quieter, O quite quieter today as I lie here on my back.

O my dear it does so deeply interest me that Joan and I prefer eternal sleep while Phyllis and you remain agnostic on thik little point.

I am so pleased that Mr Coombes has finished his Book on Theodore. O I shall so enjoy reading it & I am glad you like him.

Yes, Phyllis says don’t ’ee wait, but send that carbon copy of the recent [1956] letters to us. Phyllis says the danger is not concerning us, but lest any reference to neighbours should cause a hurt of some slight kind.

I wonder if my wise Mother, when she gave herself up to looking after our Father after sharing poetry with John, games with Littleton, sad waiting interims with Theodore, Parish duties with Gertrude, wild thoughts with Nelly, calm intuitions with Bertie, ever said to herself "What shall I feel if I have 5 more children?"

Aye! but it does bring past memories to my mind when you say you use your Mother's shoe horn.

Good luck to you both,

John

February 21st, 1957

No, my dear, I won't have to read the [1956] letters, but Phyllis will do so and will no doubt detect that you have already left out anything our neighbours mightn't like

We would very much like to see your sheet of extracts [*about Americans*] from Harold Nicolson's "Good Behaviour".

Phyllis has just been explaining to me a subtle point about Americans — concerning their attitude to titles and titled persons & old castles. She says that deep down in every American is the absolute conviction of equality, the conviction that every man and every woman all the world over (I haven't yet raised the question of Southerners and Niggers) are equal, but that the arena is open for them all to mount up as high as possible and get as famous, as rich, as adventurous, as happy or as — as — I'm tempted to use this horrible modern word which I hate most of all words I've ever heard used — I mean the word "knowledgeable" — as they can

But I'd like to make two lists — 1 of the words I like best, 2, of the words I hate most. I'd begin, under 1, with Illusion, vertigo, portentous, reflection, shadow, rigmarole, palimpsest, paltry, metaphorical, fickle, tantalize, ominous, sinister, horizon, ethereal. Then, under 2, the word "curious" when used as meaning "inquisitive" instead of "extraordinary" or "queer". Then bounce, squeal, cudgel, twinkle, perspicacious, bludgeon, pimple, portly, pickle, heckle. But I find it much harder to think of words I hate than of the Words I Love! which shows my profoundly optimistic disposition.

But their liking — the Americans' — for titles is entirely superficial, just part of the game of being interested in the social spectacle and of getting on and of being au courant with the haut monde, just as a good cricketer likes to take so many wickets as a bowler or make so many runs as a batsman.

With our class system, based on a thousand years of peasants, townfolk, and lords of castles, congealed into lower class, lower middle-class, upper middle-class, aristocracy, the whole thing is completely different. To us Class is like a universal Religion from which there is no escape! It's far deeper than any organized Church or Chapel. It's so deep that its supreme paradox is that those who are least conscious of it are the ones who live most in accordance with its secret regulations, which have become melted into atmosphere & diffused into an aura.

Of course our Class, the upper Middle-class, is bound to be one most conscious of the Class System, for we have all classes in us & we spend our lives — without as a rule knowing what we are doing — in adjusting within ourselves the tradesman, the working man, and the lord. I crossed out "the beggar" because any of us might under special circs, whether lord, or Rev. Dean, or grocer, become a beggar! Men and women in this matter of class show their difference in the way men consciously aim at being and behaving like gentlemen, whereas women, save for being knowledgeable as to how to behave & what to wear & how to talk, let

themselves go.

Who are the most perfect lady from my point of view and most perfect gentleman I've ever met? Well! I'll tell you. I will tell you at once the most perfect gentleman is a great nephew of my Ideal Lady, Lady Charlotte Guest, namely Colonel Eliot Crashaw-Williams. Poor man, he's awfully ill at this moment. And my most perfect lady is Mrs James Hanley, the direct descendant (though none of the family are lords) of the brother of Stephen Langton the Archbishop in the time of Henry 1st — and her relatives still live at Langton, wherever that is! These Langtons of Langton must be like the Oakovers of Oakover near Ashbourne in Derbyshire.

Think of you and Joan going to Lisbon in May! Bravo!
your old J

February 28th, 1957

I'm so glad what Phyllis said about the American attitude to Class interested you. I love that remark of the American boy, "I'm a pedigree guy, I am!" & that tickled Phyllis too. We both like Roger Williams, the contemporary of William Penn and other Mayflower Holy Founders, best by far of the original American Statesmen. He got fed up with New England & Boston and went to Providence, Rhode Island, where he founded the University called Brown's University which I've always liked best, & so does Phyllis, of all the American Colleges — much better than Harvard or Yale or Princeton.

We've just cut out a Review of a book on Witches [*by Christina Hole*] by Michael Warton - & O how I used to keep under my pillow at school Harrison Ainsworth's "Lancashire Witches" and wake up before any other boy in the Dorm was awake, about 6 a.m., & read that small print of one of those sixpenny novels that there were in those days with paper covers! Well, we've cut out a passage in this review which mentions Sible Hedingham in Essex as where the last "swimming" Warlock lived in the year 1863. What on earth, I wonder, is a "swimming" warlock? Does he swim in the village pond or in the air?

Yes, Harold Nicolson's observations [*on Americans in Good Behaviour*] are top-notch — though I never myself noticed this "adulation accorded to children and young boys and girls" — and if I had noticed it it would have struck me as quite right and natural. But I am probably talking as Jack at 84, not 44. Over 80 there is a queer and to me fascinating understanding between old men and children, and I wd. say between old women and children, that middle-aged and youthful persons are totally ignorant of As a child I can well recall the magnetic link between myself and my mother's mother.

When I met Lady Ottoline Morrell it was in Theodore's house in Chaldon and I was so occupied with entertaining her husband who looked awfully shy and uncomfortable that I didn't take notice of Lady O.M.

yr old J

March 5th, 1957

O I am so pleased you read "The Lancashire Witches" when you were about eleven

I expect I mistook for shyness in Morrell his annoyance over some talk that was passing between Theodore and the Lady

My Fibrositis has gone! We are both in good feather today, tho' the Sunshine we've had of late — for a week, I think — has gone too. Such a queer kind of semi-mist — what the Welsh call "tarth" — covers everything today

What you say about Radley is of great interest. This difference between the various public schools is extremely interesting. We had at Sherborne the same Hymn Book, a great big quarto, as they have at Uppingham. But the difference between the elder Waugh boy and Evelyn Waugh is, I think, due to the fact that Evelyn was at Uppingham [*actually Lancing*] but his brother Alec at Sherborne. Bernie [O'Neill] was at Hailebury, I recall, which has always given me a penchant for that school

It's quaint that the one and only thing I love about Roman Catholics is the present Pope [*Pius XII*]. I love the Holy Father's face.

Well, good luck to you both
ever your old J.C.P.

March 11th, 1957

..... What portion of the Daily Paper do you get the greatest pleasure from? I never read the Leading Article or the big head-lines but I go at once to any Literary page, but on my way I am always side-tracked by the sight of a Murder or a Ghost or a story like that of yesterday of a little girl with a mania for a big dog and how they went into an empty house and into a cupboard there which shut on them and they couldn't get out and when the cupboard was opened the girl was dead but the dog lived and then the authorities had the dog killed in order to examine the contents of its stomach tho' it was obvious that it hadn't touched the dead little girl.

But after murders & ghosts & cupboards what next arrests me is Legal Cases, for I love the arguments to & fro – especially when a culprit finally condemned to 10 years, like a Mr Hinds recently, showed he knew every detail of the Law & it was his favourite of all subjects second to opening locks and escaping from cells!

I am most interested in that Mr Ellis [*LW: the late J. M. Ellis who wrote Biographies*] because Ellis is a Welsh name and he was clearly a typical Welshman The number of Welsh names that aren't just made up from Christian names is very very few. Lloyd is one, but that comes from Llwyd meaning "grey". Our name Powys means "rest" — to lie down and Powysog!

I would defend as something a little different from ordinary snobbishness Mr Ellis's keeping his coat of arms and his pedigree on his chimney piece. It's a Clannish vaunt or boast. It refers to Mr Ellis as belonging to the chiefs of a Clan. It is as if he boasted as I often do when I repeat to myself "Or, a lion's gamb in bend between two cross-crosslets fitchée (I don't know what that means) gules" [*the Powys crest*].

your old J.C.P.

March 12th, 1957 [*picture postcard from Criccieth*]

Here we are on the beach at Criccieth, Lloyd George's town. The sound of the waves on the sand makes me think of Lulworth.

From J.C.P. and P.P.

March 18th, 1957

We went to Criccieth on the top of a covered bus and came back the same way

One of Littleton's friends wrote and told me that the Sherborne town council had named a much used "lane" — really a little narrow road, I expect, somewhere between the school-bath and the New Prep. — by the name Powys lane in honour of Littleton. That really did make me feel proud. I recall how the Sherborne Headmaster, when my Uncle Littleton was at the

School, wrote to my Grandfather at Stalbridge begging him not to allow his son to go into the Army, for he would be able to do quite well in civil life, but he — my Dad's only brother - insisted that he preferred the Army to any other job. I think he died of cholera in the Afghan war the year our sister, Nelly, was born — that is 1879

Just think of your having actually made money on the Stock Exchange! Arthur Ficke used to go in for that a lot. We correspond still with his widow Gladys. But it is Lulu's & Arthur's friend Edna St Vincent Millay the poetess we have been thinking of lately for we have just got her complete poetical works in one volume.

O my dear it makes me shiver from head to foot & make faces too to think of your cold baths! Isn't Joan amazed by your having them? Like a piece of ascetic "pietas pietatis" in some eccentric emperor like Hadrian, my favorite of all the emperors of Rome.

Well, I walked exactly to the minute for three quarters of an hour this morning! I get practically no pleasure from eating or drinking and I can't bear to think of eating or drinking anything else but the little I do

I love the feeling of annihilation in the sense of its being eternal sleep. For now far far my greatest mental and sensual pleasure is going to sleep.

I hate the idea, as C. Lamb said he did, of getting ideas in any other way than by reading books.

ever your old J.C.P.

March 23rd, 1957

..... The name of our Favourite Writer at this moment — and P. and I are in complete agreement over this — is Mary Norton, author of "The Borrowers" and its sequel "The Borrowers Afield", illustrated by Diana Stanley & costing only 3/3, a small price for a masterpiece like Alice in Wonderland. It's a book for a peculiar type of person — but I'd love to learn what a real child wd. think of it — the type of person whose favourite of all books is still the Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm

I think it's cowardice or pure funk with me, wanting annihilation after death. I funk the weirdness of any other life than this.

I'm such a hopeless book-worm that for every one of my opinions, which are all pure feelings and prejudices, not rational opinions at all, I love quoting a favourite writer in support

Well! all I can say, my dear, is that you must be very brave to face that plunge into cold water! I should certainly enjoy getting out! But I'd be so glad to be out of that cold water that I wouldn't have much room left in my sensibility for any enjoyment of warm blood reactions. [LW: in my reply to his last letter I had said that cold baths were not an ascetic or pious practice, but on the contrary a source of sensuous pleasure: both from the plunge itself and from the glow on getting out.]

O Phyllis is going to see As You Like It on Wednesday played by that travelling art Company. I am longing to hear her account of it

ever your ancient J.

March 31st, 1957

..... Those are good lines by Michelangelo. Does it mean "O how grateful I am to be stone — not to see — not to feel"? — but I cannot translate "è gran ventura pero non mi destar" — but I bet it ends with "O speak low!" Yes I love Swinburne's

"The happiness to sleep and to be stone,

The great good gift to feel not nor to see."

..... The Picture of Swinburne emphasizing his beard & his huge forehead that I saw was wonderful. It was Bernie, wasn't it, or was it you, who found Swinburne in some Club and hesitated to approach him? [*LW: Not long before his death Swinburne came into the Rose and Crown at Wimbledon, when Bernard O'Neill and I were there, for his daily morning half pint of bottled beer. We did not dare "to approach him". He sat chuckling frequently as he read his newspapers and held up his glass of beer to catch the sunlight.*]

O yes, I read that broadcast [*on Swinburne by Alfred Noyes*] in "The Listener", the BBC's paper which we take & which just suits me, for I (is it my father in me or is it an actor's jealousy of other platform reciters?) I can't bear listening to the speeches on the radio! tho' I heartily back up Phyllis in her indignant support of the Third Programme.

Do you think that there is more deadly maliciousness in all of us British Islanders that in Germans or in French or in Italians? I love that "Quel naïf, ce malin!" [*a French comment on Edgar Allan Poe*].

I read in "The Listener" about Swinburne nearly tumbling into his mother's grave, his Aunt trying to make him kneel so that he would have fallen in if the Sexton hadn't caught him by the heels. I remember Uncle Cowper trying to jump into his mother's grave when impelled by passionate emotion and being held back by force by my father. That was the grandmother I adored; but I didn't cry at her burial or jump into her grave.

I still correspond with my astonishing old cousin ten years older than I am, just 95, who used to be to me Katie Donne, but she now makes me call her Catherine, tho' she lets me leave out "Cousin". She's the old lady who is descended from a lady who called Elizabeth I "aunt"! In a letter I had from her only yesterday she says that both her grandfathers, one after another, ran the London Library in St James's Square. One was called Donne & the other Kemble, and they in turn lived in that house where the Library is. She met Carlyle and she says it was Tennyson's idea to start that London Library.

I've never heard before that saying of Queen Victoria, that she disliked bishops, and the few she liked "as men, not as Bishops". O yes & her saying "I shall not meet Abraham".

And I am fascinated to think of your very own Grandfather being present when that bone was returned to Charles 1st's grave, & Princess Marie Louise's account in her book agreeing with his account of that scene with the beheaded head so like the Van Dyke picture. I wonder if Charles 1st did turn to dust after exposure to the air. How strange to think of all our buried relations in their coffins lying in their flesh, not as skeletons at all as I always thought.

[*drawing to illustrate this*]

We are expecting a visit from Professor [*Wilson*] Knight of Leeds on Tuesday, so I must play the fool tomorrow so unlimitedly that I shall be good and quiet on April 2!

J.C.P.

April 6th, 1957

Aye! but your letter my dear of the 3rd is full of interest. I could go on enlarging — I won't say agreeing or disagreeing — just enlarging on what you say, "ad lib" if there is such an expression and whatever that expression is short for! But alas! our excellent Doctor Jones who has been a Doctor here for 22 years has sent me to bed for two or three days or at any rate has forbidden me to go out so I tend to stay in bed rather than sit or lie on a couch feeling like the prisoner of Chillon! He thinks I've got a chill in my left kidney which sounds comical to me. I didn't know we had 2 kidneys! Think of saying to yourself when you went out: "now be careful!"

Not to get a chill in your left kidney!"

No! Alas! we missed that A.C. [*Aleister Crowley*] broadcast. Think of your having met a person actually born in 1789 and having a Table in your house now that she gave your mother! Did anyone tell you she was 100 when you spoke to her? I wish I could remember something clear and definite about your great great great great great Uncle Admiral Blake. I must look in my little Child's History of England to see if they mention him, but do tell me something about him.

Yes, that account of the Medici Coffins [*as examined in 1857 in the vaults of the Medici Chapel*] I found absorbing. I sent it to Marian whom I write to very regularly. She has been reading *Ivanhoe* every afternoon to a group of 10 little boys and girls.

Yes, I do now well recall how you and Bernie encountered Swinburne but I had forgotten that Bernie helped him on with his coat. You describe his face very well. I saw the picture of it — with that grand forehead. I do so greatly prefer faces with the deciduous chin retreating retreating retreating. I can't bear big chins! They remind me of Belloc whom I met and who is my Bête Noire.

Phyllis is going to send for keeps to you and Joan that Bookseller Book she got from W. H. Smith. She speaks of posting it next Monday.

Love to Both from Both (this good sentiment or message ought to have a particular Sign to express it just as "&" expresses "and". Someone told me what "&" was called but I've forgotten.)

J.C.P.

April 8th, 1957

Well my dear I've spent the last 3 days in bed to see if it cures this queer "fibrositis" which our good doctor now thinks, I think — but who can read the mind of a Doctor if he isn't Rabelais himself? — has not been connected with my left kidney as he thought at first. But it's better today; and neither Dr Jones nor his partner Dr Whittaker has called to see me. (Are there 2 T's in that name or 2 K's? How do you spell Whitaker's Almanac and what is is or was Whitaker's Almanac??)

I enclose a little letter from my Florentine friend. Will you please my dear translate it for me word by word with the English word over the Italian word? I'm sorry to bother you but I do so want to send him a sympathetic reply.

Phyllis is very thankful that the Third Programme is still to go on — at 8 p.m. every night. Have you got or are you going to have from Alyse this new Book called "South of Granada" by Gerald Brenan? If not, Phyllis will lend you our copy which Brenan himself sent me from Spain. It contains amusing accounts (apart from those of his Spanish neighbours) of visits from the Bloomsbury Group.

Well! we have had, or rather the floor & sky which are all I can see from my bed have had a lot of sun & blue sky but the wind is cold, our visitors tell us, and comes from the North West

your old Jack in the Bed

April 10th, 1957

Just to reassure you & Joan by telling you that I'm better today I went my usual walk today from 8.30 a.m. to about 9.15 a.m. & was pleased to see green leaves on the blackthorn wh. hitherto has had only white blossoms — but that was more for the sake of the little bush

itself, for those white flowers looked as if they felt funny by themselves, than for my own sake, for I hate leaves! O it is such a pleasure to me to see bare Twigs against the Sky!

I have just seen a long-tailed Tit absolutely alone on the extreme top of our Laburnum tree, wh., thanks be to Pallas Athene, has so far not one leaf to spoil the beauty of its bare branches and up and out twigs. My favourite month remains January when at last, for 4 months here, all leaves vanish! I have only once in my life had a real Nightmare & that was at school about a Twig

O I am glad I asked you about “&” & you said that “Ampersand” was its name. And now to my great delight I have just looked it up in my Concise Oxford Dictionary & there it is — Ampersand! Ampersand! I am more thrilled by this than by any other word I’ve ever had discovered for me! Ampersand! Ampersand! Ampersand!

Both our loves to you two & my respectful greeting to Joan’s sister your hostess.

Old Littleton made friends with a Dominican Monk called Dom Michael Hanbury, O.B.S. who has a Magazine called Pax, but that is different from your Carmelite Friar [LW: *Fr. Brocard Sewell of Aylesford Priory, editor of The Aylesford Review*]. My Dom Michael lives at Farnborough Abbey.

April 16th 1957

..... You needn’t send it [*an enclosure about his royalties*] back to me at once. But put it “in your files” & if I need it ever to send to Ribbons & Winder my Income Tax Consultant in Rhyl — and I recommend them to you if ever you want help over Income Tax. It was Lulu I think, who first introduced them to me. They are awfully good people and are really wonderfully inexpensive considering the help they give. Their name sounds almost Dickensian, doesn’t it?

I’ve got such a host of letters today that I must stop. Thank you my dear a thousand times for translating the Firenze chap’s letter. I’ll write to him this very day now!

J.

Yes, I am really better. It’s fibrositis, I’m sure, & nothing to do with kidneys left or right. I walked for half an hour this morning before breakfast and I think our doctors have decided I’m cured for they have not come for several days.

April 22nd, 1957. Easter Monday.

What a wonder Isobel [*his niece*] is! She is by far the most competent, wise, practical & far-sighted of all the rest of us left alive! Think of her taking measurements of Katie’s House. O I am so thankful you thought Katie looks better. She has always taken life harder than any of us. I was so interested lately in re-reading her novel “Blackthorn Winter” for it has got so much of her most characteristic feeling in it.

Yes, I’ve got the Aylesford Review & I wrote to the Reverend Editors, if that’s the proper way to address Carmelite Monks, to thank them for sending it to me. I did notice (for I had had a very amusing letter from Violet herself the day before) about Theodore’s mourning for his wife, but not that “1884” for my birth. Violet wrote so touchingly about how she missed Theodore — referring to him so spontaneously after talking of Susan [*Theodora*] and of her pet — I forget whether it was a cat or a dog. She wrote very affectionately of Susan.

But my dear it is really serious for my friends, especially for poor Phyllis, “My dear companion” as someone says somewhere of somebody, I forget who or where — this loss of memory of mine. I even forget the names of shrubs & flowers! For instance Redwood

[*Anderson*]'s Gwyneth spoke of periwinkles — Perriwinkles Perrywynkles Periwinkles — and tho' Phyllis described them eloquently for me I couldn't remember them at all! I am a man who has never seen a periwinkle! Daisies and buttercups and celandines and primroses and heather I can remember, and lilies of the valley — but when someone spoke of Lilies I felt that I had never seen a Lily nor had the faintest idea what a Lily looked like, except the kind of Lily whom old Edgar Lee Masters so perfectly described as a "slip-shoe-lovey". And even now I cannot visualize a Lily to myself at all — I just can't see it or what it looks like.

..... Phyllis and I will have to get to work on our Income Tax, but thank heaven we can just send it to Ribbons, Winder & Sons. How the generations hurry on! Think of Ribbons & Winder having sons!

I'd love to know what you said to that Carmelite about Crowley. Was it to a Carmelite Nunnery that our Cousin Marion Linton [*went*] whom Lulu wanted to marry and who came to stay for a week with us at Burpham to decide whether to enter a Nunnery or not? I think she was fed up with the relatives' friends she had to live among when her mother died. My son went to visit her as a priest but he was only allowed to talk to her thro' a grating. I owe more to her mother [*LW: Lady Alice Linton née Shirley*] for what they now call "culture" than to any other person.

Phyllis has gone to see a great Show of Welsh wool at Port Merion but she wd. send her love if she were here to you & Joan. O thank god we've got Joan in our Circle!

your old Jack

April 27th, 1957

I love what you say, my dear, about loss of memory — "Better live with someone who remembers too little than with someone who remembers too much"! O yes I loved also that letter from Isobel. What insight that girl has! Her description of House & garden created by Joan — I bet she hits the mark there; & what she says about Katie is reassuring to me. But what a shame that Katie hurt her back in this sort of permanent manner!

As to our names in these Letters — What I suggested at once to Phyllis — but our brave hard-working friend Verna Vaughan, the Squire's sister who does all the work in their ancient house and has been baking bread today, came for an hour's visit just in time for me to show her a picture card from Rome, from Raymond Garlick, of — you can guess what his mania for things Welsh wd. lead him to send — of the Arch of Constantine. No Welshman can speak of Helen without thinking of the Helen who was the Mother of Constantine — never of the beautifullest of all Helens, the runaway from the virtuous and righteous Menelaus with Paris who was the best shot with bow & arrow of the whole lot of them including Pandarus, & the handsomest youth of the ancient world!

But what I suggested to Phyllis was — but she has now vanished so I know not what her view will be — was that on the Back of the Book and on the Jacket of the Book it might be "Letters of J.C. Powys to L.U. Wilkinson" and then inside the Book in the Title page they might print "Letters of John Cowper Powys to Louis Umfreville Wilkinson."

All the best to you both! Phyllis, I can see, wants to leave it to the men who are in thik little job. So here goes!

your old J.C.P.

How very comical Isobel's idea is that the Catholics may one day make a Saint of Elizabeth Myers! I'm sure the present Pope (whom I hope they'll make a Saint with every formality for I admire him the most of all celebrities of our time, more even than the old Aga Khan!) would

never agree to the Canonization of E.M. And I do not feel quite sure that her mother would approve of it either.

I am glad you wrote that Defence of Crowley.

..... That Bertie [*A.R. Powys*] didn't understand his brother John very well is proved by his refraining from visiting us when he was quite near Corwen because he'd seen "The Philosophy of Solitude"! He had no idea of the complete lack of consistency in a crafty old hippopotamus like me, and the vast gulf between my interest in seeing Bertie and my rabbit-warren of interior refuge-holes thro' which, as Lulu always said, I am like water seeking its level. In other words he didn't understand that preachers forget themselves & their audiences when "carried away".

..... I've got another book called "Up and Out" to be published so they may bring that out before the "Letters". Evidently Harvey [*a director of Macdonald, Publishers*] feels that his old cranky customer regards him more as a Benefactor and a Patron, as I am sure I do, or as an exceptionally considerate friend

May 3rd, 1957

..... God! my dear, but I am tickled by your dialogue between me and the Red Queen & you as Alice! Yes, I agree about our names, that we'll leave it to them.

I am now studying my Diary — Collins One Day Royal Diary — to see what night it was when Phyllis called me out at 10.35 p.m. to see the Comet. It was Tuesday the 30th. Yes, she showed me where she could see a white line like this //, descending near that big sign in the sky for which there are so many different names — Arthur's Something, Cassiopeia something — and I could see one very large bluish star there which I fancy may have been Aldeboran. Lulu used to give long discourses on the stars & show them to me in order — but with my memory breaking up I forget them all as I am even beginning to forget how to spell! I am becoming lazy too — I call it "feeling tired" but it's much more like a lazy old gent comfortable on his back on his couch at his window & refusing to get up! I make even the prettiest girls who visit me give me their hands to kiss when they go — to avoid rising & helping them on with their cloaks. Yes, I wanted to tell somebody I was absorbed in something & I couldn't for the life of me think how to spell "absorbed" — was it "apsorb" or "absorp"??

Very well, my dear, you let me off hunting for that Contract mentioning all the dates! when "Up & Out" comes down & out and whether the Letters wait till after "when" to appear. It was Simon & Schuster in New York who told me that in America you didn't have to have agents but that in England all authors had to have agents Pollinger [*his agent*] told me he was the representative of D. H. Lawrence which made a great impression on me for as I must have told you many times I am a fierce adherent of D. H. Lawrence and a great admirer of his German Freda. I regard him as a product of Derbyshire where the 1st 5 of us came out into the world.

O but, my dear, a most exciting thing has just happened this very afternoon & I can't wait to tell you, for you come in it! I had a visit while Phyllis was out & Phyllis is so vexed & remorseful that she only came back just in time to meet her, and she longs to have given her a good tea — a visit by a beautiful Gypsy with her little boy of four. She was very very handsome with a huge Wicker Basket but she refused to accept a penny. By degrees I felt such complete confidence in her that I told her & her child to go upstairs into my room & I would follow. Very carefully she handed me the 2 bottles of milk wh. had arrived at our door as usual & up she went I followed her with the milk, then I seated her in the corner in front of me by the bookcase and

introduced her son to our Doll, Olwen, who always sits demurely in her chair, & the little boy made great friends with her & kept taking off and putting on her shoes while I talked to his Mummy [*drawing of this incident, showing JCP on his couch addressing his visitor, and the child and the doll*].

Her name now is Mrs Juanita Berlin and she lives in the New Forest. She was on her way with her husband to spend a week fishing in Bala Lake with a great friend of hers, Mr Manfred Wood. Now I had known his father during our 20 years at Corwen very well and I recall meeting him in the wilds there & giving him a regular lecture as to the dignity of his Romany blood & how he must do it honour as the proudest aristocracy. His Dad was a very old man, as old as I am now, Mr Wood of Corwen who was a great fisherman and knew the Rev Sampson a Gypsy champion, & of course old Augustus John who knew all the Romanys in this land & adored them. I helped, or Phyllis did, for Mr Wood was an R.C., to direct a priest to him when he was dying & give him the last rites.

Well, this new friend of mine to whom I shall certainly write & to whom I gave one of my latest books is a poet and corresponds (I told her I don't think he likes me) with Robert Graves. She told me her best friend was Theodore! She said she had married when she was 16 a man about 45 who was a friend of yours and that you & he were very interested (I seemed to detect in her words a girlish shudder of terror lingering still!) in watching how much her girlish love for her husband would stand! She described her feelings exactly. [LW: *Mrs Berlin is not only a poet but a writer of fiction.*] She said Theodore was her only friend in that place and that you were — what's the word we use? — “cohoots” with her husband.

She seems very happy with Mr Berlin and she wholly agrees with my devotion to the House of Israel and I think she thinks that her present husband may very easily have Israelitish blood. She writes essays, stories & poetry and I think she knows Augustus John & wholly understands what I feel about that old Zeus. O I wish Phyllis had got back in time to give her tea. I was too thrilled by her talk to offer her even a cigarette wh. Phyllis did the second she came in, but she had to go before Phyllis could give her tea. But I could see she was very pleased with Phyllis's praise of her ear-rings & bracelets, etc. etc which I had taken for granted! She said the Romanys came from India & she explained how their visit to Egypt occurred.

Well — Here's to our perfect Joan — God, but we all bless the name of King Louis for bringing her into our midst.

ever your old one J —

May 9th 1957

Well! my dear! What a Juanita! I liked her little boy called Jasper and he had a weirdly high-pitched laugh that went up & up & up & up like the cry of a long-tailed tit in a tree as tall as a pylon. And I liked her but the extraordinary thing was to be able to talk quietly to a gypsy about such things as the poetry of Wordsworth and of the exact nature of my present paraphrase of the Iliad [Homer and the Aether, *published 1959*].

I must confess I understood — but this is a subject upon which I must write a book one day — the little boy better than I did her. Yes, I must write on the extraordinary link — a very deep subtle one indeed — between Toddlers of from one to 4 (both boys and girls) and old gents like me! Childhood and Second Childhood! I've noticed it again & again & again.

The Toddlers begin it! Baby after baby comes along beneath my window, holding somebody's hand sometimes & sometimes walking alone, & they always catch my eye and start waving to me. It's like a new Grimm Fairy Tale wh. I'd like to write, between the Giant and

little red riding hood or little boy blue, having a compact to make war on humanity till there are only Giants and Toddlers left in the world.

Juanita put down her enormous basket like a Barge in the middle of the room & fixed Jasper in the armchair with a newspaper on his knees and a lot of buttered scones and things — but he stretched his head back — refused to eat anything — nodded at me — as much as to say “You know what I want to do” — and went peacefully to sleep.

I am so interested in all you tell me not only about Juanita — 18 not 16 [*when first married*], yes, I get that! — but about her first husband who must have been — & must still be — a terrific character.

..... Arthur Hugh Clough I should say I do indeed remember — in Matthew Arnold’s [*LW: quoted from memory, as will be shown by comparison with “Thyrsis”, verses 7, 8, and 9*]

“And open, jasmine-muffled lattices
And groups under the dreaming garden trees
And the pale moon & the bright evening star.
It matters not, light comers, he is flown,
But we shall have him in the sweet spring days,
With whitening hedges and uncrumpling fern
And blue bells trembling by the forest ways,
See him come back and cut a smoother reed
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed,
For Time not Corydon hath conquered thee.
Alas for Corydon no rivals now,
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate
Some good survivor with his pipe would go
Piping a ditty sad for Bion’s fate,
And relax Pluto’s brow
And make leap up for joy —”

..... Juanita’s ear rings were what staggered Phyllis most & pleased me most; so magnificently Babylonian & Assyrian, as you might expect to see in the court of a mistress of Sennacherib! I was so thrilled to have a real live gypsy dressed so fantastically & with rings on her fingers & bells on her toes sitting opposite to me with her back to the 4 Folios of Littré’s French-French dictionary and my huge 17th century Edition of Aristophanes.

O yes, my dear, do tell Joan we long for the day you & she are with us again, and we’ll be very interested to see Mr & Mrs James Stern. Only tell us as near as you can in advance so that we can put off any others that may come a-hovering and a-havering, a-white-owl-hooting and a-woodchuck-spitting, and darkness waiting to cover all Aye! but it’ll be heavenly to see you & Joan

Phyllis has just been to the Movie here & heard “The King & I” about a lady visiting Siam & teaching the King’s 100 children.

Well, amen now.

Phyllis says that Yul the actor had his head completely shaved of every hair and now he’s found himself so attractive to ladies he has decided to continue in ordinary life having his head absolutely bald and shaved!

May 17th, 1957

O yes I am my dear longing to see you & Joan whenever you come. The date is nothing. To the Devil with the date! And I am longing to have a real exciting argument with you about Juanita who is, I am sure, a real true Gypsy! This young man with whom she & her present husband (who looks in the picture of him she has just sent me, along with a poem of hers on Hardy, just like Tamberlaine the Great or Genghis Khan) went to stay for a night is certainly a real gypsy if ever there was one, the son of that old gypsy Mr Wood

But you and I must have a grand debate, with Joan and Phyllis as arbiters to judge who wins, when you two do really arrive. Aye! come quick! come quick, O happy day when we two debate looking out on these Moelwyns or "little naked white ones"! Pallas Athene & the Jehovah of Moses, not of Jesus, bring you soon, yes, bring soon and keep you both in mounting health & spirits!

your old J.C.P.

May 26th, 1957

..... You've only to tell us the Date, close to the day and that's all — just tell us in time for Phyllis to buy something nice & special in the way of Strawberries, Raspberries, Currants, grapes, apples, Pears, Oranges, Tomatoes, chocolate-éclairs & Nuts! Not necessarily Loins of any Beast or Wing of any Bird. But tell us just just just before you come. "We'll be arriving at your Palace-Door or at your Postern Gate about 3 o'clock Tomorrow afternoon or about eleven o'clock tomorrow morning."

Some lady — was it Alyse, it must have been Alyse — sent us a picture of the little boy Peter [*Powys Grey, son of Marian*]. I've never see a more delicious lovely little child-Ganymede in all my days!

O I've just finished Lulu's Somerset & Dorset Essays which our angelic publisher sent me for love & I've read every word of it. It bears out all I tell everybody — that Theodore is far the most original of us & Jack far the cleverest, but Lulu far far far the most loveable. Why, do you know, my dear, twice at the end of one of the essays I couldn't stop making the funny face that we all make, second childhoods as well as childhoods, when we want to cry & have to swallow it down. Twice that happened. One of the very best essays is the one on Ilchester Gaol and another of the very best is on Nancy Cooper. The only one that didn't move me at all or very little was "Bat's Head".

O I am so amazed to see in the Sunday Papers that Philip Toynbee (whom I always call "little Philip" because I was at Corpus when the original Toynbee's Guild, or whatever it was, was culturizing the working class & came to Cambridge & I had to escort one of them round the town) is the grandson of old Gilbert Murray. I like little Philip's Dad Prof. Toynbee the Historian, but I do not like Gilbert Murray at all and never have. I couldn't bear his translation of Euripedes which Maurice Browne loved playing in his Little Theatre [*in Chicago*]. But his grandson "Little Philip" now explains why I don't like Gilbert Murray. Because he hated — just think of his being brave enough to do that! I ought to admire him for it but I am, I guess, too Boswellian and also too much of an actor — He hated Shakespeare!

No! Nobody living could write an essay like Lulu. Because he writes straight from his heart. I could cut out some passages from "Tristram Shandy" that are like Lulu's writing. Like Sterne, Lulu had a peculiar humorous tenderness that is Shakespearian

I should always have been terrified of Norman Douglas. That kind of aesthetical flibbertigibbety dandified Society Wit scares me stiff! But on the other hand I would never have

been in the least afraid of Max Beerbohm. Why? Because he was a clown in his soul – just as I am!

Love from Both to Both
Your old doting one J.

June 10th, 1957

[*LW: [Joan] died early in the day on which this letter was written, after a very short illness.*]

There's nothing to say, old friend, nothing — it is only for me with my mania for worshipping and praying to turn the direction of these from our lost Joan to our still living Louis. I keep wishing I knew what Lulu would say to you

Phyllis is a true agnostic & she says there may be, there may not be, another life. I can only — only speak for myself — & I say — for perhaps we get what we want to get — that I don't want another.

anyway your old J.C.P.

July 3rd, 1957

..... And so this scrawl will actually reach you at Dove Cottage. Well, you sure are a brave one & in my opinion a wise one to go back there [*i.e. not to have moved house*] I have heard of Bodmin but I think I've always mixed it up with Bude about which Aunt Dora used to talk; but Bude I fancy is on the coast. The only other Cornish places I've ever heard of are Land's End and Tintagel.

I can't stop myself from thinking what I should feel like, and what I should do, if Phyllis were suddenly to die; and I have come to the conclusion that I should stay on in this little house and get somebody to run in and out to sweep & scrub & dust. I'm lucky in not wanting any cooking at all as I live on raw white bread, raw eggs, raw milk, and I could boil the kettle for tea at breakfast myself – I've given up having tea for tea.

How interesting it is that you and Joan differed about cremation.

O my dear but what a splendid girl Joyce Gill must be to have arranged all! Aye, but I sure do admire her. Our most competent one in that sense is Isobel, a double-dyed Powys [*LW: Isobel Powys Marks's mother was a Powys, as was her father A.R.P., the brother of J.C.P.*], & Phyllis reminds me — for it's comical how I forget everything — that she is going shortly to have a holiday in Greece.

We were waked up early this morn by the most terrific thunderstorm I've ever heard in my life, with bursts of sheet-lightning, not forked lightning, all the time! I woke up thinking that a colossal load of heavy stones was being unloaded outside our door. Our Squire's sister came later & told us that Blaenau was famous for thunder storms. We've sent our only Shakespeare to be bound so I had to depend on my memory for "rage, blow, you hurricanes & hurricanoes spout till you have drowned the steeples and cocks!" (and that's wrong) "till you have drenched the steeples, drowned the cocks! You sulphurous and thought-executing fires, strike flat the thick rotundity of the world! crack nature's moulds & spill the germs that make ungrateful man! Rumble thy belly-full!" I bet you could rattle that off without the book!

..... Well, old friend, I try to imagine what Theodore would say to you as well as what Lulu would say to you. I only feel like asking what was Joan's favourite Musician? and what was her favourite tune? Phyllis made her new possession, a "Phil-Co", play Bach's bit of music about grazing sheep - & from now on till I die Bach on Sheep is my favourite music!

your old one J.

July 13th, 1957

Yes, better cut out "little" from before his name [*Eliot's, in the JCP-LUW Letters*] I have consulted Phyllis a lot about it and she says "cut it out".

I ought to remember more clearly – I am getting a terrible dunderhead! – how thrilled I used to be by the Waste Land ever since I first read it in Los Angeles when it first appeared. I used to read it aloud to everybody – about Mrs Porter and her daughter washing their feet in Soda water. And it ends with some thundering word rather like my favourite

"Om Mani

Padme Hum"

the prayer, when dying, of all the old gentlemen, few of them, tho', over 80, of Tibet.

O no! Cut out "little". Heavens, my obstinate eccentric prejudices seem to survive all my "rationalism" against wh. Unamuno, whom Phyllis is reading now with intense interest, is always brandishing his club — his club with spikes in it! I confess I've always had a sneaking fondness for Tertullian's saying "I believe because it is impossible". And I ought to be pleased that T.S. Eliot had ancestors in East Coker, for my father used so often to walk there with me as a boy from Montacute & there was a clever Vicar or Rector there Besides — the greatest argument of all for cutting out "little" — Phyllis greatly liked the way T.S.E. read his poetry aloud.

It has been pouring with — why can't we just say "pouring"? — It's been raining as if Zeus were doing it, for 2 days!

..... I am so glad that my favourite Music was Joan's too. I think (but of course I'm an ignoramus about music) because Bach, like Milton, played the Organ.

It's so teasing to me that all my strongest prejudices seem contradicted somewhere or another by my conscience! How can I nourish for instance my savage prejudice against G. B. Shaw when he's the only modern famous old gent who attacks Vivisection? It all makes me think of Orwell's Farm & his "two legs bad, four legs good".

Well, even on the 13th, my lucky day because Lulu's birthday, no more [*writing on*] margins!
yr doting & dotty old J.C.P

July 24th, 1957

..... Think of your dining with Antonia [*White*] the former wife of Tom Hopkinson! [*LW: J.C.P. had written a letter in defence of a book by Mr Purdy that he felt had been too unsympathetically reviewed by Mr Hopkinson. The letter appeared in the newspaper that had published the review.*] Yes, I expect I did write a bit too violently & probably a bit too pedantically too, considering all the authors I quoted. I think he replied very quietly & easily and gently. But my excuse is I had been following with such excited eagerness the effect of this queer book of Purdy, for Purdy is such a fascinating & extraordinary personality, and he was waiting with the sort of wild excitement a person might wait for the Day of Judgment, for the effect on the critics of his first properly Published Book that — you know what I am! — I sort of, kind of, became Purdy for the nonce!

Didn't our Isobel's daughter Tamar — I don't think old Herbert Marks was reading the Bible as carefully as I do when he selected that name — but I am too fond of old Herbert to ever want to scold him for it — I think when she, Tamar, had herself named afresh, her name became Antonia. A fine name! "Come, Antony, & young Octavius, come —" But think of a daughter spirited enough to re-christen herself! I wish I had a daughter or grand-daughter as you have!

We have just had a visit from Mr Glyn Griffiths and his wife Rowena, a beautiful and distinguished lady, & their daughter Judith of about twelve or thirteen. They had entertained old Littleton in Swansea when he lectured there on us all.

O do tell us when next you write, just roughly and briefly what the plot or story of Oliver's play is & what its characters are [*LW: my son Oliver's play, How Can We Save Father, was produced at this time at the Exeter Festival and at the Royal Court Theatre*], and do give him our love when you see him.

Your old John o'Dreams

August 7th, 1957

..... I am sorry to hear this about Meum Stewart [*who had recently died*]. She came to see me when I was in Hospital in Wrexham for a Duodenal Ulcer Haemorrhage, but I had no operation that time.

At this moment, while Phyllis has gone to the coast with old Redwood [*Anderson*] & Gwyneth his wife, I suddenly heard a voice — I think it was addressed to our neighbour — repeating the words "Are you in bed? Are you in bed?" Those words keep going round & round in my head as I watch a crowd of children, boys & girls, out of this window, playing "Socca" — or some species of Football.

This very morn I got an exultant note from James Purdy

Now today we've got in the Daily Telegraph a very good review of Oliver's "Saving Father" by Patrick Gibbs. It made the whole thing wonderfully clear and easy to follow and he evidently thought very highly of it.

O my dear & I do so entirely agree with you in praising the wisdom & competence of Oliver's wife Margaret. I know that from my own experience for once when Phyllis was out & away & Oliver was conducting some Toc H performance in the Corwen Pavilion the whole lot of their children spent the afternoon with me, and Margaret looked after them so perfectly. And that makes me think of the perfect manners of your grandson Chris when he was here in this very room where I am now writing to you on my couch by the window. O how lucky you are to have grandchildren! I have pictures of two young people whose faces I adore almost to the point of crying when I look at them, only I am not a crier for my little heart very soon got smaller & smaller as it was eroded from my boyhood

[*drawing of hearts progressively diminishing*]

Do you know what I think is the best blood that all we eleven children of C.F.P. & M.C.P. have — the Patteson blood — yes, the blood of the Brewers of Patteson Ale!

But the young people's pictures of wh. I speak are my son's on the tea table at my side on the right, and a picture of a handsome young early Victorian girl on my desk which is the window-sill of my observation Post at the window. This girl is my mother's mother, my favourite of all possible grandparents, whom I always associate with her reading to me "The Children of the New Forest" by Capt. Marryat. Heaven and Earth! What a grand novelist he was! Second only to (in my opinion between 7 and 10, and now still the same between 80 and 90) to Jules Verne.

O no, I much prefer your handwriting to any typing, however good.

your old John "while this machine is to him".

August 22nd, 1957

Only a word, my dear, just to ask you if you have yet had a copy of my book "Up & Out" which, as it is dedicated to you, they may have sent to you; but if not please send me a card —

just a card and I'll send you one at once.

I enclose to amuse you my correspondence of some while ago with this Portuguese gent who certainly knows English well — also a letter asking if I know anything about Baron Corvo! [LW: [letters] about JCP's books, from a young man who signs himself "Your Portuguese admirer". The replies were not enclosed. The letter refers to JCP's meeting with Corvo in 1912 and the description of it in Welsh Ambassadors]

We were both most interested in the review of Oliver's Play.

August 27th, 1957

..... We have just had a letter from Giles Wordsworth to say he will be driven to our town by a friend tomorrow Wednesday. He writes: "It is my only chance. If you are busy or tired you must turn me away. I shall understand and look forward to another occasion." He says in his letter, "Gradually over all those years Joan Wilkinson came to mean very much to me and it was always to her that I turned when ill or dispirited."

Today we are expecting in the afternoon a queer poet [Roye McCoye] who is what they call a "spastic" and with him comes the wife of the Warden of his "Home" — O those terrifying "Homes"! They are more frightening than hospitals! I have a tiny paper collection of his poems & some of them are original and all of them are perfectly clear & simple. I shall show them to young Wordsworth I think it's very nice & considerate of him to appear on foot and quite alone & I certainly shall hurry him up our steep little steps to my room where he'll see, in the place of honour between Virgil and E. A. Poe, the best edition I've got of old Wordsworth [LW: Giles Wordsworth is descended from the poet's brother] given me by my son & his mother long long before he became a Catholic Priest and they were both buried in the Catholic cemetery at Bath

O I did so very much like Mr & Mrs Coombes [LW: Mr Harry Coombes, author of a book on T.F. Powys's writings] when they came along with their children, Mark, Sarah, and Anna. I was deeply attracted by the big dark eyes of Mister and the lovely nature of Mrs who is a darling girl. O I liked her so well! And his dark eyes were as friendly — honest & unfrightening as any eyes could be. But for Sarah and Anna the main attraction wasn't Theodore's old brother but our doll Olwen bought in New York City in the early 'twenties.

How I wish I had close enough rapport with Jesus of Nazareth who would, I feel sure, dislike the Trinity as much as I do, to get his aid, as a Faith-Healer, to cure this "Spastic" — if I've got that queer word correct. I admit, though, that in the subtle art of Inventing a Metaphysical Religion nobody could equal Paul of Tarsus — but that was because he was a born Rabbi & no doubt friendly with the Essenes whose ideas (see the Dead Sea Scrolls) in many ways resemble mine, or, I ought to say, mine resemble theirs.

Well, all the best, my dear, and so says Phyllis.

your always loyal

J.C. Powys

September 2nd, 1957

My dear, I am sending you, or rather Phyllis is doing it up & writing the address, the "Up & Out" with a proper inscription.

Neither Phyllis nor I can imagine anyone not liking Giles Wordsworth! He made a bewitching engaging exquisite impression on us both. He struck us as the most charming & perfect mannered youth He pronounced your name in the French way, "Louis". — Both

Phyllis & I agreed that his resemblance to you was absolutely startling [*LW: no one else, to my knowledge, has thought there is any resemblance*]. O he was so nice. Only I wish I hadn't confined my enquiries to his great-great-great [*William Wordsworth*] because I never found out who Andrew Wordsworth is — who writes for the papers nowadays. Is this Andrew his father? He told me he had known Gertrude & Katie & Alyse since he was four. And he said — & that delighted me — that I reminded him very much, both in appearance and talk, of Katie. I must tell Katie that when I get her first letter from her new abode.

Do tell me more about Miss Ethel Fox. You recall Warwick Powys whom I met in Las Vegas, New Mexico? His Father was one of the Lilford family and he always talked of that formidable lady of the Holland House Foxes who married one of those Powyses. I recall my Father's description of her when I went with him to the church where his grandfather was buried, with a Monument in the church with a poem to him by Max [*? Matt*] Prior, a poet with something of your perfect Rochester's wit. And when my father pointed out to me as we crossed a bridge the relative he called "the Bird-Man" [*Lord Lilford*] who was fishing from a barge — the one who introduced into Britain the Little Owl from Spain or Portugal — he told me that the great Fox Lady told him once that they always gave their livings to members of the Family. But evidently my father preferred to get his Vicarage at Shirley from the Shirleys — though that he gave up the moment (after 5 of us were born there) his brother Littleton [*whose wealth he inherited*] died in the Afghan War & because he thought his Moilliet mother at Weymouth would be sad. So he became a Curate in Dorchester, which was a blessed thing for me, for Thomas Hardy taught me all the things a boy ought to know & introduced me to the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe.

My only Moilliet cousin left alive in Britain, Trevor Moilliet of Bath, is now in Hospital and is to have a terrifying operation. I have been sending him a lot of letters about our Moilliet cousins in Geneva which I have had sent me by Madame Schoen who lives on the edge of the Lake of Geneva and has been collecting data for me about the Geneva Moilliets from whom our Grandmother of Weymouth, the Grandmother of our Shirley cousins too, drew her ancestry I often wonder whether M. Mollet, one of the French Ministers of today, is a Moilliet. The addition of two little "i"s would make him one.

You are good to send your copy of "The Joy of It" by old Littleton to that lady in Oklahoma. Yes, Phyllis remembers them, but I am so Second Childish that they have slipped out of my memory completely.

We are both so proud of the success of Oliver's Play, for it is a success & the more rows it gets into the more it's a success! Think of Scandinavia asking for translation Rights!

It seems so unnatural not to end my letter, my dear, with my old "Both to Both" — so by the Powers I will end it so. But it is a blessing that you have a lot to do.

always your old John.

September 14th, 1957

I am so thrilled that you like "Up & Out", & that its effect upon you was to bring a breath of consolation into your feeling about Joan

Arnold [*Shaw, his lecture-manager in U.S.A.*] used to cry when I was at low ebb, "Jack's a Fizzle!" No, I'm not a Fizzle — I'm a coward and that's the bald as they say truth! tho' my old skull is anything but bald. "Jack the Funk" not "Jack the Giant-Killer" is the word

How very strange this extreme likeness to you I found in the countenance of Giles Wordsworth! I think there is something "psychic" and "occult" about this

Yes, I wish I could think of a better translation of "Nox est perpetua una dormienda" —

"There must be slept by us a perpetual sleep [*sic*]" . What a Gerund! Isn't it Roman to have a Gerund as your prison-chain in every verb? But O how hard it is to translate Roman poetry at its very best! Think of the Emperor Hadrian to his soul when he was dying —

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loco
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos?

Little soul, little wanderer, little white thing, guest and comrade of the body, in what place do you dwell now, pallid, rigid, and naked, and none of your jokes left?

I wish I knew more about Sappho. She must have been an extraordinary genius. But wasn't she attracted to some youth? Wasn't her death connected with her sudden passion for some young man? I must ask Phyllis when she's up here next to get down my Lemprière, that book that was Yeats's Bible, and see what it says. I never dare nowadays (again "Jack the Funk") stretch out my arms to get a book down, because when I do I sometimes, not always, feel my old — or feel just where my old Duodenal ulcer on my right side — Yes! under my ribs — used to bide.

[drawing of himself reaching up to a bookcase with his hands on a volume marked "Lemprière". The face of an imp is seen on his side, with the words "Yes, I am here still!"]

The amazing thing is that I have had no trace of my old Dyspepsia (O how proud I was when I first learnt that word! When they used to say that Carlyle had it) since we have lived here. Perhaps we are nearer to the Moon, & Ralph [*Shirley*] always said that the Moon in my horoscope was identical with what it was in Yeats's.

So far I've found no Lesbianism & no homosexuality in the Iliad [*he was then writing Homer and the Aether*] & I am half thro' it. The friendship of Achilles & Patroclus was like yours and Lulu's when you were at Cambridge.

Your old Johannis.

I feel towards Eric Harvey [*a director of his publisher Macdonald*] as some Pico della Mirandola might feel towards the Head of the Medici in Florence!

September 22nd, 1957

..... O you are quite right about the second love-affair at the end [*of the second story in Up and Out*] being a mistake from the point of view of the story as a whole. It is too hurried & too rushed

Don't 'ee think, my dear, that I have any return — what's the word — recrudescence — of the old duodenal trouble. It is only that I am aware of where it was — like an old scar that you are conscious of when you move in a certain way. The only thing is that I feel this old healed wound is still there when I reach up with my right arm or when I reach out with my stick in my right hand to poke at some post or rail or trunk or hedge for some reason

Yes, I am very erratic about underlinings. I really have no idea at all when they ought to be used and I am bad at Capitals too — when for instance Earth or Sun or Sky or Moon should have capitals

[LW: He has in mind the omission of many of his italics and capitals in his published letters to me. This omission is referred to in the Editor's Preface to the 1935-56 Letters.]

I do indeed appreciate your pride in recalling that you made Lulu realize that lust is natural & not wicked.

What a triumph, an elegant instep! I bet that is something for a man to be proud of! But no!

no! I am as flat-footed as the “Abominable Snow Man”!

Love from us both

J.C.P.

September 24th, 1957

..... Phyllis & I are both thrilled at the thought of your appearing on Television! Holy Jesus, but I'd be far too scared to do that! The idea of it absolutely terrifies me! I shiver! I shake, I quake! I tremble! I quiver, I jitter! I run! at the thought of it!

Think of Margaret Murray, aged 92, also appearing. What a shame she'll speak at home and you won't meet her. But the subject — Witchcraft — and Aleister Crowley coming into it!

I've given up my pleasure in rolling off those wonderful sentences — the best in our whole prose — in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*, because I read that he advocated and as a Magistrate actually organized in Norfolk the Burning of Witches. I would far sooner go to a Witches' “Sabbath” — is it? — is it when they meet the Devil? — than do Television. So, alas! I shan't see thee do it. I think Television has done more harm to the taste, feeling, culture, refinement, delicacy, nicety — perhaps naïveté! — of the education of our kids of this age than the Black Death! I wonder what Lulu wd. feel about “Tely” as they call it? Good Devil! But how I would be scared of those coloured lights rushing at you in Telly! Well, you are a one, on my life and soul, to be able to face that & talk!

Yes, I don't know if I've got or Phyllis has got the right pronounciation of Blaenau. But I think I would intuitively say “Bliny”, to rhyme with “Blimy”, or “Slimy”. I annoyed someone once by saying that Henry James was slimy. It was Bernie [O'Neill] who introduced me to [*the novels of*] Henry James. My favourite author at the moment is a translated German called Böll.

[drawing of LW confronting the evil spirit of Television]

Love from Both

J.C.P.

September 29th, 1957

..... I love to hear about Charles Chaplin's son! Think of Oona — Gods of Olympus, but I adore that name! — handing on her beauty to this little boy. I am glad you saw them [*on the screen*]. I shall never forget how nice Charlie was to me in Hollywood.

..... We have had a visit from Mr Lauder who was a miner in Derbyshire & now is a coal-carrier; one of those fellows who carry huge sacks of coal on their shoulders! He knows our Shirley Vicarage, and the Shirley lady who lives in it showed him round the house which is hardly changed at all since the first 5 of us were born there. Listening to Mr Lauder's account of life in Derbyshire and the ways of those born there has been of great interest to me, for it explains the difference between us five & the Dorset three, Bertie, Marian, and Lulu, and also the Somerset three, Katie, Willie, and Lucy.

Marian is starting on her adventurous tour [*from near New York*] to Blaenau and to Kenya, stopping at Paris and at Athens. She's made friends with a beautiful Greek girl who has explained exactly how she can drive — for she can hardly walk a step now, with this curst arthritis — from Athens to a Temple of Poseidon near the sea.

Well! Love to Oliver and Margaret and the children

Your old Jack of One Trade

October 9th, 1957

Why, my dear, I'd be honoured and excited to have any wild crazy drawings of mine

preserved & reproduced! [*in his 1935-56 Letters, then in preparation*] Sure I consent! But beyond that I certainly would leave it all to you & the Macdonald Firm and I would, and here & now do refuse to have any part or lot in it save only to consent & to be made proud & honoured!

..... O my dear I miss my son more than anybody else. He & I understood each other's emotions and imaginative peculiarities thro' & thro'. It was not at all paternal-filial. We were like an older boy and a younger boy at school. And he & Phyllis got on together top notch. I don't believe he'd have been annoyed if I had chanted to him your profane ditty about his uncle [*J.C.P.'s brother-in-law, Harry Lyon*]. He took everything of that sort exactly as I do.

How silly old Lulu could be sometimes, as he sure was about that "Hostility" [*LW: which Llewelyn Powys sometimes thought I felt towards J.C.P.*] Yes, our Lulu used to get funny ideas into his head like that description he gives of our mother, calling her "that woman who always loved darkness rather than light & sadness rather than joy"! No wonder old Littleton, reading that after he'd been playing battledore and shuttlecock with "that woman" got annoyed with Lulu! But, aye, how well he describes that Prison in Ilchester! I've just been reading that [*in Somerset Essays*] and how well he does honour to that excellent Rev Squire Osborne who got his peasants emigrated to Australia! How personal Lulu always was, wasn't he? No, no one will ever describe him as well as you do in Welsh Ambassadors.

O by the way — but I'm not going to let it out of my hands — I've got a heavenly book of Court Gossip in the Courts of George I and George II. They didn't know a word of English and the Court Ladies didn't know a word of German so they all talked French which those 2 kings & their wives talked very well. This book is by an ancestress of the poet Cowper, namely the wife of Lord Cowper who was Lord Chancellor. Her maiden name was Clavering. Isn't that a perfect name to have? There's a picture of her by Sir Godfrey Kneller. And if ever there was an English Madame de Maintenon!

Well, enough for now —
your old Johannes

October 16th, 1957

No, my dear, we have not got in our possession any of those drawings of me which Augustus John made when his daughter drove him over here [*he was given one later*].

I adored the old man and in the middle of his drawing me I jumped up and kissed his forehead, which made me feel exactly as if I were kissing the forehead of Zeus! I recall well that of the 3 drawings the final one was the one I liked best [*it appears as frontispiece to the Letters*]. It was a picture of my very soul!

I really am getting a bit dotty especially in memory but I am well and happy, and so is Phyllis. I keep feeling so proud of your success on the Telly! though I have never seen one & will certainly obstinately stubbornly fanatically bigotedly Johnishly die without seeing one!

I pray you've found some drawing of mine that really is amusing.
your old Johannes Crack-Pot

Guy Fawkes Day, 1957

..... I wonder if you have seen any Guy Fawkes jublations or heard any fireworks. We have only seen 2 red fires out of this window. "What on earth," I cried to Phyllis, "are those two red eyes aflame over there?" "My dear, you've forgotten it's Guy Fawkes Day," said she. Isn't it funny that no one ever thinks of making it a point of battle between Catholics and Protestants that the Gunpowder Plot was a Catholic Plot?

Well, my dear, all the best, such as the “best” is in this weird world!
yr J.C.P.

November 18th, 1957

Aye! but I did so enjoy this letter of yours with its description of K.P.’s [*Katie’s*] visit & your talk about me. You were the one who “got my number” better than any other person save Phyllis & Lulu.

By the way, the sun went down – as seen from my window on whose broad desk I have pictures of Phyllis as a young girl, of Lulu when in Switzerland with his Beard when he looked exactly like a god on Mount Ida. Theodore never looked natural with a beard but Lulu did. Theodore knew it as he knew everything about himself, and he used to talk of “this beard” as if it were a disguise he’d put on for a game of charades at Montacute House where he was so fond of Margery [*Phelips*] and we used to act plays.

..... O you are so right about my having no fixed philosophy but being full of violent prejudices O yes, I remember that professor who came but I was so fascinated by his wife, a very tall, very very slim girl, with O such wonderful eyes, that I felt afterwards I had neglected him for her. I hope he did not feel as I did once long ago at Arundel when I met a very famous Jewish novelist – I forget his name but you would know it at once — this was before I went to America – who made a lot of my wife but thought nothing of me!

I am so thankful you found K.P. so much better in spirits than when she was living at Chydyok. Both Phyllis and I think it was really wonderful, what power she put into clearing that house of Gertrude’s collection of things, and what wisdom too!

Yes, it is acting not arguing that I enjoy, and lecturing not debating

Yours always — I won’t say “ever”, for absolute annihilation is my chief positive certainty just as to attack vivisection is my chief negative certainty. What a frivolous bit of humbug and silliness is this “Yours ever”! But “always” is all right. That has no “ever” about it.

Yrs always & so says Phyllis

J.

I can’t help grotesque outbursts like an actor. Today Phyllis was out & I was entertaining a lady visitor alone when suddenly I saw the sun going down and I turned clear round and addressed it with Homeric emotion —

November 28th, 1957

Yes, that really is something — to hear a “strapping” boy of 19 call someone “Granny” that you can remember as a little girl of 6! And it is exciting to think of a picture of Theodore with a mustache. No, I bet none of us have seen it I remember when I stayed with Theodore when he had his Farm and he had to walk to that town [*Saxmundham*] to exhibit specimens of his crops!

In the Daily Telegraph about Eisenhower it says he suffered from occlusion in his brain. Isn’t that a queer word? I would define it as a headache caused by visits from an occultist like old Crowley —

O I begged Phyllis to cut out to send you — you need not return it if she has kept it & I do enclose it — a newspaper account of a man, the father of several “strapping” sons, who is turning into a woman and now walks about dressed as one, along with his wife as if they were sisters!

Think of one youth having to say to another, “I suppose you’ve heard that Daddy is

changing into a woman?" What do you suppose happens? What a decent wife he must have to quietly accept the situation and treat him as another woman! Phyllis tells me I told her that at Montacute I was once seized with a terror of turning into a woman — but in my Second Childhood loss of memory I've forgotten it altogether now

[drawing to illustrate this terror]

All the best from Phyllis & her old man still in trousers

J.C.P.

December 3rd, 1957

Well, I was interested in all you say here! for as I get older I grow not less snobbish but less afraid of the aristocracy I love the name Grosvenor — "Great Hunter". And what you say about waiters and waitresses, and how the latter are less punctilious than the former over titles does arrest my attention.

On Nov 26 I had an electricity Bill & paid it for £12.14.7 [LW: for heating he uses only electric fires, and uses them very liberally, all the time.]

O I've had an amusing letter from "Vogue", that ladies' picture book of Fashion Plates — whatever plates are! — to ask whether I will be ready to be photographed for some Number which they are going to entitle "A Great Age". When I first saw that I took it to refer to the Age in which we live, but when they mentioned Bertrand Russell I knew they meant old writers!!

I like Bertrand Russell's face best of all the celebrities of this tottery demi-semi pseudo generation of quasi's. I think he has a particularly nice face, and though I've never met him since I debated with him on marriage in New York, he attacking it & I defending it, I still like everything about him.

"Vogue" must have a terrific sale, mustn't it? if they can afford to send a special photographer [it was *Tony Armstrong-Jones*] all the way to Wales to take one photo! But maybe there's some other old gent sitting like Humpty Dumpty on one of the eminences round here —

I saw a reference in some paper yesterday to the Mystique of the Upper Middle Class. I know that word means a sort of half-religious half-philosophical rather Pateresque & Proustian cult, but what on earth is the Mystique of the upper middle class? Perhaps a desire for there to be Belles Dames sans Merci in the House of Lords?

I was delighted with your picture of Rabelais' Chinon & the River Vienne.

All the best from us both

always your old J.C.P.

December 17th, 1957

No, my dear, your old J.C.P.'s phizz will not be with those old gents'. They wrote to say that their photographer was ill & unequal to such a long journey. I expect it was my fault for not jumping at their first date which was in the morning — probably the same morning as they visited one of the others — possibly Bertrand Russell; but it seemed to me that the afternoon with cups of tea wd. suit us better than the morning with a possibility of Lunch! But I made a mistake there.

I begged them to send me a copy of "Vogue" when it came out for I want very much to see a picture of [Lord] Samuel; for I've never seen one of him & he must have Jewish blood & I'm a fierce devotee of the Jews.

Jews first, and after them Germans are my choice, but I have lately been reading — I told you about “Atlantis & the Giants” by Denis Saurat which is my favourite modern book — but what I’ve lately been reading aloud to Phyllis is a different book. It is called “Gothic Tales” and is by a lady who calls herself “Isak [Dinesen]” but whose real name is Baroness (are there two n’s in Baroness?) Blixen of Denmark. She wrote this book in English and then translated it herself into her native tongue. We are both enthralled by it and we think you would be. It analyzes the “mystique”, as journalists love to say now, of an aristocracy; and the stories themselves are simply thrilling. I may have got the title wrong — we’ve just lent it for a couple of days to Verna Vaughan — but she’ll bring it back to us tomorrow so that I can go on reading it to Phyllis. We’ve promised to give it as an Xmas present to Raymond Garlick here (a poet & a lecturer and a teacher), so I can’t lend it to you

Last night we listened on the BBC to a story by Hartley about a brother and sister called Eustace and Hilda. We had read years ago at Corwen this Novel and were glad to hear it again. This chap Hartley is very good at natural ordinary talk between people like ourselves

I had a letter the other day from a lady who had just read “The Buffoon” [*LW: a very early novel of mine, in which one of the two chief characters was drawn from J.C.P.*] and was exultant about it. Feminine readers as a rule, I think, get the real atmosphere of a book better than most men do.

It must indeed have been interesting to see yourself on that “Telly”! But it was annoying that they left out the question about Crowley’s sex magic & your reply.

I love to think of Katie coming to tea with you again.

All the best from Phyllis & your old John,

J.C.P.

December 23rd, 1957

Phyllis has just shown me the New Moon which I should have missed altogether. It is exactly 2 days old, for it or She began on Saturday the 21st at 6.12 a.m. according to my Diary. [*LW: “Nine p.m., Monday night” is at the top of the letter; an example of his inability to reckon.*] Do tell me more about what you know of Robert Graves and what you think of him? I have been reading his huge Book called “The White Goddess” who, as far as I can make out (for it is a very difficult book to skim thro’) is the Moon. Anything about the Moon interests me, for — as often I’ve said — Ralph [*Shirley*] always told me that I was born under especial influence of the Moon, just as Yeats was. And this great heavy book is full of all the peculiar mythology that particularly interests me.

We have just today heard from Alyse [*Gregory: she had recently moved from Chydyok in Dorset*] at that weird address in Devon. She writes like one who is a bit lost and bewildered, but I expect she will by degrees gather together the various lost selves within her till she becomes more like the Alyse she knows and we know.

So many of the Xmas cards we’ve had have considerably long letters inside them, and I am so grotesquely conscientious in answering letters that, though I’ve got tantalizingly near to finishing my *Iliad* [Homer and the Aether] I can’t do it till these letters are answered.

What a quaint thing conscience is! It hasn’t been half analyzed enough. I think it’s based on Fear: fear that if you don’t do what you know you ought to do you’ll suffer for it! Not necessarily in Christian or Dantesque Hell, for I find conscience in Homer’s *Iliad* a thousand years before the year one. But I think it’s based on what all children, long before Christianity, long before old Jewish Jehovah or Greek Zeus or Roman Jove, have always from Cave-Men

days, been frightened into believing by their parents. “Be good or — or or or or or or —” — yes, it’s that “or”!

Well, I must stop, it’s ten p.m.

your old Jack-in-the-Box that has lost its locks so it’s open when it ought to be shut, but who has the ring is another thing and I must —
with love from Phyllis too.

JCP to LUW — Transcription by Robert V. Lancaster

1 Waterloo, Blaenau Ffestiniog

Monday, Jan. 14, 1957

Aye my dear but what a heavenly letter from Oliver! I simply love it and am so grateful to you for letting me see it. I herewith return it with an embrace to you and him and that (all of ’em) lovely family of his. I do so like that address of his, Lewknor Oxon.

No! No! you’ve never told me before about that best of all our Dukes’ mania for old suits! And certainly I never knew before that suits of any sort could be Turned! It makes me think of the feathery or woolly suits of Birds or Beasts when we Turn their bodies before we devour them on a Turn-spit!

Aye but I adore your story of that bow of the Cabby who drove you! I must read over that Shylock passage again. “My ducats and my daughter — fled with a Xtian !” No, I cannot decide that crucial point tonight. I feel as if I were standing with you and Lulu on the Rialto and suddenly saw the gondola of you know whom coming towards us! I must ponder this point a bit more before I give my verdict!

Love to you both from P and me, my dears,
your old un-turned coat Jack !

Reviews

Anthony Head: Glimpses of Melancholy

Florence, Mistress of Max Gate by Peter Tait

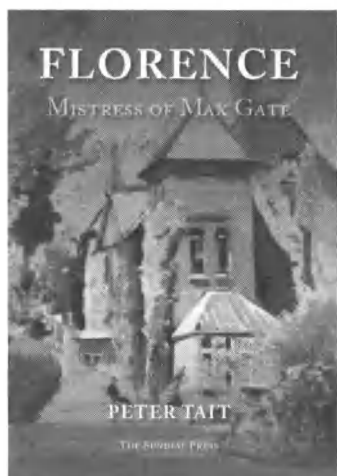
The Sundial Press, 2011, hardback, ISBN 978-1-908274-08-3. £16.50

In the summer of 1918, during his madcap trip to England to try to join His Majesty’s Forces, John Cowper Powys took the time to visit Max Gate. ‘I went to see Hardy,’ he wrote to his California friend Paul Jordan Smith, ‘& had tea with him & stayed about two hours. (Thin bread & butter & home-made damson jam but no sugar!)...’ Hardy’s second wife, Florence Dugdale, made a marked impression on him: ‘a gentle rather sad, rather ascetic, little lady, dressed in plain cream-coloured silk with pearls around her neck & hair (darkish) done Madonna-wise – & with brown slender very nervous hands.’

There are echoes of this in Llewelyn Powys's sketch when he visited Max Gate the following year: 'I stood with Mrs. Hardy at the window. We looked out at the spring twilight in silence. It was the first time I had met Mr. Hardy's second wife. She was a dark, nervous woman, of an awkward carriage, who possessed an odd distinction of her own.' This was the occasion when Hardy expressed his fancy that a family in Broadmayne by name of Keats might have been related to the poet, and Llewelyn's 'indiscretion' in mentioning this in an article in *The Dial* three years later sparked Florence into complaining of his 'ill conduct' in publishing 'an intimate communication' not intended for literary use. Llewelyn said he had to write 'the most propitiatory letters' to her and it was only his gift of a snakeskin bookmark that helped Hardy 'forget his annoyance'.

Such suggestive glimpses of melancholy, frugality, and protective touchiness are among the many facets of Florence Dugdale's life with Hardy that are teased out and brought into dramatic focus in *Florence, Mistress of Max Gate*, an intriguing debut novel by Peter Tait that was launched with great success in Sherborne in November.

The author begins with a 'Preamble' revealing the existence of a 'letter' – the most significant of several 'props' in the story – that Hardy wrote to Florence just before their marriage, the unveiling of its contents being appropriately delayed until the last chapter, by



which time Florence has come to regard it as 'a measured and cruel attempt to enslave her'. The narrative proper begins in 1912 at a hotel in Weymouth where Florence receives a telegram notifying her of the death of Hardy's first wife, Emma Gifford: 'The word numbed her, as did the mere contemplation of bodies moving from one element to another ... Every death of someone she had known in her life punched a small hole in her already dark universe, and sat upon her as a precursor of what was to come to her too.'

The story then unfolds through a series of progressions and reversions to scenes from Florence's earlier life, depicting her tortuous relations with Hardy (she had first met him in 1905) and the Max Gate household, into marriage and a gradual accommodation of conflicting desires and interests. It ends with a cleverly staged climax on the cliffs of Cornwall in 1916, where the 'watershed' in their marriage is reached with the idea for the posthumous 'Biography' of Hardy that

was to bear and make Florence's name (if not quite in the way she intended): though presented as Florence's idea, this was swiftly submerged beneath Hardy's desire for control. In the portrayal of Hardy, indeed, it is arguably his faults and foibles that are to the fore – a procrastinator by turns possessive, jealous, and quietly dictatorial – though he is also shown as generous, hen-pecked, amused and amusing, a man in need of loving companionship, even if only to ease his own indulgence in nostalgia and guilt: the poems he wrote to Emma that cause such humiliation and pain to Florence are a pivotal theme in the novel.

In his portrayal of Florence herself and her 'dark universe' Tait produces a compelling character-study of a woman of strikingly independent leanings and literary ambitions, who craved respect as much as affection, and who struggled against a series of disappointments and tragedies in her own life (her similarities with Philippa Powys in this regard are striking), yet maintained the devotion and dedication to Hardy that would posthumously earn her the

dismissively admiring sobriquet ‘helpmate to genius’. Her relationships with a broad cast of characters – the sadly dignified Sir Thornley Stoker, the ill-fated Alfred Hyatt and Frank George, the feisty and obstructive Lillian Gifford – are drawn with an affecting and sometimes humorous sensitivity. Several exterior scenes – the trips to Dublin, a night ride through London, walks on a Suffolk beach and in Puddletown Forest – give balance to what is largely an interior work, and the cameo appearances by Bram Stoker and Ellen Terry, with H. G. Wells and Conan Doyle glimpsed in passing, also work to make this novel a gift for a TV screenplay writer.

An ‘Aftermath’ summarizes the last twelve years of Florence’s life with Hardy and her subsequent lot – cut off by the Stokers, her purported authorship of the ‘Biography’ discredited, and widely regarded as parodied by Somerset Maugham in *Cakes and Ale* (despite his later denial). It closes on a note that suggestively returns us to the opening scene: ‘How death must have seemed a release for her from all the railings and ravages of life.’



This novel is the fruit of the author’s life-long interest in Hardy and his work, and it might just be that Tait’s sympathetic recreation of Florence Dugdale – the first significant portrayal of her in fiction (whatever Maugham’s intentions) – ensures for her a more deserving immortality than posterity has so far bestowed. That would be one of life’s little ironies which might have brought a smile to Tom Hardy’s face ...

Anthony Head

Florence Dugdale (b.1879) was the daughter of a headmaster in Enfield, trained as a teacher and taught in his school. Among the children’s books she published were ‘The Book of Baby Beasts’ (1911), ‘The Book of Baby Birds’ (1912) and ‘The Book of Baby Pets’ (1913). She first met Hardy in 1905, became his secretary and married him in 1914, two years after the death of Emma Hardy. The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1841–91 (1928) and The Later Years 1892–1928 (1930) appeared under Florence’s name, based on letters and “conversations”, but are thought to have been largely dictated by Hardy himself. After Hardy died, Florence remained on friendly terms with Llewelyn, and with JCP and Phyllis during their “Dorset Year” in 1934–5. There are several references to her in JCP’s diary of this time. She died at Max Gate in 1937. A volume of the letters of Emma and Florence Hardy was published in 1996.

Jeremy Hooker: Magical mixings

Towards the Waiting Sun, by Glen Cavaliero (Poetry Salzburg, 2011).

The poems in Glen Cavaliero’s new book are arranged sequentially and in four sections: ‘Dissolution’, ‘Unlucky Numbers’, ‘Here and Now’, ‘Springboard’. The arrangement bespeaks a careful thematic ordering. Order also characterises Cavaliero’s sense of form, which is hospitable to a good deal of variety. However serious his subject – and this book, along with its touches of humour is profoundly serious – Cavaliero is a poet at play, delighting in language

and formal variety. There is, for example, the tight control of 'Crosswords', a poem tense with Christian paradox:

Tempered to a fine Herodian humour
It mocks the bleak complicity of Cain,
With tender scorn allows the priests their rumour
And arrogates its power in meek disdain.

A humorous wit sounds in 'The Witching Hour': 'When smooth elastic silken sisters/ saunter softly through the shade,/ and lustful ambulating mis-
ters/ strut in cocksure masquerade, ...' These are just two examples of Cavaliero's formal variety, which coexist in the book with many diverse 'freer', more conversational modes.

With so many 'voices' one may ask of a book of verse, where is the man himself? The answer in this case is: everywhere. The first poem, 'Flood Alert', observes a river 'angry/and engaged on some annihilating business'. Here, 'A pilgrim's chapel holds on for dear life'. Elemental forces surge through the book, which is charged with the passions of a man in age remembering, regretting, reliving.

Towards the Waiting Sun is a book of love poems, of love in a life. The poet confronts love as enemy; he expresses pain, loss, anguish, betrayal, savage love, and love as ecstasy. He is equally capable of expressing joy and the darker emotions, a son's tender love for his mother, and the torment of disappointed sexual love. The poetry is not less religious for being, often, erotic. 'All About You' is among the most moving explicit love

poems in the book. It recalls Cavaliero's earlier poetry, in which places are closely bound up with human experience, historical or personal, or both. This poem is located *At Portmore Loch*. In this place,

You were the air's breath that day,
earth's distillation on my lips
your tongue stirred with the fragrance of the pines.

The memory provokes a question, which is central to the book as a whole:

Was love like that then?
Earth, water, air, all formed
To have their life for me, in you?

At issue is the relationship between self and other, and person and elemental world.

The numerous places in the poems include English locations, New York State, Sardinia, Andalusia, Scotland and the Hebrides. None is a tourist's poem; almost all are woven with the poet's life experience. They are elemental, made of 'Earth, water, air'. The poem on the page facing 'All about You', 'At Dunwich', includes the words 'The sea licks clay'. This turns the mind to dissolution, to mortality; but it has, too, an erotic suggestion. We are made of clay; our relationship with the elemental cosmos is a peculiarly intimate one. If we inevitably share its dissolution, love has another message, and there is waiting in the light of the setting sun. Light

as energy, as well as illumination, haunts the book.

Towards the Waiting Sun has a prefatory essay, 'A Journey', by Peter Scupham, in which he writes: 'In a poetic climate which is choc-a-bloc with relativism, explorations of a post-modern world where meanings are suspect and tease the reader with their baffling shape-changes, this collection obstinately assumes the need for poetry to move the human heart, to confront and examine pain, loss and heartbreak, but not to be imprisoned by them, and to hearten the reader to continue his or her own journey'. This is a useful, elegant essay (marred only by the ascription of a quotation from Christopher Smart's Hymn 32 to William Cowper), in which Scupham locates 'the heart of the collection' in the thirteen-part song-cycle, 'Unlucky Numbers'. Here and elsewhere, the feeling is at times rawly painful, but the formality of 'numbers', which enables expression, also frames it, guarding privacy.

The concluding poem, 'The Songs of Rhiannon', has an epigraph from John Cowper Powys: '...that song of the Birds of Rhiannon which brought death to the living and life to the dead'. The quotation put me in mind of another passage in which Powys writes of Welsh mythology, of what he calls 'all manner of magical *mixings* up' in the *Mabinogion*, 'of life and death and death with life; so that on all sides we grow aware of half-alive things and of half-dead things, of life vanishing as the death-mists rise or fall, of birth appearing even from the lap of death'. It has been obvious from his first book, *The Ancient People*, that Cavaliero the Powysian is Cavaliero the poet. It is not only that he too is drawn to the ancient and the mythological, but also that he knows himself to be living in a haunted world. There is a side of Cavaliero the poet that looks towards an English social vision in hailing distance of John Betjeman and Philip Larkin. In this book it can be detected in 'Thingworth', for example:

The elms are all down of course that use to stand
beside the church. And that's marooned in a field
nobody wants to cross. The steeple squints at you
as you come roaring up from where the villagers all go -
down to the shopping mall, industrial estates ...

But he has always been open to something altogether more 'Celtic', in his eschewal of self-protective irony and his love of abrasive landscapes and prehistoric sites. As he writes here, of *The Standing Stones of Callanish*:

They shift while I'm not looking. Hooded shapes
incline towards each other, guardians of that centre
that I will never reach.
(Never, never, never,
the sea-birds wail as they head across the marsh.)
(*'Among the Farthest Hebrides'*)

The Powysian 'magical *mixings* up', which Cavaliero has made his own, combine with his original Christian vision to make him a poet of our liminal situation between worlds. It is an inspiring poetic perception, but it doesn't make for comfort. *Towards the Waiting Sun* is too full of 'life and death and death with life' for easy consolation. It is at once a pleasure to read and unsettling, as, surely, any serious book drawing on a lifetime of experience must be.

Jeremy Hooker