TWO POWYS DAYS
APRIL 23RD & JULY 16TH — SEE PAGE 2

Editorial

A previous Newsletter editor once described the job as an exploration of the 'nooks and crannies' of Powys ... lore. The present edition is a good example of this, with several interesting pathways followed up by Chris Thomas (to whom as usual very many thanks) – among them the sculptor David Nash's reminiscences of Phyllis Playter in the 1970s, and a connection between T. F. Powys and the great film-maker Satyajit Ray. Added to this Chris acts as a brilliant receiving-point for Powys mentions and references both on and off the Internet. It all adds up.

Phyllis Playter herself makes two appearances: aged 14 – a discovery by Robin Wood in Canada – with a 'futurist' story of flying machines not unlike JCP's 'Shillyshally', 50 years on; and with her late friendship with David Nash, Blaenau's other famous resident. Stephen Powys Marks traces Littleton Powyses through the ages, and Tony Head justifies the ways of editors to sometimes puzzled readers – in this case with the new 'Earth Memories', which it is hoped will attract new readers to Llewelyn Powys as a 'classic'. JCP's *Meaning of Culture* gets an appreciation from a new generation: not only 'forgotten wisdom', 'a vintage gem' but 'a masterwork – one of the most thoughtful and beautifully written books I've ever encountered ... wholly rewarding'.

Shakespeare is in the air, reflected in typical ways by Llewelyn and John Cowper. (Did Theodore ever mention Shakespeare? Any suggestions gratefully received.)

continues next page

ON OTHER PAGES

One of LlP's less well-known essays, 'Shakespeare's Fairies', is distilled from deep knowledge of the lore (and prose style) of the 15– and 1600s. Not actually about Shakespeare, but conjuring the country background he (and LlP) came from and its (possible) diminutive, humanoid residents. These are small-scale Elves, rather than the sinister alternative humans of Irish legends and the ballads that LlP loved (and which Sylvia Townsend Warner recreates so cleverly in her sophisticated *Kingdoms of Elfin.*)

JCP's chapter on Shakespeare in *Pleasures of Literature* (here, an excerpt only) deals with the man himself, the special nature of his genius and how far, if at all, we can deduce his character and 'philosophy' from his work. As with all the subjects in that book, what JCP conveys is the various ways these 'great books' reveal their writers' methods for *dealing with life*, and hence what we can learn from them – with Shakespeare, an understanding of 'life-illusions'.

KK

Two Powys Days

Ely, Saturday 23rd April

***John Cowper Powys*: Maiden Castle**

Sonia Lewis will lead a discussion of *Maiden Castle*, Chapter 5, 'The Scummy Pond', at the **Old fire Engine House, restaurant and art gallery, 25 St Mary's Street, Ely**, which is located near Ely Cathedral. We will meet in the upstairs sitting room at **10.30am** for welcome and coffee. Our discussion will commence at **11.00**. Lunch will be served in the restaurant from **12.00 to 13.00**. The discussion will recommence in the afternoon.

Maiden Castle was first published in the USA in 1936 (the *New York Times* thought it was 'bewildering because of its complete lack of movement'), and in the UK in 1937 (the *TLS* review said that it 'moves within a realm of its own'). Our President, Glen Cavaliero, has called *Maiden Castle* JCP's most 'Lawrentian' novel and W. J. Keith called it 'the work of a literary master' although 'not a fully achieved novel'.

The book was drastically cut by JCP's American editor – 'he's a snipper not a slasher' said JCP. *Maiden Castle* did not appear in its original unabridged form until a new edition was published by the University of Wales Press, edited by Ian Hughes, in 1990. The *Daily Telegraph* review of the new edition called the novel 'extraordinary'.

JCP began writing the story in August 1934 at Rats Barn, on the Dorset downs, on his return to the UK from America but he found it difficult to decide on the form the story should take. It was not until after he had moved to Dorchester on October 8th 1934 and started to rewrite the novel in January 1935 that he settled on the main setting in Dorchester itself, reflecting his own daily routine and meetings with

people. His working title for the Dorchester novel was now '*Dud No-Man's Girl*'. *Maiden Castle* is particularly notable for its morbidity and obsession with death – Urien Quirm has 'dead eyes', he smells of mortality and is associated with a 'corpse god'.

Maiden Castle is a very troubling novel much concerned with frustrated desire, tangled human relationships, the dark influence of family history and the ancient mythological past. But *Maiden Castle* is also remarkable for its wealth of realistic detail and especially naturalistic evocations. Chapter five begins with a portrait of Dud No Man's domestic life in the flat he shares with Wizzie Ravelston in Friary Lane (a self-portrait of JCP and Phyllis) and ends with an astonishing climactic scene on the approach to the ramparts of Maiden Castle, 'the mystical city of Dunium', where the 'nameless bastard's' true identity and his relationship to the grotesque figure of Urien Quirm is revealed.

In between these events JCP weaves his way, leisurely examining the interrelationships of his characters, commenting on certain astrological influences – Dorchester is described as 'a city under the sign of water', and exploring the theme of the quest for identity, integrity and the search for inner meaning. There is comedy in the scene at the Antelope hotel and the literary luncheon hosted by Mr Comber. In the fully restored edition of the novel we may now also better appreciate JCP's description of 'the magic of flowers'.

There is a good discussion of the significance of JCP's description of cuckoo flowers in the scene set alongside the water meadows on the path to the blue bridge (chapter 5), in Harald Fawkner's book, *JCP & the Elements* (Powys Press, 2015). The textual history of the novel has also been published in an article by Ian Hughes in *The Powys Review* 12 (1982/1983). The abandoned parts of the novel can be consulted at the Powys Collection at Exeter University and were printed in the *The Powys Review* 15 (1984/1985). For an interesting personal response to the novel see W. J. Keith's article in *la lettre Powysienne* 16 (Autumn, 2008).

Dorchester, Saturday 16thJuly

T. F. Powys's religious and metaphysical ideas

Michael Kowalewski, the Society's Collection Liaison Officer, will present an informal talk and lead a discussion on the theme of TFP's religious and metaphysical ideas, illustrated by an examination of passages from *An Interpretation of Genesis*, *Father Adam* and other works by TFP.

In his talk Michael will explore TFP's original ideas about religion, his visionary fantasies and religious symbolism, his dualist beliefs, love of the Bible, his mysticism, pantheism, and antinomianism. A. E. Waite, the occultist, in a discussion of TFP's religious unorthodoxy, referred to his paradoxes, contradictions, as well as his reverence, sense of immanence and his ability to produce 'brilliant epigrams'.

The venue for the meeting is the library of the Dorset County Museum in

Dorchester. Coffee and welcome is at **10.30am**. The meeting will commence at **11.00**. Lunch will be from **13.00 to 14.00** at a nearby restaurant.

An Interpretation of Genesis, written in an archaic biblical style in the form of a dialogue, was TFP's first published work; It was privately printed in 1908 with the help of Louis Wilkinson and JCP, and distributed by William Rider & Son; it was later reprinted by Chatto and Windus in 1929. On its first publication the book was favourably reviewed in Aleister Crowley's magazine, *Equinox*, *March 1910*, which noted the influence of the Kabbalah and dualism and stated:

> This is a most mystical interpretation of the most beautiful of the books of the Old Testament ... It is a little volume which one who reads will grow fond of, and will carry about with him, and open at random in quiet places, in the woods and under the stars ...

Father Adam was written in 1919 but remained unpublished during TFP's lifetime. It did not appear until 1990 in a modern edition. In *Powys Notes* (Fall 1990), Anne Barbaeu Gardiner reviewed the novel and called it 'a theological novel and will attract the sort of reader who would enjoy Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress'. A useful guide to the many levels of meaning and reference in *Father Adam* can be found in an article by F. R. Leavis, 'T. F. Powys in Perspective, the significance of *Father Adam*' in *The Powys Review* 29/30.

Chris Thomas

Both events are free, although a charge will be made for lunch, which is optional. We welcome contributions towards the costs of coffee and refreshments. Everyone is welcome to attend including non-members.

If you wish to attend either meeting please notify Hon. Secretary, Chris Thomas, either by e-mail or by post (see inside front cover for contact details).

Rothesay House, South Walk, Dorchester, built for the Revd C. F. Powys when he took up his duties as Curate of St Peter's Church, and completed in March 1880. It was the birthplace of A. R. Powys, Marian and Llewelyn Powys, the 'Mabelulu' threesome.
Photograph by Peter Foss in 1973, shortly before its demolition.

AGM 2016

This gives notice that the **Annual General Meeting** of The Powys Society will be held at 11.00am on Sunday 14th August at the Wessex Hotel, High Street, Street, nr Glastonbury, Somerset, BA16 OEF.

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

Chris Thomas, Hon. Secretary

Committee Nominations

Nominations are invited for **Honorary Officers** and **Members** of the Powys Society Committee to take effect from August 2016.

All paid-up members, including Honorary members, are entitled to submit nominations for the Committee. Nominations must include the name of the **Proposer** and the **Seconder** and should be submitted in writing or by e-mail, including a statement confirming the **Nominee's agreement**.

Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary
by **e-mail** to < chris.d.thomas@hotmail.co.uk >
or **by post** to flat D, 87 Ledbury Road, London W11 2AG
Nominations must be received by **Wednesday 1 June 2016**.
Current Honorary Officers of the Powys Society Committee are:

Chairman	Timothy Hyman
Vice-Chairman	David Goodway
Secretary	Chris Thomas
Treasurer	Anna Rosic (Pawelko)

Nominations are sought for the four positions of **Honorary Officers** from August 2016.

Current **members** of the Powys Society committee are: **Kate Kavanagh** (*Newsletter editor*), and **Dawn Collins** (who have two years to run of their three year term of service), **Shelagh Powys Hancox**, **John Hodgson**, and **Michael Kowalewski** (*Collection Liaison Officer*), who have one year left to run of their three-year term of service and **Louise de Bruin** (*Publications Manager*) who will complete her three-year term of service. **Jacqueline Peltier** continues to serve as honorary Committee member and **Charles Lock** (editor of the *Powys Journal*) serves as ex officio member of the Committee.

Nominations are sought for one vacant position on the Committee from August 2016.

Chris Thomas, Hon Secretary

The Powys Society Conference, 2016
The Wessex Hotel, Street, nr Glastonbury

Friday 12th to Sunday 14th August

'Strange Matters'

O Glastonbury, Glastonbury … how lamentable is thy case now? How hath Hypocrisie and Pride wrought thy desolation? In this sorrowful lament for Glastonbury, written in the late sixteenth century, the Elizabethan magus and hermetic philosopher, John Dee, looked back to a vanished period of Albion's ancient history under the reign of the 'peaceable' Saxon king Edgar.

Dee's lament for the destruction of the Abbey, and its great library of books and manuscripts, strikes a Powysian note, for the name of Edgar is invoked several times in *A Glastonbury Romance*. Like the poet and novelist Charles Williams, John Cowper Powys tapped into modern interest in the Glastonbury legends and the medieval Grail romances, 'the matter of Britain', but, unlike Williams, JCP's attitude to Glastonbury's legends was much more critical and sceptical. He says of Glastonbury: 'the land reeked with the honey lotus of all the superstitions of the world'.

We cannot avoid encountering the Glastonbury myths, in one form or another, at this year's Conference. The location for our Conference, the small, busy, town of Street, whose emblem is the ichthyosaurus, is only two miles from Glastonbury and is situated in the shadow of places closely associated with Arthurian romance: Pomparles bridge, where John Crow in *A Glastonbury Romance* experienced a vision of something – Excalibur, or a meteor, or a hallucination, or perhaps a cosmic ray – certainly something 'beyond the limits of the known'; the *Terre Gastée* at the foot of Wirral Hill, and Beckery, the Grail Castle and the Chapel Perilous. If you believe in such things, Street also forms part of Glastonbury's legendary terrestrial zodiac and earthly Temple of the Stars, supposedly first uncovered by John Dee. In Street we are in the sign of Aries and on the cusp of Pisces.

Street is surrounded by a pleasant vista of water meadows, rhynes, marshy fields, pine-covered hills, cider-apple orchards, woods and slow flowing rivers such as the Brue, Hartlake and Whitelake where eel, pike, dace, chub, perch and tench may be found; thin-legged herons stand silently on the riverbanks, and egrets, lapwings and bitterns can often be seen flying overhead. There is a fine view of Glastonbury from the top of Wirral hill revealing a sea of greenness dominated by the Tor, rising up, 'like the phallus of an unknown god'. The occultist, Dion Fortune, called this view of Glastonbury 'a goodly place and kind'.

JCP was of course profoundly sensitive to the spirit and atmosphere of certain places especially 'the psychic chemistry of religious sites older than Christianity'. Ever since his father first pointed out to him, from the slopes of Montacute hill, St Michael's tower and the Tor, he had been attracted by the 'immemorial mystery' of

Glastonbury, *Urbs Beata*, the 'mysterious Vale of Avalon', *Ynys Witrin*, the Fortunate Isle, which he also knew from Tennyson's familiar description: 'deep meadowed, happy, fair, with orchard lawns'. No wonder JCP described Glastonbury as an ancient medieval city, 'a city that Fra Angelico might have painted'. When the antiquarian, chorographer and bibliophile John Leland visited the Abbey library in the early 1530s, before the dissolution, he was so overwhelmed by the fabulous collection of books he fell into a state of intense ecstasy: 'the mere sight of the books struck my mind with an awe or amazement of some kind ... I paid my respects to the deity of the place ...' JCP's reverence for the *genius loci* of the Tor is recorded in his diary for 1929: '... The Tower, the Tower, the Tower ... I knelt and said Oh Tower help me.'

The title for this year's conference, 'Strange Matters', comes from *Macbeth* (Act 1, Scene V) and was one of JCP's favourite quotations: 'Your face, my Thane, is as a book where men / May read strange matters.' [*Lady Macbeth, advising her husband to change his face: 'look like the innocent flower / But be the serpent under't'.*] In *A Glastonbury Romance*, 'Barter's face at that moment was indeed one in which could be read "strange matters"'. G.Wilson Knight said of JCP's work: '... each book ... is saturated in a sense of ... prodigious *strangeness* and importance ...'

Our speakers will discuss this theme in a variety of ways. **Paul Cheshire** appears at a Powys Society Conference for the first time and will take us deep into *A Glastonbury Romance* to explore JCP's personal 'strange' philosophical ideas about the psychic-sensuous margins of life. **Peter Foss** will give a talk, illustrated with slides, on the background to Llewelyn's 1911 diary, discussing his recovery in England, convalescence and relapse into illness again. (A strange, or at least unusual, life). Novelist **Lindsay Clarke** also appears at a Powys Society Conference for the first time. His talk on *Porius*, JCP's imaginative vision and multiversal consciousness, draws on insights from recent advances in archetypal psychology and current ecological thinking. We are especially pleased to welcome back **Angelika Reichmann** from Hungary, who will give a talk on the previously unexplored, possibly strange, affinities between *Wolf Solent* and *Lucky Jim*.

On Saturday afternoon there will be an opportunity to visit places of interest in Glastonbury and Street, take walks to places associated with *A Glastonbury Romance*, or travel further afield to explore places such as Wells, Wookey Hole caves, Burrow Mump with its ruined 18th century church, situated near Burrowbridge and Southlake Moor, or visit the Iron Age lake village near Godney, the prehistoric causeway, the Sweet Track near Westhay, Cadbury Castle, Ilchester or Tintinhull.

On Saturday night our special guest **Frank Wintle** will introduce the screening of a documentary film he made in 1986 for South West TV, about the complicated relationship between Frances Gregg (JCP's greatest love before he met Phyllis Playter), the poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Ezra Pound, Louis Wilkinson and JCP, sparked by the discovery, in strange circumstances, of Pound's original manuscript of poems dedicated to H.D. (written in the romantic manner of Swinburne, William

Morris and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in 1905 before he began experimenting with modernism). *Hilda's Book* includes scenes filmed on location in Plymouth, the West Country, Venice, and Wyncote, Pennsylvania, which was Ezra Pound's home town.

On Sunday morning members are invited to participate in a discussion about proposals to launch a project of Powys talking books.

Chris Thomas

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Friday 12th August

16.00 Arrival
17.30 Reception
18.30 Dinner
20.00 **Paul Cheshire**: 'John Cowper Powys and the "psychic sensuous margin of life" '

Saturday 13th August

08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Peter Foss**: 'Recalled to Life', an illustrated talk, with slides, about the events described in Llewelyn Powys's diary for 1911
10.30 Coffee
11.15 **Lindsay Clarke**: 'Beyond the literary: JCP's *Porius* and the romance of the Polytheistic Imagination'
13.00 Lunch
Afternoon free
19.00 Dinner
20.30 A special screening of ***Hilda's Book***, a dramatised documentary film written and produced by **Frank Wintle**.

Sunday 14th August

08.00 Breakfast
09.30 **Angelika Reichmann**: 'Two Historians, Two Christies, Two Urquharts: Kingsley Amis and JCP'
11.00 AGM
12.00 Open discussion with members on a project to develop Powys talking- books.
13.00 Lunch
15.00 Departure

Hilda's Book

This is a dramatised documentary film written and produced by **Frank Wintle** in 1986, with the participation of Oliver Wilkinson and Professor Donald Davie, an expert on the life and work of Ezra Pound. In his introduction Frank Wintle will discuss his collaboration with Donald Davie and Oliver Wilkinson, and explain how he was inspired to make the film. The duration of *Hilda's Book* is approximately 52 minutes. For more details of the relationships, events and poems described in the film, members may wish to consult Frances Gregg's memoir, *The Mystic Leeway* (1995, edited by Ben Jones with an introduction by Oliver Wilkinson), and H.D.'s 1979 memoir of Ezra Pound, *End to Torment*. There are articles, by Jacqueline Peltier and Odile Stuart, about *The Mystic Leeway* in *la letter powysienne* 26 (Summer 2013), and on H.D. and Frances Gregg by Penny Smith in *The Powys Review* 22 (1988). There is also a reference to the film in the Introduction to Vol. 1 of *The Letters of John Cowper Powys to Frances Gregg*, published by Cecil Woolf Publishers in 1994.

The Speakers

Paul Cheshire is a past Trustee of the Friends of Coleridge. He has written a number of articles on Coleridge, as well as articles about Coleridge's contemporaries, including a chapter on Coleridge's *Notebooks* for the *Oxford Handbook of S. T. Coleridge*; he has also written on the influence of seventeenth-century hermetic philosophy on Milton. He is currently researching the life and thought of Coleridge's little-known friend, William Gilbert, astrologer and author of an eccentric theosophical poem, 'The Hurricane', which shows the hermetic tradition surviving into the romantic era. He has created a website dedicated to William Gilbert. Paul gave a talk to The Powys Society on JCP and Wordsworth at the Dorset County Museum in June 2015. He also presented this talk to an appreciative audience at the 44th Wordsworth Summer Conference at Rydal Hall, in Cumbria, in August 2015.

Paul's talk will examine JCP's vision of a world in which consciousness is not restricted to human and animal life, but inheres universally: in planets, plants and minerals, and even in light or twilight. He will take examples, mainly from *A Glastonbury Romance*, of the different ways JCP portrays this world, and ask why it seems so persuasively real that one hesitates to view it as 'imagination'.

*

Peter Foss is a past Vice-Chairman and Hon. Secretary of The Powys Society. He was the first editor of *The Powys Journal* in 1991. He is a writer and artist and well known as an authority on Llewelyn Powys: his *A Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys* was published by the British Library and Oak Knoll Press in 2007. He has contributed many articles on Llewelyn Powys to the Society's publications. His indispensable book on Llewelyn Powys, *A Study of Llewelyn Powys: His Literary Criticism and Personal Philosophy*, was published by the Edwin Mellen Press in 1991. He has since edited Llewelyn's diaries for 1903, 1908 and 1909, published by Cecil Woolf, 2005–2007; *The Conqueror Worm*, his edition of Llewelyn's diary for 1910, was published by the Powys Press in 2015. (See NL85 for a review by John Gray in the *Literary Review*, and NL86 by

Michael Caines in the *TLS*.) Peter's edition of Llewelyn's 1911 diary, *Recalled to Life*, will be published by the Powys Press later this year.

For many years Peter has been investigating the history of Market Bosworth, its topography and links with the Battle of Bosworth (1485). He published a history of Market Bosworth in 1983 and a book, *The field of Redemore*, in 1990. Recently Peter has been involved with the archaeological survey at Bosworth, having been the first to locate the battlefield from documents in the 1980s (see NL No.78, March 2012).

Peter's discussion of the 1911 diary includes Llewelyn's return to England from Clavadel in April, the summer spent at Montacute, walks in the countryside with JCP, holidays with Theodore and Katie at East Chaldon, his relapse into illness again, and plans to return to Switzerland in 1912. Much of this was summarised in *Skin for Skin*, first published in 1926.

*

Lindsay Clarke is a well-known novelist and teacher. Before becoming a full-time writer he taught in newly independent Ghana, in Further Education in the UK and with an American College of cross-cultural experiential learning. He was a Writer in Residence at the University of Wales in Cardiff, where he is an Associate of the MA Creative Writing Course. His novel, *The Chymical Wedding*, won the Whitbread Prize in 1989 and in 2010 his novel *The Water Theatre*, ('powerful and convincing', *Financial Times*) was selected by *The Times* as one of their Books of the Year. Lindsay has also written about Celtic mythology, Arthurian myth, the Grail romances and the legends of the 'Matter of Britain'. In 2012, he edited *The Gist: A Celebration of the Imagination.*

Lindsay is a keen advocate of the work of John Cowper Powys. His enthusiastic review of the Society's publication, *Proteus and the Magician, the letters of Henry Miller and John Cowper Powys*, appeared in *Resurgence & Ecologist* magazine (also in NL 83, November 2014). His talk will explore JCP's attraction to Romance as the fictional genre most suited to his nature and philosophy, taking as his starting point a quotation from *Autobiography*: 'What I wanted was that kind of romantic struggle with things and people ... which takes place in an ideal region, hewn out of reality and constantly touching but never quite identified with reality, such as might be most conveniently described by the expression, a Quest.' (*Autobiography,* 66). Lindsay will also discuss some of the close affinities he feels with JCP as a novelist and writer. While looking at *Porius* in particular, the talk will examine how Romance was peculiarly appropriate for exploring the multiversal nature of consciousness, and how JCP's imaginative vision 'both anticipates recent developments in Archetypal Psychology and perhaps illuminates urgent aspects of the current planetary crisis.'

*

Angelika Reichmann is senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies at Eszterházy College, Eger, in Hungary. She became interested in the works of JCP over ten years ago, when, as a PhD student, she researched Dostoevsky's influence on English and Russian novelists. She has written articles about John Cowper Powys's novels *Weymouth Sands* and *A Glastonbury Romance* for *The Powys Journal* in 2009 and 2013, and for *la lettre powysienne* a review of *Descents of Memory* by Morine Krissdóttir (*lettre* 17, Spring 2009), a study of *Wolf Solent* (*lettre* 15, 2008), on Dostoevskyan allusion in *Wolf Solent* (*lettre* 20, 2010), and on narrative desire in JCP's novels (*lettre* 30, 2015/ 2016). Angelika has also written about *Wolf Solent* for the Romanian *Journal of English Studies* (2004). In 2012 she published the collection of articles *Desire – Identity – Narrative: Dostoevsky's* Devils *in English Modernism*, which includes studies of *Wolf Solent*, *A Glastonbury Romance* and *Weymouth Sands*.

Angelika notes the admiration expressed by two outstanding '50s writers, Iris Murdoch and Philip Larkin, for the Powyses. Martin Amis's reference to one of his characters, in his novel *The Information* (1998), as having '*a chance of becoming a monument of neglect, like a Powys*', is often quoted although it is usually misquoted as if Amis meant only to refer to JCP's work. . Angelika says: 'The person who connects these three writers – an eminent friend to two of them, father to the third – is Kingsley Amis, never mentioned in any Powysian context, as far as I know, yet his celebrated *Lucky Jim* (1954) shows a number of parallels with *Wolf Solent* (1929). Both Wolf and Jim Dixon are history teachers of sorts with a (relatively) new job in the country; both are caught up in a love triangle; both prefer a girl called Christie/ Christine, who works in a bookshop; and finally a powerful older male character plays a crucial part in the fate of both. I aim to explore whether these parallels can suggest a reading of *Lucky Jim* in Powysian terms; and if so, what kind of attitude this implies to JCP's work'.

*

Frank Wintle is the founder and director of a communications consultancy, PanMedia Ltd, which advises governments, businesses, academia, NGO's and charities, and provides training courses and tailored one-to-one coaching to help organisations and individuals improve their communication skills, and to develop knowledge of production and script writing, promotional films, presentation and webcasts. In his career in filmmaking and broadcasting Frank has won gold and silver medals from the New York film and TV Festival, the Golden Gate Award from the San Francisco film and TV Festival, best programme award from the Royal Television Society and an Emmy nomination. He has written for most of Britain's national newspapers, produced and directed programmes for ITV and Channel 4, and worked as a presenter for BBC television and a producer and presenter for Radio 4. He is a published historian and biographer and has been a visiting professor in media at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, and at the University of Vermillion, South Dakota.

Frank's film, *Hilda's Book*, was made for South West Television in 1986, during a six week period, but has never been broadcast on national TV. It was directed by Kevin Crooks. The cast includes Denis Lil, Al Mathews, Manny Redwood and David Shaw. This is a rare screening of the film. Frank was intrigued when he read the story in a note to H.D.'s *End to Torment*, of how Pound's book of poems, dedicated to H.D., had in 1941 been found in the rubble of Frances Gregg's bombed house in Plymouth, and decided to investigate the circumstances and the characters involved in the story. This led him to Oliver Wilkinson, who participated in the making of the film and who provided advice about the life of Frances Gregg and her relationship with his father, Louis Wilkinson; as well as to travel to locations in the West country, Italy and America. Frank reports that the original manuscript of Pound's poems, *Hilda's Book*, is now in the Houghton Library at Harvard University. 'In the film', says Frank, 'you'll see (a much younger) me with the book and a librarian in situ. I had an exact replica made for use in the dramatised blitz sequences, which I kept.'

Obituary

Joan Stevens (1931–2015)

David Goodway writes

I knew nothing of Joan Stevens, who died in November at the age of 84, until at an early Conference – it was Buxton in 1976 – Glen Cavaliero drew attention to 'our bookseller ladies'; and I saw Margaret Eaton, tall and always vocal in public, sitting next to Joan, slight and very reserved. Margaret and Peter Eaton ran one renowned antiquarian booksellers' while Eric and Joan Stevens had a shop at 74 Fortune Green Road, London NW6. Yet it wasn't until Kingston Maurward in 1991 that Joan and I became firm friends after Margaret had invited me to join them in her large and luxurious car for an afternoon in Montacute.

Joan was born on 17 January 1931 in Harlesden, North London, where she grew up, the only child of a working-class couple: her father was a compositor and her mother had been a personal secretary. An evacuee during the Second World War, she was always a great reader and on leaving school became a librarian. A member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, she resigned – along with 7,000 others – after the Russian suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

It was that year that she met Eric, who at the time had an office job, and they proceeded to build up their business together, first with bookstalls at the markets at Kensington Church Street and Portobello Road before acquiring the shop in the 1960s. They lived in Child's Hill where they brought up three daughters. The partnership reprinted art-historical works but also published a number of interesting short literary texts in limited editions (I own one of sonnets by John Barlas), Alan Clodd of Enitharmon Press becoming a good friend and adviser.

Joan separated from Eric in the early nineties and went to live in a beautiful house at Yoxford, close to the Suffolk coast. While there she began to issue lists, in which her great love John Cowper Powys featured prominently – for a time she owned Oloff de Wet's bust of him – as well as taking an Open University degree. She hankered, though, for a shop again, and around 2000 found one at Chatteris, a small Fenland town. In a different location and at another time I am sure this business would have flourished but, although only twenty or so miles from Cambridge, there was no passing trade and prospective customers needed to make a special visit.

Other than J. C. Powys, Joan's main literary passion was for Edward Thomas and she was a keen member of the Edward Thomas Fellowship. She also admired Dorothy Richardson and was interested in all women writers and feminism.

After her separation from Eric Stevens, Joan developed a close relationship with the author John Symonds, who with Louis Wilkinson was one of Aleister Crowley's two literary executors and wrote five biographies of Crowley, including *The Great Beast*. Symonds died in 2006, aged 92.

Joan hadn't attended a Powys Society conference for at least fifteen years, but the receipt of our *Newsletter* was always, I am told, a significant event for her.

From a letter to the Editor from Joan (2002)

... doubt I shall be listing special Powys catalogues in the future. Am attempting to make time to catch up on reading the books myself now! I'll leave it to Jeff Kwintner to talk about the early days of the Society – without him I doubt if it would have blossomed as it did & I'm proud to have played some part in that.

I am hoping to get to the Conference but am restricted by arthritis/ osteoporosis which make travelling anywhere problematic ... however the spirit is willing and we shall see... I wish you all the best – the Society too – creative harmony!

Joan

Notes and News

JCP On ...

Another small but beautiful meeting took place at Bunhill Fields Quaker House, on 5th December, to discuss JCP's books of collected essays on other writers – *Visions and Revisions* (1915), *100 Best Books* (1916), *Suspended Judgments* (1916) and of course *Pleasures/ Enjoyment of Literature* (1938).

Writers often come across more strongly and more revealingly of themselves when writing on other writers – *POL* has been called an extended Autobiography. It is Editor's favorite, possibly of all JCP books, with its inspiring introduction and Afterword, but the shorter essays in the earlier books have special interests.

100 (Chris Thomas put in good words for this one) is interesting historically, for what were popular writers at the time, some now requiring help from Google to identify, and for comparison with other contemporary selections. *SJ* and *VR* with their shorter pieces may reflect JCP's lecturing priorities, *SJ* also his inclusion of many French authors, and *VR* comparisons with the longer pieces on the same subjects in *POL*. His special favorites (Homer, Rabelais, Dostoevsky, Dorothy Richardson) have, of course, books to themselves.

Among questions discussed: Did he feel bound to include ones that appealed to him less ? What differences in the 'Canon', then and now? Did the Everyman Classics series affect this? What notable omissions? (The 18th century? Donne and the Metaphysicals? Lyrical poets?)

He expects readers to know what he's talking about – these are not introductions, no 'primer'. Does he take too much for granted, now? Does his style need special (slower) reading?

* * * *

News from NLW

from Bethan Ifan (Assistant Archivist, NLW)

Geraint Philipps (who has been cataloguing Powys items at NLW) is in the process of taking early retirement from his post at the National Library ofWales and I'm sure

you'll all wish him well in his future undertakings. He has 'bequeathed' me the Powys archive in order to tie up a few loose ends, which hopefully will take place within the next few months, after which the archive will be available to view either online or by visiting the library and requesting to see the papers. I believe all the Powys items will be absorbed under one main heading and will be divided into archives and NLW MSS (National Library of Wales Manuscripts).

* * * *

la lettre powysienne

The latest *lettre powysienne* (no 30) – highly recommended – contains Patrick Quigley's interesting investigation into the life of the Irish anarchist Captain Jack White ('White of White' as JCP called him – the 'mystic messiah'), and his correspondence with JCP, recorded in JCP's diary. It also contains Amélie Derome on her translation of *Homer and the Aether*; David Stimpson on 'Loony John's alivement', i.e. his move in 1923 to Patchin Place with Phyllis Playter, their first home together; 'Underlying presences into a writer's workshop' by Jeff Bursey, on the influence of JC and LlP on Bursey's novel *Mirrors On Which Dust Has Fallen*; the original French version of 'A Russian Perspective on JCP' in *The Powys Journal* XIV, by Olga Markova; and from Angelika Reichmann (who will appear at this year's Conference), 'A Craving Old as the Hills – notes on Narrative Desire in JCP's Wessex novels'.

* * * *

A proto-Pagan

The latest issue of Jerry Bird's *Merry Meet* 'Journal of Folklore and Pagan Heritage', which covers a large field of interests, has an article 'In the Foosteps of a Wizard', about JCP in Dorchester. It includes a map of John Cowper's favorite walk in the meadows behind the town, with the trees and other features he gave names to (many remaining) as recorded in his diary (*The Dorset Year*, ed. Krissdóttir and Peers, Powys Press 1998). 'Powys's writing is marked by a unique personal philosophy that invests the landscapes and inanimate nature with souls. Both the man and his writing are suffused with an inherent paganism and a sense of the "magical" and "otherworldly" immanent in the "here-and-now" '. *Autobiography* is quoted, the beautiful passage on sensations as thoughts.

* * * *

Nature Notes

Conrad Vispo, of Hawthorne Valley ecology project which includes JCP's Phudd Hill, has produced a calendar for 2016 with notes on natural events each day, 'Then' from archive sources and 'Now' for locals to fill in. Among the Thens (ice-cutting, fencing, appearance of bluebirds, storms and snow) are a number from JCP's 'Upstate' diaries (1929– 34) such as 'last yellow toadflax flowering', 'saw clouded sulphur butterfly' (November 1931) or 'only willows still with leaves', 'watched the meteor shower' (Nov. 32).

* * * *

Powys in Romanian

from Charles Lock:

In 1982 Antoaneta Ralian published *Cercul Nubulilor* ('Circle of Fools'), her translation of *Ducdame*. The book has been re-issued but JCP did not catch on in Romania as he did in Hungary, and I believe this remains the only Powys book in Romanian. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/14/antoaneta-ralian

* * * *

JCP-inspired

from Tim Blanchard and Jim Nawrocki:

Mark Brend is a Devon-based composer, musician, writer and an expert on ancient musical instruments. He has a strong interest in the novels of JCP. *The Continuing Adventures of the Strange Sound Association* is Mark's first album of original music which he has recorded with his band called Ghostwriter. The music is played on a variety of instruments such as the dulcitone, persephone, harpsichord, autoharp, toy piano, modular synthesizer, recorder, banjo, accordion, bass, drums, sampler, voices and the brendonium. Mark combines the influences of jazz, folk and electronic music to create a unique and eclectic mix of musical styles.

There are 15 tracks on the album divided into three chapters. The first section, called, *Music for Men of Letters,* is an attempt to evoke fragments of texts by Simenon, Arthur Machen, Ivor Gurney, Colin Wilson, and Steinbeck and includes a track dedicated to JCP called '**The Life Behind the Life**'. Mark writes that: 'The music relating to JCP is one short piece. It isn't about JCP directly, but rather is an attempt at a musical evocation of the atmosphere of JCP's writing as I perceive it. I am a fan, though not a particularly well-informed one – I've read the Wessex novels, and a few others things, and am wading through *Descents of Memory* at the moment. I've also read some Llewelyn and TF.' ***Tim Blanchard*** has generously donated a copy of Mark's album to the Powys Society Collection. ***Jim Nawrocki*** notes that the CD, (packaged in a cardboard slip cover, with an insert listing the tracks), is now available on Amazon.

* * * *

E. M. Forster and Powyses

from Chris Thomas:

Last year **Richard Comben** sent me an interesting extract from *The Common Place Book of E.M. Forster* which includes a reference to *Wolf Solent*: 'Evil to interest must triumph over something. Have been trying to read Solent Wolf (sic) again — duck weed and spittle unrelieved. Perhaps Joyce is readable for his inwit of agenbite as T.E. suggested his intensity of remorse. Only to dribble upon a dribbling universe is monotonous, nothing's destroyed even if it is the slime underlying all evil. No wonder that those Hardyesque fungi, the Powys, have never got anywhere. Patiently advertising their own decay and searching the hedgerows for simples. Can't go to bed with anyone, only talk and think it over, don't know that lust and tenderness bring relief. Tenacity without vitality. Semivirous sextons.' Richard comments that this is: 'Fairly strong meat don't you think?'

However, elsewhere, E. M. Forster seems to have considered the Powyses in a

more sympathetic way. In a radio broadcast he made in 1939, in a review of the books of the year, Forster comments on the death of famous writers such as Freud, Yeats, Havelock Ellis, Ernst Toller and Ford Madox Ford, and also mentions the Powyses who he called 'a gifted family'. In his broadcast Forster noted the death of Llewelyn who, he said, 'quitted a world deficient in sanity and insight'.

The *Commonplace Book*, which covers the period 1927 to 1968, includes Forster's personal notes on a wide range of subjects, events, people, books, and writers. It was first published in facsimile, from the manuscript in Kings College, Cambridge, in a limited edition of 350 copies by the Scolar press in 1978. A transcribed and annotated edition was published by Wildwood House in 1988.

* * * *

Glendower Tours

from Hilary Bedder:

An article, by travel writer Kevin Rushby, about a new themed and guided tour following events in the life of **Owen Glendower**, appeared in the travel section of the *Guardian* on Saturday 14th November. The article mentioned JCP's novel *Owen Glendower*: 'The wildly eccentric 20th-century novelist, John Cowper Powys, lived in Corwen for many years and was inspired to write his novel Owen Glendower (1942) a book "deep with the half-tones and shadows of the legendary past of Wales", as one critic put it. Perhaps there's a screenplay in it." '

The tour has been organised by Welsh Dragon Tours which provides customised escorted tours of Wales for small groups.

* * * *

JCP Mentions

Some recent mentions of JCP in newspapers and magazines:

Daily Telegraph, 24th November 2015, published an article by **Simon Heffer** on *Wolf Solent*, entitled: 'John Cowper Powys, the forgotten giant of English fiction'. This follows the article on 16th August last year by **Michael Henderson** on *A Glastonbury Romance*, with a magnificent aerial view of the Tor. Both articles can be read on line.

Brighton and Hove Independent, 30th August 2015, published an article about JCP and Southwick quoting passages from *Autobiography* and entitled: '*Aerial ale, dithyrambic lectures, and spiritual hyenas*'.

Actress **Clare Higgins** (who has appeared in West End productions of *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Hecuba*, *Vincent in Brixton*, and episodes of *Dr Who* on TV and has won an Olivier best actress award three times) was interviewed in *What's On Stage*, 15th April 2015, and asked about her favourite book. '*At the moment it's* A Glastonbury Romance. *It's the greatest English novel ever written and no one has heard of it*'. Contacted by Chris, she was thrilled to discover the existence of Powys Society and thinks of joining the Conference at Street.

The Scotsman, 14th January 2014, published an interview with actor and impressionist, **John Sessions**, who revealed that after studying English at Bangor University he went to McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, in Canada to study for a

PhD thesis on JCP. He never completed this because he devoted all his time to appearing in plays and one-man shows ... **CT**

* * * *

Oxford Views

The December edition of *Oxford Today* magazine includes a long interview by Dr Richard Lofthouse with **John Gray**, conducted in Oxford at Corpus Christi College, entitled: 'Forget your delusions and be happy'. At the end of the interview Gray discusses some of his favourite writers:

> ranging from Schopenhauer to US economist Nouriel Roubini, the poet Wallace Stevens, British historian Norman Cohn, Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi. His only admission of a hobby turns out to be the pursuit of an esoteric literary inquiry concerning the novelist John Cowper Powys. It's an invigorating conversation that touches on his next book, which will concern different types of atheism. Although considering himself one, he hates Richard Dawkins for his 'evangelical' denial of God.

The on-line edition of the interview in *Oxford Today* also includes a response from **Timothy Keates**: 'Some of Gray's "faves" find me in strong agreement: Leopardi, Roubini, Schopenhauer, and especially J. C. Powys – nothing "esoteric" about the latter, but a pity that he will never be admitted to the canon of 20th century Eng. Lit.' **CT**

* * * *

Forteans

In *Notes & News*, NL. 85, July 2015, Dr Dougal Hare refers to a recent article in *Fortean Times* with details of JCP's interest in the work of **Charles Fort** and says 'This is the first time I've seen the two of them juxtaposed in print.' Our editor noted that Charles Fort is often mentioned in JCP's diaries. In fact both Phyllis and JCP were great admirers and keen readers of books by Charles Fort, probably led by **Theodore Dreiser,** a Fort enthusiast. In his diary in 1930 JCP says that Phyllis is reading Fort's *Book of the Damned* 'with passion' and that he also was fascinated by Fort's ideas about 'other beings'. **Paul Roberts** included an essay on Charles Fort, originally published in *Fortean Times* in January 1942 (but probably written much earlier) in his collection of essays by JCP about America, ***Elusive America*** (Cecil Woolf, 1994).

This article gave JCP the opportunity to state clearly some of his most closely held beliefs about 'the mystery of life which allows for all manner of strange and even 'improper' occurrences'. Readers may also wish to see the *webliography* pages on the Powys Society website for more information about another article in *Fortean Times*, published in June 2005, about the early years of the Fortean Society as well as original correspondence, dated 12 July 1937, from JCP to the New York lawyer Arthur Leonard Ross (friend of Emma Goldman and literary executor of Frank Harris), about the proposed closure of the Fortean Society. The correspondence is now held in the Charles Fort collection of papers at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. **CT**

* * * *

Jeremy Hooker

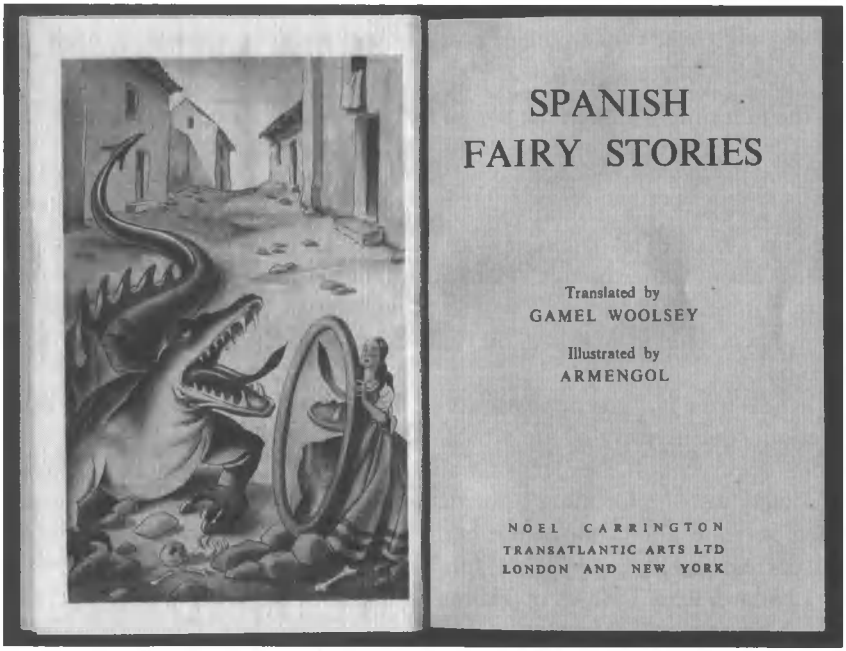
Scattered Light, a collection of new poems by Jeremy Hooker, has arrived from the Enitharmon Press.

'Here scattered light falls across landscapes and memories. These new poems are among Jeremy Hooker's finest, extending his thinking about powerful cross-currents that constitute the 'sacred', and deepening his exploration of history embodied in landscape.'

* * * *

Happiness

Jeffery Babb, a member from Hay on Wye, hs some interesting thoughts on *The Art of Happiness* – that is, on both the books of that name (1923 and 1935). He sees '1935' as a response to the 'low dishonest decade' of the 1930s, with its prevailing 'pernicious philosophy' of A. J. Ayer, and the dreariness of suburban life that Powys so well describes. He questions the whole idea of 'happiness' which for many people is meaningless – excitement, interest, absence of pain being experienced, not thought about. He prefers the simpler methods of encouraging personal happiness, as recommended in 1923, rather than the Ichthyan Leap, Decarnation, and Panergic mental efforts described in 1935.



Spanish Fairy Stories, *trans Gamel Woolsey (1944, 2nd ed. 1946), page ht 7.2 ins: this copy inscribed 'For my dear, dear Alyse/ With love from/ Gamel/ Christmas 1946'.*

Chris Thomas

TFP and Satyajit Ray

Towards the end of last year I received an e-mail from Barry Keith Grant who is Professor of film studies at Brock University in Ontario in Canada, where he specialises in teaching film history, criticism, popular film genre, and documentary film. He is the author of numerous books, monographs and anthologies of film history and criticism, such as studies of John Ford's film *Stagecoach* (2002), *Hitchcock's British films* (1977), *Mythologies of Violence in Post Modern Media* (1999), and *film Studies Dictionary* (2001); and has also produced new editions of monographs by the film critic Robin Wood (*not to be confused with the Powys Society member, writing in this Newsletter on Phyllis Playter)*, on filmmakers Ingmar Bergman (2013) and Arthur Penn (2014), for Wayne State University Press.

Whilst recently preparing a new edition (due out in 2016) of Robin Wood's classic monograph (1972) on the great Bengali filmmaker, Satyajit Ray (1921–92)*, Professor Grant said that he had come across a quotation from TFP's novel *Unclay,* which Wood uses in his study, (*'In every good book a light shines, that compels the reader to be joyful.'*). Professor Grant asked if I could help identify the source of the quote from *Unclay* so he could include a page reference in his new edition of Wood's monograph. I gave him the details. *Unclay* has appeared in three different editions: Chatto & Windus, London, 1931, (quote on p.149); Cedric Chivers, Portway, Bath, 1974, (quote on p.149); The Sundial Press, 2008, with an introduction by John Gray (quote on p.143).

It is very unusual to find TFP quoted in a film commentary and film study context. It's therefore well worth reproducing the whole relevant passage from Robin Wood's book:

> T.F. Powys wrote in one of his novels *(Unclay)* that: 'In every good book a light shines, that compels the reader to be joyful'.. Powys is a very unfashionable novelist, and, in these days of Losey, Polanski and MASH, is a very unfashionable remark. But I believe it to be true. I don't know exactly what Powys means by the 'light'; for me it has nothing to do with whether the work in question is comic or tragic, whether it has a happy or sad ending. The 'light' is that striving of the artist's being towards the establishment of standards for human life — towards as complete an understanding of life's potentialities. It shines with uncommon strength and consistency in the films of Satyajit Ray, and there is a sense in which even the most tragic moments in his films, even as they provoke in us the profoundest sense of sorrow, at the same time 'compel the viewer to be joyful'.

The quotation was also noted by Harry Coombes in his book *T. F. Powys* (Barrie and Rockcliff, 1960), mentioning it twice, as well as by Marius Buning in his book, *TFP, a Modern Allegorist* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1986).

Wood comments on Ray's characters in a way that might suggest both JCP and TFP:

> Even quite minor characters in Ray's film are granted grace and dignity beyond their function in the plot.

Wood also comments on Ray's humanism in Powysian terms, which is illustrated in his trilogy of films (*Pather Panchali, Aparajito, The World of Apu*) about a boy, Apu, growing into manhood:

> If Apu is an 'everyman' figure, it is in the sense that he embodies what is finest in universal human potentiality: he is ourselves and he is the god Krishna made manifest. This is the essence of Ray's 'humanism'."

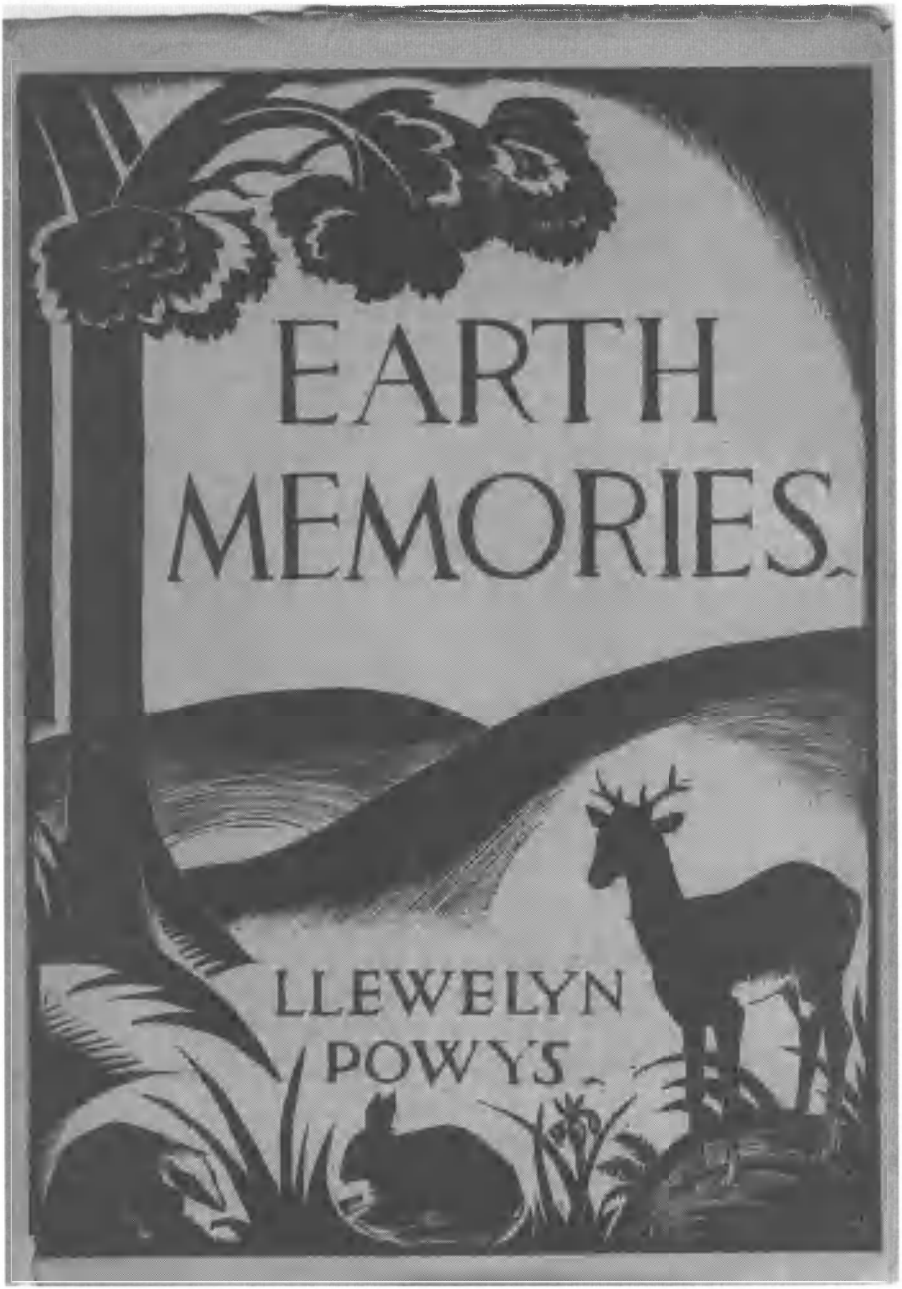
Robin Wood (1931–2009) was an important British film critic, teacher, lecturer, and supporter of the French New Wave. With other contemporary English film critics like Peter Cowie, and Raymond Durgnat, he championed *auteurism* in the 1960s and 1970s. His books, on Bergman, Anonioni, Ray, Chabrol, Howard Hawks and Arthur Penn, as well as the articles which he contributed to Ian Cameron's groundbreaking *Movie* Magazine, are distinctive for their deeply serious approach to film** with their close and detailed visual analysis, and wide ranging cultural references. Wood, for instance, discusses Ray's films in the context of music, responding to criticism that Ray's films move too slowly, and mentioning their alignment with Brahms and Bruckner. In an essay, in 1970, on the Serbian filmmaker, Dusan Makavejev, Wood also refers to 'novel films and poem films' asserting that 'Makavejev's films are poem-films'.

Robin Wood studied English under F. R. Leavis and A. P. Rossiter at Cambridge University which probably accounts for the clarity of his literary prose style, his knowledge of TFP, and his facility with cultural references.

NOTES

* Ray's films include: *Panther Panchali*, 1955; *The Music Room*, 1956; *The Big City*, 1963; *Charulata*, 1964; *Days and Nights in the Forest*, 1970; *The Chess Players*, 1977; and *Home and the World*, 1984. Ray was influenced by the work of French film director Jean Renoir and by Italian neo-realism as well as by the writings of Rabindranath Tagore. His films are notable for their compassionate humanism, portraits of modern city life as well as life in 19th century India. His films were greatly admired by film makers such as Martin Scorsese and Akira Kurosawa. He introduced European audiences to Indian cinema with *Panther Panchali* in 1955.

** Wood's early essay on Hitchcock's, *Psycho*, is a good example of his approach to film studies, and was first published in French in *Cahiers du Cinema* in November 1960, having been originally rejected by *Sight and Sound* magazine. In his later years Wood founded the film collective CineAction and wrote monographs on *Rio Bravo* (1959) directed by Howard Hawks and *The Wings of the Dove* (1998) directed by Iain Softley.



Earth Memories*: dust-jacket of original Bodley Head publication of 1934, ht 7.5 in. Not by Gertrude Powys; artist's monogram not yet identified.*

BOSTON GIRL, 14, TO MAKE AIR FLIGHT

Wrote Magazine Article, Now Achieves Heart's Desire

Because at the age of 14 little Phyllis Playter, a Boston miss, wrote a magazine article which showed Charles Glidden how deeply she was interested in aeronautics, she will soon realize the great ambition of her life.

Her father, Franklin Playter, is a member of the Aero Club and has for many years been interested in anything which pertains to aeronautics. And whenever it pleased the father to hold forth on the subject his daughter would curl herself up on the big couch and listen wide-eyed to the recital. Before long she could talk glibly of aerodromes and aeroplanes and helicopters and the Zeppelin theory.

The Letter Was Printed

One day when Miss Phyllis was coming from New York to Boston on the train she spent her time writing busily. It was a very long letter and her father and mother regarded her with curious eyes.

When her letter was finished it proved to be a letter to one of her playmates, supposedly written in the year ...

Is Not a Bit Afraid

Playing Part of Camp Follower

Cuttimg from The Boston Sunday Post *for May 2nd 1909.*

Phyllis Playter

with back turned (as ever) outside 1 Waterloo in 1978 during a visit by Peter Foss with his parents and friends including Gladys Jelley who corresponded with JCP, and George Lionel Lewin, the bookseller who sent JCP books from London, the original of Joram Orcas in his unfinished novel 'Edeyrnion' (see PJ 1)

&

older Phyllis in black hat, from obituary in The Cambrian News, *April 9th 1982.*

Phyllis Playter, Teenage Author

by Robin Wood

In February 1909 Phyllis Player (1894-1982) published (anonymously) a short science fiction story in *The American Magazine*.* She would have been 14 on November 29th 1908. Several further exciting events occurred in 1909. first, because of the publication of this story, Charles Glidden,* a noted businessman and adventurer, offered her a balloon ride. This then led to Phyllis and her mother being interviewed by *The Boston Sunday Post*; and this was published on May 2nd 1909. The balloon flight took place on May 26th.* Two weeks later Phyllis and her father Franklin Playter sailed for Liverpool, England.*

Our picture of Phyllis Playter has been largely shaped by details about her life after she met John Cowper Powys in 1921, found in Morine Krissdóttir's biography of Powys, *Descents of Memory,** along with Powys's letters and diaries. It is therefore interesting to see what she was like in 1909, through both her own words and those of her mother. Krissdóttir does, however, record that '[a]ccording to relatives [Phyllis] was a bubbly, happy child, extravagantly indulged by doting parents' (*Descents*, 172).

*

Phyllis's short story is in the form of a letter, supposedly written 100 years into the future by a 12-year-old girl. The story shows Phyllis to be both imaginative and knowledgeable. Cars 'look antiquated', 12- year- old girls fly planes, and horses are practically extinct, while eating food is outdated and the young woman takes her friends to a restaurant to consume 'capsules'. A form of television exists, 'far-seeing apparatus', while a friend 'looks well through the telephone'. Such ideas were clearly being discussed in the first decade of the twentieth century: in E. M. Forster's science fiction story, 'The Machine Stops', published November 1909, for example, there is a hand-held television screen called a 'cinematophote', as well as 'dietic tabloids' and other machine-made food.

In Phyllis Playter's fictional 2008 people live at the North Pole, and fly to Mars. Polar exploration was very much in the news in 1909, because Frederick Cook claimed to have been the first man to have reached the North Pole* on foot on April 21st 1908, and Robert Peary made the same claim in 1909, though both claims were subsequently disputed. Mars was also a popular subject of conversation, because of astronomer Percival Lowell's books about its supposed canals, and his *Mars As the Abode of Life* was published in 1908.

'A Child's View of the Future' also indicates that Phyllis was a feminist: her protagonist not only flies a plane, but plays American football for Wellesley College* against Yale and Harvard; Wellesley is America's foremost Women's University. Incidentally, in 1909 the French woman Thérèse Peltier was the first woman to fly a plane. There are, furthermore, in the story, references to a woman police officer, and a judge, along with talk of a woman becoming President of the United States.

Interestingly Hilary Clinton, amongst many other famous women, attended Wellesley College. American women did not gain the right to vote nationally until 1920, but Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood,* one of the first female lawyers in the United States, had run for president in 1884 and 1888 on the ticket of the National Equal Rights Party.

It is not surprising that Charles Glidden was impressed by Phyllis's story. He had been a pioneer in the telephone industry and was also a strong advocate for the latest innovation, the automobile. Furthermore he was an adventurer, who flew balloons and had travelled round the world by car. His offer of a balloon flight to Phyllis led to the interview by the *Boston Sunday Post*. The interview implies that the impending balloon flight was Phyllis's first, but Krissdóttir refers to an earlier one when Phyllis was only 8 (*Descent*, 172).

The interview reveals that Phyllis cannot wait to fly, and that she is totally unafraid:

> Afraid? Of course I'm not afraid. I know I shall feel lots safer in a balloon than I would in a Pullman car.* [...] If you were going to get something you had been wishing for for over two years? I guess you wouldn't!

Her mother was equally confident that her daughter would be safe. Mrs Playter explained to the reporter that Phyllis's father, Franklin Playter, had long been interested in flying, so that it was 'only natural that Phyllis should have absorbed some of his enthusiasm', and Phyllis had listened 'wide-eyed' to her father's talk. Mrs Playter indicates that 'Phyllis doesn't know what "fright" means.'

On May 26th 1909 the balloon flight took place, covering 40 miles in just over 3 hours and reaching a height of 6,500 feet. Glidden was the pilot, and the passengers Phyllis, her father and another man.*We gain further insight into Phyllis's privileged life by the fact that two weeks later Franklin Playter took her to Europe.*

In 1910 Phyllis's life began to change because Franklin, aged 68, gave up his law practice in Boston and returned to Kansas, where they had previously lived, to become manager of Boston Land and Mining Company in Galena. (Newspaper archives, MyHeritage.com). Phyllis, however, attended boarding school in Boston until she was 18, followed by a year there at art school. An even more drstic change took place around 1914, when Phyllis, aged about 20, began to suffer drastic depression. This seems to have coincided with her return from Boston to small-town Kansas and Missouri. In 1920 the population of Cherokee, Kansas, where Phyllis lived, was 1091, while that of the mining town of Joplin, Missouri, where she met Powys, 29,902 (1915 and 1920 censuses, Ancestry.com). Phyllis's depression lasted for five years and almost led to her suicide. She then met John Cowper Powys in March 1921 and subsequently moved to New York City (*Descents*, 172-3).

There is no evidence that Phyllis published any further fiction, though she translated *Dialogues of the Dead* (1925), from the French writer Bernard Le Bouyier de Fontenelle's *Nouveaux dialogues des morts* (1683), for Haldeman-Julius (*Descents*, 199), and stated on the 1925 census, when living in New York, that she was a writer

(Ancestry.com). John Cowper Powys, however, in his diaries frequently acknowledges Phyllis's important contribution to his writing. She, for example, suggested numerous improvements to *Weymouth Sands*, including the introduction of Magnus Muir, Perdita Wane and Jobber Skald. Powys admits that 'she ought to have her name on the book but I am far too selfish to let her have it there!' (*Descents*, 273-4, 281, 257). He also rewrote a chapter of *A Glastonbury Romance*, some 100 pages, from scratch, because Phyllis said, 'it seemed to have run completely off the track' (*Descents*, 257).*

The record that Powys left behind makes it very clear that 'Phyllis Playter exercised a decisive critical impact on the form [Powys's] novels actually took' (David Goodway, 96).* finding her had transformed Powys emotionally and psychologically: 'It was lack of having these limbs to hold that made me a sadist'(*1931 Diary*, 127).* But Phyllis equally brought high intelligence to bear on Powys's writing.

Phyllis's life from 1914 until 1921, and later, suggest that it was unlikely that she was destined to become a writer – though Powys, in his 1943 Diary, compares her storytelling abilities 'to "the Henog", the official court storyteller' in *Porius* (*Descents*, 352) – however, she did share in a major way in the creation of significant works of literature. The exceptional talent displayed in the following story was certainly not wasted, though the reader might wonder what Phyllis might have achieved, both as woman and as a writer in her own right, if she had been born 100 years later.

NOTES

The Boston Sunday Globe can be accessed at <http://newspaperarchive.com/>. *The other original documents can be accessed via* <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Search/Advanced>

**The American Magazine*: vol. 67, no. 4, February 1909, pp. 420-1. This was an American magazine of popular literature that published during the 19th and 20th centuries (see *Wikipedia*). The newspaper article in the *Boston Sunday Post* enables Phyllis to be identified as the author of the anonymous story.

* *Charles Jasper Glidden*, Barbara Reed, 'Touring with the Glidens'. See also *Wikipedia*.

* *Balloon flight*: See *AERONAUTICS, The American Magazine of Aerial Locomotion*, vol.5, no.1, July '09, p.77.

* *Voyage to Europe:* June 10th 1909. Phyllis returned with her mother, October 26th 1909 (Ancestry.com passenger records).

* *Descents of Memory*. New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2007.

* see photo of young Phyllis in NL66, p.48, and with her father on cover of NL64.

**North Pole*: 'The Race for the Pole', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

**Wellesley College*: See the address on the fictional letter.

**Policeman:* Though America had its first woman police officer in 1891, it was not common until much later ('Women in law enforcement', *Wikipedia*; see also James A. Bultema, *Guardians of Angels: A History of the Los Angeles Police Department*. Infinity Publishing 2013).

**Belva Ann Lockwood*: 'Woman Suffrage', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

**Pullman car*: In the United States, this is a railroad sleeping car. The newspaper interview indicates that the story was written during a train journey between New York and Boston.

**Goucher College* is now co-ed.

**David Goodway: Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

**Phyllis as editor*: *Descents*, 273-4, 281, 257. A few other examples: *Morwyn*, see *Diary* September 25th

1937; *Owen Glendower, Diary* May 15th 1935. (*Petrushka and the Dancer: The Diaries of John Cowper Powys*, 1929-1939, selected and edited by Morine Krissdóttir (Manchester: Carcanet, 1995), 254, 187).
**The Diary of John Cowper Powys*, 1931 (London: Jeffrey Kwintner, 1990).

A CHILD'S VIEW OF THE FUTURE

(From a letter written by a twelve year old girl)

***The American Magazine*, vol. 67, no. 4, February 1909, pp. 420-1.**

WELLESLEY, Mass., 2008

Papa gave me the nicest little air-ship for my birthday, and I have taken about every girl here out in it. Of course you can imagine that we have had many exciting adventures. One time we had to leave the machine way down in Alabama and come home by the gyroscope line,* but of course the rail broke when we had come half way, and made us late for our literature. I borrowed one of the girls' machines though, and got it back again the next day.

Yesterday afternoon about five, I took a party of girls and boys to the Waldorf* to dinner. We had the nicest time. They had two new capsules that had been sent from France which were awfully good. My great-grandmother told me that my great-grandfather used to predict that sometime we would use capsules for food and do away with the foolish notion of eating, which, he said, was only a habit. How funny it would seem to eat the way they used to! I can hardly imagine it, but how quaint and picturesque it must have been.

There are a few automobiles here and they certainly do look antiquated, as you say. My grandmother says she remembers when the streets were just crowded with them and people were afraid of their lives.

Yesterday morning before breakfast, I went out for a spin and got away over in Canada, when I happened to look down and saw an immense crowd, and being of a curious nature (I think you remember the time when we went on board the new warship, and I pressed the electric button and the cannon went off? I did have a serious time then, but of course my Boston surgeon put a new heart* in and I have never had any trouble since), I pulled my descending lever, and in a moment I had landed in the midst of the crowd. Such excitement I never saw. It seemed they had found an animal that everyone had believed extinct. It had four legs and a long main and tail, and I have seen in some old books a description of a beast like it called a horse. There had been a circus man around who paid an enormous sum of money for him, and who said it would be the making of his show.

I was tired by this time, so I pulled the ascending lever and was just going along at a moderate rate, only two hundred and fifty miles an hour, when I saw another air-ship approaching, only one of the old-style Dumont* (I forgot to say my machine is a Wright,* and that is the reason I

never have any trouble with it). As it got nearer I saw a policeman* hold up her hand, and when she got along beside me she said, "Exceeding the speed limit! Come with me to court!" "But I was only going two hundred and fifty miles an hour," I said, showing her my speedometer. "The speed limit is a hundred and fifty." But I was able, with the aid of a pretty pearl ring and a few tactful remarks about her complexion and figure, to proceed on my way and go back to college just in time to dress again for breakfast.

In your last letter you asked me how I had time for these long trips. The very trips are part of our curriculum. We think nothing of a trip to England for the study of architecture, or the Continent for illustrations. The longest of our lectures never exceed fifteen minutes. All of our professors are in constant telepathic communication with all the great centers of learning in the world, and are able by this means to condense our instruction.

We have a new judge here. She is awfully pretty and wears beautiful clothes, but the jury are all jealous and always sure to disregard her instructions.

Do you remember our friend Mrs. Van Dyke Emerson, whom we met in Washington? There is a good deal of talk lately about her being elected to the Presidency.

Last evening, three girls and myself went (of course in my machine; I am hardly ever separated from it) to Panama to see how the canal* was getting along and it isn't nearly done yet. They are only a little more than half through.

I went over to Wanamaker's* the other evening. They have the new far-seeing apparatus. You can look through that, if you wish, and see all the costumes at Worth's* or Paquin's* in Paris, but I generally buy two or three gowns before I even get seated. I telephoned Marion the other day; she looks so well through the telephone.

I saw Mrs. Eddy out riding in her new flying-machine. She has just built another magnificent home.

My aunt is going to start for the North Pole next Thursday and will spend three weeks there at the home of one of her friends.

The professor of astronomy is going to head an expedition to Mars in a few weeks' time and is loading his new flyer with provisions and instruments and expects to arrive there, if nothing goes wrong, the latter part of next week. He intends to go from the campus, and as the entire college is lighted by radium,* he will be able to keep it in sight for a long time.

Dear me! The watch in my buckle belt says half after three, and so I must close as we have to go to football* practice! We are going to play Harvard next week and so we are practising double hours. We beat Yale last month, and of course we won't have difficulty with Harvard; still we want to be sure.

NOTES

**Gyroscope*: A prototype gyro monorail had been developed in the early twentieth century ('Gyro monorail', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

**Waldorf:* Presumably the famous Waldorf Astoria hotel, New York.

**Heart transplant*: Christian Bernard performed the first heart transplant in 1967 ('Heart transplant', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).
**Dumont and Wright:* These are the names of two early builders of airplanes. The Wright brothers are credited making the first controlled, powered and sustained heavier-than-air human flight, on December 17th 1903 ('Wright Brothers' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).
**Panama Canal:* Actually it was completed in 1914 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*).
**Wanamaker's:* A department store in New York (*Wikipedia*).
**Worth's:* The House of Worth, a French house of high fashion (*Wikipedia*).
**Paquin's*: Jeanne Paquin (1869–1936), a leading French fashion designer (*Wikipedia*).
**Radium* was once used in self-luminous paints for watches, etc. ('Radium (Ray', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).
**Football:* Women first played American football in 1926, but only as half-time entertainment ('Women's American football', *Wikipedia*).

When David Met Phyllis

by Chris Thomas

The English land artist and sculptor in wood, David Nash, OBE, RA, has lived and worked in Blaenau Ffestiniog since the late 1960s when he became a close friend of Phyllis Playter: she used to watch him creating the sculpture of *The Tower*, his first major work, which he constructed in the hills above the town. *The Tower*, which Phyllis observed, growing, every day, was later destroyed in a storm and a second version removed by order of the local council. Other Towers were constructed in London in the courtyard of the Chelsea School of Art as well as outside the Serpentine Gallery whilst another Tower was built by David Nash in his studio in the early 1970s which Phyllis must also have seen.

After JCP died Phyllis often visited David Nash in his studio where he was surrounded by his tools and materials – chainsaws, blowtorches and great blocks of wood. Together David Nash and Phyllis Playter shared a deep interest in art, literature and poetry and enjoyed long discussions.

David Nash trained at the Kingston College of Art and Chelsea Art School, and has exhibited very widely in the UK and internationally. His most recent solo shows include exhibitions in 2013 at Kew Gardens and Chateau Chaumont-sur-Loire in France, and at the Oriel Mostyn Gallery in Llandudno in 2011, at Annely Juda fine Art in London in 2010, and at Abbot Hall in Kendal and the Kunsthalle in Mannheim in Germany in 2009. His work is represented in collections in Caracas, Cardiff, Eastbourne, Edinburgh, florence, the Tate Gallery, the V&A, the National Museum of Wales, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He has also published illustrations of his work in books such as *Forest Poems, Forest Drawings*, 1982, and *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the landscape*, 1984.

In 1995 David Nash was interviewed by Denise Hooker for the National Life Stories series of artists' lives which is published in partnership with the British

Library. In the interview David Nash recorded his memories of his friendship with Phyllis Playter in Blaenau Ffestiniog in the 1970s. The references to Phyllis and JCP, on pages 115-118 of the interview, are extracted below. The whole interview can be accessed on-line at http://sounds.bl.uk.

There are some factual errors in some of the comments made by David Nash which I have annotated.

DN: Miss Phyllis Player was John Cowper Powys's housekeeper as she was politely known ... she was his companion. He had died in 1963 so I never met him, but Ted and Margaret Harris, who lived next door to me, can remember him walking up the hill in his very thin-soled shoes because he wanted to feel the ground, and he would hit this stone with his walking stick and then walk back down again ... Phyllis lived in this tiny little house now on her own, and she could see the Tower (*Nash's early sculpture in wood*) as it grew, from her kitchen window and was very intrigued ... Phyllls was thrilled with the Tower and my paintings and she bought two paintings, I think it was about £38.00 that the paintings came to, and with that money I was able to buy a car, which was about £20.00, from the local garage ...

I should talk a bit more about Phyllis Playter because she came to play a very important part in my life ... American she was, from Boston originally ... she left home, she was a single child, she left home to be a waitress on the railways when she was about 18. There was a connection with the Quakers in some way but I can't really quite remember what that was; I think she might have been a librarian briefly in a Quaker library somewhere in Boston. And she can remember being with her parents in a covered wagon going to Oklahoma to claim land, and her father had the privilege of naming a small town and he called it Pittsburgh and she always used to tell this story and say, 'But why Pittsburgh? He had the opportunity of naming a town, and he called it Pittsburgh!' she used to say.

She had a lot of stories she would often repeat. In the Oklahoma little cabin that her father made she heard this noise of a frog on the veranda and she went out and there was this frog hopping along the veranda and there was a gopher snake coming after her and it, and she was very young, she killed this snake and she took the frog a mile down to this creek, to her favourite place where she knew there was nice damp air that a frog would like, and then she would say. 'And do you know, it took that frog three days to get back to the veranda.' (*laughter*)

DH: *How old was she when you knew her?*
DN: Well, she died in 1982 and I guess she was about 86, and I had known her for 14 years, so 14, 86 minus 14 is 72, and so she was in her 70s. A tiny little house, she smoked Woodbines and was very sociable and liked to offer people a cigarette and she had this big chest of drawers and one of the top drawers she would heave open, she was very small, and very frail, and it was full of every sort of cigarette you could imagine and she would say: 'Well help yourself' because she didn't want to oblige

people to smoke Woodbines which was her favourite cigarette. Gin and tonic and lemon also was always out. And then there was a clock that ticked in this room, and a beautiful mirror and it was like visiting a shrine going to visit her and the conversations were always interesting, very interesting ... And I would be complaining about something that was going on, like in advertising, I think ... and she would say: 'Oh you English, you're so protective. In America we don't take any notice of advertisements. We know what they are.'

DH: *What brought her to England?*
DN: John Cowper Powys. She met him in the States, he was a great orator and lecturer and she came ... he left his wife and I guess they lived together. They lived in Corwen and for quite some time she nursed her parents until they died in Corwen.* He was very sociable and a lot of people wanted to visit him and interview him, and they had a spare room, and there was always people there, so it was difficult for him to work, so they made the decision to move to the smallest house possible in a really inhospitable town where people wouldn't want to come, so they chose Blaenau Ffestiniog. And they bought a pair of cottages, both right next to each other, you know they were semi detached by this little waterfall sort of tucked away, and he lived in one and she lived in the other one.**

DH: *Why was she important to you?*"
DN: Somebody who as deeply connected in the arts, was really interested in what I was doing, was always wanting to come and see the work ... she liked to give us a present at Christmas but she would always give £5.00 to me and £5.00 to Claire (*Nash's wife*), she wouldn't give us £10.00 as a couple, she respected us as being individuals. When I was teaching, I was going off to Newcastle or Maidstone, which would be, could be a week long, could be ten days long, each trip, and I would always go and visit her on the way back and sort of report on what I had experienced on these trips. ... She was just somebody I felt very connected to, and there was this sort of support ... I felt what Henry Miller had advised, he said.. '*You only need two people to believe in what you are doing*!'

Acknowledgement
David Nash interviewed by Denise Hooker, Artists' Lives, 1995. British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C466/32, transcript p.115–118. © The British Library.

In his book, *The Sculpture of David Nash*, published by the Henry Moore Foundation in 1999, Julian Andrews provides some more information about the relationship between Phyllis Playter and David Nash: '*One of (David Nash's) first patrons was Powys's companion, Phyllis Playter. A tiny woman, dressed in black, wearing a huge hat which made her look like a mushroom,*** *she took an instant liking to Nash who was impressed by her knowledge and understanding of art and the interest she showed in his work.*

*He remembers her talking about Odilon Redon and his wish 'to place the visible in the service of the invisible'. She also introduced him to the aphorisms of Brancusi, translating them from the French for him. Brancusi's succinct comment that 'simplicity is complexity resolved' remained in Nash's mind.'*****

Julian Andrews also mentions that David Nash's first '*really ambitious*' work was called *Tower 1*(1967) and was built '*on a piece of rocky sloping land*' in the hills above his studio and was intended to represent the narrative structure of Malcolm Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano* (1947). This is very interesting as Glen Cavaliero, in his book on JCP, suggests that '*one might compare (JCP's) novels to the self enclosed work of Malcolm Lowry*'. Lowry was acquainted with the editor of the *New Age*, A. R. Orage, who was a close friend of JCP. Orage encouraged Lowry to attend the lectures given, in London, in 1921, by the philosopher and researcher into mysticism, Pyotr Demianovich Ouspensky, on the *System* and *Work* of the charismatic spiritual teacher and psychological theorist, George Gurdjieff. Ouspensky's lectures were also attended by T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and many other writers. Lowry incorporated Ouspensky and Gurdjieff's ideas into his novel, *Under the Volcano*, and it is quite possible Phyllis discussed both Ouspensky and Lowry with Nash.

NOTES (CT)

* JCP and PP lived in Corwen from 1934 to 1955, then moved to Blaenau. Mary Playter, Phyllis's mother, whom JCP called 'The Mistress', and her sister Harriet Van Dyke, Phyllis's aunt, arrived in Corwen in December 1935. They lived next door to JCP and Phyllis, at 8 Cae Coed. Both died and are buried in Corwen. Phyllis's father, Franklyn Playter, 1841–1933, had died in America (see JCP's diary, 1933, for references to visits by Phyllis to see her father).

** A confusion with the arrangements at Corwen (see note above). 1, Waterloo, JCP's and Phyllis's two-roomed house, was one of a semi-detached pair.

*** There is a photo of Phyllis wearing a (medium-sized) black hat in PJ, vol.5, 1995, page 177 (taken from a newspaper announcement of her death).

**** It is likely that Phyllis owned a copy of David Lewis's book on Brancusi, published by Tiranti in 1957, which includes Brancusi's aphorisms in French (*Propos de Brancusi*). It had also appeared in the literary magazine *This Quarter* in 1925, which Phyllis may also have read. It seems probable JCP became acquainted with the work of Brancusi whilst in New York and Chicago through the inspiration of Phyllis. For more information about JCP's knowledge of Brancusi see *NL* 83 (November 2014), 38.

***** Phyllis was certainly familiar with Ouspensky's ideas as JCP mentions, in a letter to Katie dated 22 August 1959, she is reading his books. Katie was also very interested in Gurdjieff's ideas. She attended Gurdjieff's demonstrations in New York in the 1920s (which Llewelyn describes in *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*) and she may have visited Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleu in search of a cure for her nervous condition (see, for instance, letter from JCP to Katie, dated late August 1926: '*I suppose Fontainebleu only held your mind as a calm and cool monastic retreat. I think your philosophy is as powerful as any Gurdjieff's.')* Lowry also considered becoming one of Gurdjieff's pupils at Fontainebleu (see *Gurdjieff and Orage, Brothers in Elysium*, by Paul Beekman Taylor, 2001).

For details of Phyllis's life see: *PJ* II (1992), letters to Lucy, 1939–1964; *PJ* III (1993); Phyllis through JCP's diary; *Powys Review* 10 (1981/1982); obituaries; *Powys Review* 26 (1991); Recollections of Phyllis by Carey Richards; *NL*64 (JCP letters to George Playter).

Llewelyn Powys

Shakespeare's Fairies

In Dorset it is easy to believe in the existence of Shakespeare's fairies. This, however, is true but for a brief interval of the year. In winter, when the lanes are foul, when there is cat's ice in the ruts and hoar frost on the backs of the hungry heifers, the countryside is "wholesome." Where the fairies go none can tell. Perhaps they hide themselves in Lenty Pond or in good Stour mud, as is reported of swallows; or, maybe, they do actually wrap themselves in the snake's enamelled skins, puny painted mummies awaiting the renewed glory of the sun.

The fairy season begins in the middle of April, at the time of the coming of the cuckoo, when the earth is new-fangled, and continues until the last scant mushroom has undergone its spongy decay under the rains and the whistling winds. Within the limits of this charmed period we are constantly teased by the suspicion that it is only because of some congenital denseness that we cannot see fairies as "realities appearing to a stable man in his awakening sense, and enduring a rational Tryall of their Being."

If only it were possible to become invisible and to be transported to the tall elder-hedge across the field; or, in a trice, to be on the other side of the green hill where the red-legged moorhen has her nest islanded amid the basket-rushes of the ox-pond! In the long white twilights of June this mental obsession becomes insistent. When I walk in the woods near my cottage it grows so strong that I am convinced that at any moment a vision may suddenly be present to my unsurprised eyes of the "Sely Court." From the smooth grass where the bluebells, already many of them in seed, nod under fronds of antique bracken, surely the "demi-puppets" have but a moment ago withdrawn. At the next turning of the damp lane where dog-roses are visible above purple water-mint and long cocksfoot grasses, they will be plain to see; and if not there, then at the end of the field-path where the haggard railings run this side of the round barrow; or, *for certain*, on the high lawn of the open downs where the fairy rings are, their "fertile freshness" conspicuous from a distance, "whereof the ewe bites not."

At almost any hour during those entranced days it would seem to require but a fresh shaking of the dice with the fall of double sixes for fairies to become visible to "men of moulde." I have often intruded upon the peace of a garden at irregular hours. I have been out before the sun rises, during those sensitive moments when dreams, light as wind-and-cloud, are vanishing from the precise craniums of blackbirds and thrushes, and one after another they lift their heads to welcome the new day. Very soon their first tentative notes are united in a single incantatory chorus which in Dorset we call "the charm of the morning." It is then I keep my eyes upon the borders of the flower-beds fondly assuming that I will detect some unaccountable movement, and there, shadowed under the budding musk-rose or beneath the

gorgeous scarlet of a great red poppy, a troop ot these "mad peevish elves" will show themselves, spontaneously, naturally, like a stray covey of partridges.

After a shower in the late evening I have heard the tap, tap, tap of the barred woodpecker's beak upon the ridged bark of the acacia. The garden, smelling of grateful green leaves, is under a glamour, each accurate shadow in its place; the upper surface of the cherry-tree bough gleaming wet in the last liquid ray of the sun, while below its rounded arm all is punctiliously and punctually black. There is no sound but the reiterated pecking, no rustling under the low schoolroom window where over the rattling leaves of last year's St-John's-wort the shrew-mice love to scamper. It is a paradise garden where all is expectancy, a paradise under the ordinance of a fairy space-time wherein "the third part of a minute" is long enough for being born, long enough for love-making, long enough for dying. "Hail, mortal, Hail!" Tomorrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! Perhaps the revelation will come when through the burden of the years I have grown a natural innocent, for we used to be told that such sights were reserved for children and for octogenarians. It is reasonable enough that we should be thus troubled. Belief in fairies is a very hoar persuasion. In India they believe in fairies. The Arabs from one end to the other of their deserts imprinted by the cushion feet of rank-smelling camels, believe in fairies. The Germans of the Harz mountains believe in the swart gnomes of the mines. Two celebrated lines of Homer's have been translated

> When round her bed, whence Achelous springs
> The watry Fairies dance in mazy rings,

and, without any doubt, the Roman Lares were "another sort of fairy."

"A bigger kind there is of them." The fays of the ballads and of Malory are represented as being of almost equal size with mortals. It is to Shakespeare's poetry that we owe our knowledge of the tiny village elves who eat and drink and do all other actions "like naturall men and women." Perhaps England is especially populated with these; whereas "the great fairies" are more numerous in, and belong more especially to, Ireland. I like to think that Shakespeare drew his fairy scholarship from the century-old superstitious hearsay that had to do with the habits and manners of these coarse common fairies of antiquity.

> In the olde daies of the King Arthoure,
> Of which the Bretons speken grete honoure
> All was this land fulfild of fayerye,
> The elf-queen with hyr jolly companye
> Danced ful oft in many a greene mede.

In Dorset, labourers coming home with their wheaten baskets over their shoulders, tell of hearing the fairy women sing as they sit weaving within the "humming barrow" that overlooks the sunny village of Bincombe. For it is within such grassy hillocks that fairies are usually reputed to have their dwelling-places. It is from such green hills that they emerge, are suddenly present in their favourite haunts near water, "by paved fountain, or by rushy brook." Some are by nature dutiful and

demure, others impatient, wanton, "fawn-faced," roughly pulling down the stiff foxglove stalks so that, with tiny finger and clubbed thumb, they can count the number of pard-like spots within the mottled dragon-throat of each angry bell.

There are also the meadow fairies, the little fairies associated with the dairies, with milk-pails shining bright as shields, with three-legged stools dew-dabbled, with cowslips standing up tall between the liquid emerald cow pats of the early summer. With Robin Goodfellow they share surveillance over the sloven and the slut, who will reward the industrious and circumspect maid and correct the careless one. It is they who watch to see whether the worn red bricks of the door-step are well scrubbed, or whether the crumbs by the earthen bread-box have been swept up. Their minds are of a somewhat severe complexion, practical and thrifty, very different in temper from their madcap cousins by the sea "that on the sands with printless foot, do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him when he comes back."

It is the woods and forests of the Blackmore Vale, with their white beech-trees and thick-grown oaks, which are the especial centres of this fourth-dimensional world. Here the Fairy Court holds state, and here take place those piquant feasts and mirthful pastimes of which we read:

> By the moone we sport and play
> With the night begins our day;
> As we frisk the dew doth fall.

The voices of fairies are high and shrill, not dissimilar to the sharp call of the corn-crake, so that the barn-door owl is often attracted to their circular parterres, and settling, after its silent manner, on a branch above, it will look down, so Shakespeare avows, blinking and bewildered to see such quaint shapes moving in rhythmic concert below — the "female fayries" in their grey-webbed gowns, the "hee-fayries" dressed in their work-a-day harvest jerkins of patched rere-mouse leather. The fairies of Egdon Heath are rumoured to use an especial resin with which to dye their short coats, made from the leaves of the wild madder, mixed with the lichen they scrape from the Agglestone rock and other charmed stones. It is hard to believe that these stolid heather fairies are of the same species with those "that in the colours of the rainbow live. And play i' the plighted clouds." "The opinions of fairies and elves is very old, and yet sticketh very religiously to the myndes of some."

The meadow fairies, or buttery sprites, share with Robin Goodfellow a liking for milk and cream and the desire to be rewarded for their gratuitous labours with pails of water set down in accessible places, for they are a cleanly folk and even take pains to wash their changelings.

> A virtuous well, about whose flowery banks
> The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds.
> By the pale moonshine, dipping oftentimes
> Their stolen children, so to make them free
> From dying flesh, and dull mortality.

It is reported that Robin Goodfellow will harbour resentment if his taste for his

homely diet is not indulged. Once climbing with his flat naked feet onto a chicken-coop for the purpose of startling the kitchen folk he became so mumbudget at seeing the family covering their porringers with cream, clots upon clots of it, that he could but mutter sulkily: "I love a mess of cream, as well as they." A dairy maid, remembering the many occasions he had saved her poor knees in garnishing the key-cold floor, thought to reward him with a gift of "dry goods":

> Hempton, hampton
> Here will I never more tread or stampen.

From that day she had no uncouth shock-pate to relieve her of half her drudgeries

The lesser fairy servitors were, it appears, "meaner fellows," in league with the dame rather than with the scullion. Lilly reports that "they love a strict diet and upright life." Idleness of any kind they abhor, and will give shrewd nipping pinches to the wench who, "tainted by desire," has been at play all the afternoon long under the flowering hawthorns, until, when she wakes in the morning, her fair flesh will have upon it "as many colours as a machrels backe." As for her gallant in his yellow hosen, sweet smelling of dandelions:

> Pinch him, and burn him and turn him about
> Till candles, and starlight, and moonshine out.

The occupations of that great "lob of spirits" were not confined to good works within doors,

> And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length
> Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
> And Crop-full out of dores he flings,
> Ere the first Cock his Matin rings.

nor to retarding the transformations in the dairy-churn, nor to terrifying "the maidens of the villagery" with his rude Ho! Ho! Ho! When a mood of miching-malecho was upon him he would make his way to some hollow stable and clambering onto the timbered partitions of a stall would sit there astride diligently plaiting the manes of the horses in the cobweb silence, only disturbed by the occasional displacement of a tired iron-shod hoof as the abused animal stretched up its ungainly head to pull out another wisp of hay from the rack.

Robert Burton delivers that this "merry wanderer of the night" would disport himself by piling up stones in the middle of a bridle-path that he might hear the rider swear when his unsuspecting pad stumbled. On the success of this exploit his Ho! Ho! Ho! would echo over the fields until at the hoarse-laugh of "this great and ancient bull-beggar" every marauding wild creature would stand stock-still in its hedgerow quest, the volume of sound rendering the silence of the listening midnight unearthly audible "while overhead the moon sits arbitress."

There is a fairy law having to do with mortals which it is dangerous to transgress. No man must spy upon them. "I'll wink and couch: no man their works must eye." Especially they cannot abide to be watched when they "do square," and even less in those intimate moments described by Robert Herrick when Oberon, rejoicing at the

sound of the distant curfew, and "full as a bee with thyme," seeks his "moon-tanned" darling, who, happy at last, lies back upon her nuptial bed of soft dandelion clocks.

from Dorset Essays (*London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1935*). *This essay first appeared in* Dublin Magazine, *April 1934; it was included in the American edition of* Earth Memories, *1938, but not in any collection since.*

Peter Foss notes sources of quotations and references from Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy*; Browne's* Religio Medici*;* A Midsummer Night's Dream; *Chaucer's* Prologue to 'The Wife of Bath'; *Anon,* 'The Faithful Shepherd'; *Lily's* Euphues; *Milton's* L'Allegro *and Herrick's* Hesperides. *Llewelyn was pretty well versed by this time in the highways and by-ways of 16th and 17th century literature.*

John Cowper Powys

Shakespeare

(*from* The Pleasures of Literature *(1938), 292–9 in Village Press edition*)

... It seems to me that every conceivable aspect of Shakespeare's art has been intimately discussed except what is surely the most important of all; I mean that mental and emotional reaction to human life, which in unsophisticated circles is called a writer's "message."

And that this essence of the whole matter has been so thinly and vaguely interpreted is not merely due to the fact that our impassioned reformers of society fail to find in him the sort of rounded-off system for improving our mortal lot that seems to them alone worthy of the name of "philosophy"; it is also due to the fact that, as with Homer, Shakespeare's philosophic "message" is so diffused throughout his poetic rhetoric and throughout the humours, dilemmas, fancies, and poignancies of his "wood-notes wild", that it requires a spellbound intimacy not only with the temper of his style and the accents of his voice but with the spiritual implications of his habitual stresses, silences, reserves, and avoidances to catch the drift of the tide.

To my mind, the most illuminating interpretations of Shakespeare's "philosophy" are to be found in certain careless and casual remarks scattered through the essays of Lamb and the letters of Keats; while among more pretentious works I confess to having found the audacious and lively study by Hamlet's fellow-national, George Brandes, the most rewarding.

The vast shelves of books upon Shakespeare in our own tongue are, as I have presumed to hint, at their weakest in this most important aspect of the subject. His characters have been discussed to a point of weariness, his allusions to every mortal subject have been catalogued, his sources collated, his dramatic art explained, and

here and there — though much more rarely — a poet like Coleridge, or a critic like Hazlitt, has thrown light upon the technical secrets of his actual poetry; but the mere fact that such a simple expression as "the philosophy of Shakespeare" is calculated to give a scholarly student no slight shock is a proof of what little headway has been made in the essence of the matter.

In the few cases where such an attempt has been undertaken one is conscious of a moral idealization that leaves, if I may coin such an expression, a hollow sweetness in the mouth, and not only this, but an uncomfortable feeling that the man has been made so completely "everything," that, like the Deity in a logical pantheistic system, he hovers on the brink of the antinomic "nothing."

What I would like to suggest in this place is that it is just as possible to be a disciple of the philosophy of Shakespeare as to be a disciple of the philosophy of St. Paul or Dante or Rabelais or Goethe; nor do I think that the fact of his being a playwright need throw any insurmountable difficulties in the way.

Surely, a reader of the plays endowed with any degree of intelligence can catch through the seductive clamour of opposing voices a clear drift of the author's personal reaction to life, a drift revealed not only by the thousand floating straws and bubbles and foam-wisps and revolving eddies upon the surface of the tide, but by the unrevealing nature of the "murmurs and scents" of the unknown sea towards which it is moving.

And how would a person who, in the company of Platonists, and Epicureans, and Stoics, and Christians, declared himself to be of "the School of Shakespeare," define his emotional and intellectual attitude?

In the first place he would, I think, declare himself an individualist; one, that is to say, who finds in the character of the individual, rather than in any collective or standardized "ideology" as we call it now, the chief redeeming element in the world and the best hope for the well-being of humanity.

And when we enquired what particular aspects of personal character are to be regarded as fundamental, it seems to me that even the most modest of Shakespeare's disciples would be forced to reply, "Courage, magnanimity, and an open mind." Carrying our presumptuous inquisition from the social into the metaphysical sphere and enquiring of our reserved Shakespearean disciple about the existence of God and of a life after death, we should merely be answered in a final and absolute "Nobody knows !"

Nothing, in fact, emerges more unmistakably as the attitude of Shakespeare to these crucial questions — Has the Universe an underlying purpose? Does man's soul survive death? Is there an overruling conscious Intelligence? — than an undeviating agnosticism. And this agnosticism, as it gradually takes possession of us in reading the plays, turns out to be no more than a heightened poetic emphasis upon the average individual's normal instinct.

Talk to any ordinary person, lucky or unlucky, the first comfortable citizen you meet, or the first tramp you meet, and you will soon catch them referring to God in

the precise Shakespearean tone, that is to say, in a tone that blends natural superstition, conventional reverence, emotion, with complete agnosticism.

Talk to them about the mystery of evil, and their tone will be the same, a combination of universal human superstition, traditional morality, individual passion, and a wistful incorrigible feeling that nobody really knows.

And then, finally, bring up the subject of death; and behold, with one universal sigh and shrug of the shoulders, from the Hebrides to Land's End you'll get the true Shakespearean answer; "He's out of his tro ubles," or "She's safe from it all now," and "The rest is silence."

But you will protest at this point: "How can you call it philosophy when Shakespeare goes no further about God, and Immortality, and Good and Evil than the average well-meaning citizen and the average much-enduring tramp ? Isn't it precisely to enlighten this primitive ignorance, to purge these traditional superstitions, to make logical these irrational hopes, that the Great Thinkers have rounded off their vast Systems, and that Plato and Aristotle and Kant and Hegel have received so much honour?"

Ah! but that is the whole point! The philosophy of Shakespeare is of such great value just because, with an originality that is the more startling the more you realize what it means, he does catch the common accent, the common tone, the universal mingling of superstition with agnosticism, which is the average man's instinctive response to the mystery of the universe.

Shakespeare, in fact, held in sober earnest what the Catholic Church claims in dogmatic theory—*securus judicat orbis terrarum*, "the whole world's opinion is a safe guide." Did he hold this philosophical brief for the common man's philosophy, as some have claimed, in order with subtle equivocations to wheedle us back into the arms of Mother Church?

Was Shakespeare, in other words, the inspired inventor of the fascinating conjuring-trick of Mr. Chesterton ? I cannot think so. Indeed, it seems to me that there is as much difference between using the average man's instinct as a jumping-off board for submission to the Church and using them as an Aeternum Organum in themselves, as there is between the monastical piety of St. Thomas a Kempis and the evangelical piety of Rabelais.

It has been inevitable that, having poetized with an unequalled glamour the philosophy of the man in the street, Shakespeare should receive some shrewd buffets from the more daring among our modern intelligentsia.

Tolstoy regarded him as an unholy supporter of a degenerate aristocracy and as a hot champion of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and in our own day his individualistic —one might almost say his anarchistic — indifference both to political reform and political standardization would clap him into gaol in any other country than ours.

But luckily his philosophy is so widely shared in Great Britain, and we have got so much of his distrust of "Great Thinkers" and their rational conclusions, that this

humorous agnostic attitude of his, combined with his reverence for tradition, strikes us all as *so natural* that we tend to just take it for granted, without bothering our heads about its somewhat startling implications.

And startling indeed these implications are!

Here we have a mass of plays, comical, historical, historical-tragical, greater in bulk, higher in quality, more appealing in poignance, more seductive in style than those of any other dramatist; a mass of plays to find a counterpoise for which from the classical world you would have to add Sophocles to Euripides and both to Aristophanes. And what is their subject-matter ? From first to last the palpable, visible, secular, human, too-human spectacle!

No wrestling with the cosmological problem, no reiterated and obstinate delving into the problem of good and evil, no desperate fathoming of the social problem, no introduction of Gods or Devils or Messiahs, or Demigods or Prophets or Saints; and finally, as Ruskin says, not one single hero whose character is not weakened and thwarted by obvious and most disastrous faults!

At the same time, and this is of the very essence of the matter, none of our stout rationalists, positivists, materialists, determinists, atheists have ever thought of claiming Shakespeare as a kindred spirit.

In some extraordinary way the man has become an inspired medium, an undistorted, untwisted human reed, through whom the Natural Man — an entity rarely found, perhaps never found in actual life, but of whose nature we all have something — can express his spontaneous reverence, his recurrent scepticism, his undying hopes, his fluctuating despairs, his intermittent faith, his treacheries, and his loyalties.

One frequently hears a person say, "I couldn't stand it, if it weren't for my sense of humour."

Now, I am tempted to think that what these people mean by their "sense of humour" is not exactly that they see themselves as ludicrous or comical in their predicament, still less that they see their persecutors or persecutions as something funny. What I think they mean is that they "couldn't stand it" if they hadn't, by sonic lucky mental device, the power of detaching themselves from the painful situation, and contemplating it as *drama*. It is, indeed, I suspect, by our dramatic instinct, the mysterious comfort we get from seeing ourselves, and those who make us suffer, from the vantage-ground of a certain interior balcony-seat, that enables us to endure. In other words, as long as we don't know what is going to happen next, as long as the play of our life remains a play, we can stick it out.

It is when it ceases to present itself to us in the likeness of a play, with unknown Acts and Scenes before us, and we looking on, and watching ourselves behaving like ourselves and the others behaving like themselves, that we commit suicide.

It has ceased to be a play. We have lost "our sense of humour." It has become reality. And no man can face reality and live.

As Ibsen so beautifully hinted in the Wild Duck, we must hang on to our Life

Illusion by the hair of its head. We all must save our face to ourselves. And this "sense of humour," which is in reality a sense of drama, is one of the means by which we save our face.

Falstaff saved his face by his life-illusion of being "not only witty but the cause why wit is in other men" ; and it is a device that all shrewd people learn, to dodge the shame of their cowardice by what they would call "humorously" admitting it.

Now the whole mass of Shakespeare's Plays is an impassioned chorus of eloquent life-illusions and humorous admissions. He is the supreme dramatist because he found in this clashing discord of multitudinous life-illusions a mystic harmony, a strange and abysmal beauty. His genius was of that particular nature which enables a person to become other people, and become several other people at the same time.

This power of becoming a medium, a reed, a wind-harp, an unblemished mirror, approaches the extremely ambiguous power of yielding ourselves up to obsession or possession, or, as the spiritualists say, to being "controlled."

And one feels this "control" of the poet by the anonymous generations of common men and women more than anything else in the plays. Shakespeare *becomes* all his hapless and desperate and eloquent characters. They possess him. Not *he* them. He becomes Lear. He becomes the Fool in Lear. He becomes Prospero. He also becomes Caliban. He becomes Hamlet. He also becomes Ophelia. He becomes Falstaff. He also becomes Harry the fifth condemning Falstaff. He becomes Caesar. He also becomes Brutus killing Caesar. His genius is that it can be obsessed by the simple equally with the subtle, by the feelings of a woman equally with the feelings of a man.

And it seems as if this in itself throws more light than a thousand anecdotes could do on the personality of the man. He *couldn't* have had the preoccupations of a scientist or a statesman. He *couldn't* have had the dignity and egoism of a poet like Dante or Milton.

He may very well have been — in fact I suspect he certainly was — of a weaker, airier, more emotional, less compact, more flexible nature than Montaigne or Cervantes.

It is George Brandes who shrewdly remarks that his genius itself gives one the impression of being composed of a stuff of lighter weight than that which composed the genius of Rabelais; and no one, I think, can read the Sonnets without being aware of a nervous, high-strung, quicksilver temperament behind this impassioned sequence, that is the reverse of everything strong, steady, well-poised and calm, the reverse, in fact, of all that Matthew Arnold calls him — "self-scanned, self-schooled, self-honoured, self-secure!" ....

Maria Popova

The Art of Self-Culture and the Crucial Difference Between Being Educated and Being Cultured: John Cowper Powys's Forgotten Wisdom from 1929

from her website 'Brainpickings'

The art of self-culture begins with a deeper awareness … of the marvel of our being alive at all; alive in a world as startling and mysterious, as lovely and horrible, as the one we live in.

In order to be cultured and not to stand below the level of your surroundings it is not enough to have read "The Pickwick Papers" and learnt a monologue from 'Faust', Anton Chekhov wrote in an 1886 letter to his brother, outlining *the eight qualities of cultured people* — among them sincerity, "no shallow vanity," and a compassionate heart that "aches for what the eye does not see." This essential difference between being educated and being cultured is what the great British novelist, philosopher, literary critic, educator, and poet John Cowper Powys (1872–1963) examined in greater dimension a generation later in the 1929 masterwork *The Meaning of Culture* – one of the most thoughtful and beautifully written books I've ever encountered.

Powys begins with the tenet that "culture is what is left over after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn" and sets out to examine what, exactly, is left over — which is often too surprising and subtle, too aglow with inarticulable radiances, to fit into our intellectual templates of understanding.

He writes:

> Whenever I am lost in admiration for a man or a woman, as fulfilling my ideal of what a human being should be, it is rarely that such a person fits precisely into the formula whose qualities I have defined so patiently as bearing the hallmarks of culture …
>
> Whatever it may be, it is clear that it appeals to elements in us which are deeper-rooted and more widely human than any trained aesthetic taste or any industriously acquired scholarship …
>
> I am sometimes tempted to regard the truest culture as the compensation of the unsuccessful, something that … can remain with us when all else is taken away.

Such a conception of culture, Powys points out, is something entirely different from a good education or a cultivated aesthetic taste. In a sentiment triply timely today, as we *struggle to glean wisdom in the age of information,* he considers that crucial difference:

> The truth is that as education is only real education when it is a key to something beyond itself, so culture is only real culture when it has diffused itself into the very root and fibre of our endurance of life. Culture becomes in this way something more than culture. It becomes wisdom; a wisdom that can accept defeat, a wisdom that can turn defeat into victory.
>
> And it can render us independent of our weakness, of our surroundings, of our age. It is at once an individual thing, a fortress for the self within the self, and a universal

thing, a breaking down of the barriers of race, of class, of nation.

This kind of culture, Powys asserts, ought to be pushed "down and in, till it is blood of our blood and bone of our bone," so that it can inform our morale and permeate what we call character. Without such osmotic synthesis, he cautions, what passes for culture is a falsehood devoid of humanity:

> The reason why that super-refined aesthete, Mr. Osborne, the villain in Henry James's "Portrait of a Lady," is so repulsive a figure, is that his culture has remained purely intellectual and aesthetic. It has neither fortified his stoicism, nor subtilized his human sympathy. Culture without natural human goodness has an extremely disconcerting effect. There is something weird and terrifying about it.

Echoing the metaphor that *a seventeenth-century gardener coined for human nature,* Powys considers how we cultivate such authentic culturedness within ourselves:

> Just as rustic mother-wit has a charm and a dignity that education too often spoils, so the whole problem of Culture is really the familiar problem of Horticulture. It is in fact the problem of how to graft the subtle and the exquisite upon the deep and the vital. For, by this grafting alone can the sap of the natural give life and strength to the unusual, and the roots of the rugged sweeten the distinguished and rare.

Long before Alain de Botton's *terrific definition of philosophy's role in our everyday lives,* Powys argues that this grafting is the true task of philosophy and the central preoccupation of what was once called metaphysics:

> The long personal pilgrimage of culture begins with the formulation of one's own philosophy ... In considering those obscure motions of the mind, wherein our individual consciousness, ceasing to be content with blind responses to its environment, begins to look before and after, it is important to remember that behind all the great controversial names, such as "will," "behaviour," "soul," "first Cause," "the One, the Many," "universe," "multiverse," "good and evil," "substance," "essence," "immortality," there lies some actual feeling or sensation or experience; which, under a quite different name, or perhaps under no name at all, must still exist, when the logical fashion of the hour, refusing to use such traditional expressions, has moved on and away.

But to harness that experience fully and properly, Powys notes, we must learn to culture ourselves:

> The art of self-culture begins with a deeper awareness, borne in upon us either by some sharp emotional shock or little by little like an insidious rarefied air, of the marvel of our being alive at all; alive in a world as startling and mysterious, as lovely and horrible, as the one we live in.

And yet marvel alone, Powys cautions, is not enough — or at least not something that passively befalls us. Rather, the seedbed of self-culture lies in a deliberate and habitual orientation toward wisdom:

> Self-culture without some kind of integrated habitual manner of thinking is apt to fail us just when it is wanted most. To be a cultured person is to be a person with some kind of original philosophy ... This implies a desire to focus such imaginative reason

as we possess upon the mystery of life. The subtle and imperceptible stages, however, by which this will to think condenses and hardens into a will to live according to one's thought are not always easy to articulate.

Powys's most salient point — and the point most urgent amid our culture of instant opinions — is that the personal philosophy of the cultured person is not a hodgepodge of impressions and reactions assembled around an ego but a reflective and considered tapestry of understanding:

> Our innermost self, as we grow more and more conscious of it, surprises us again and again by new explosions of feeling drawn from emotional, nervous, and even chemical reactions; but for all its surreptitious dependence on these impulses, its inner report upon its own nature is that it is a clear, hard, enclosed, secretive nucleus with a detached and independent existence of its own. Our reliance upon this introspective report may easily be shaken by logical argument; but it is not often that any argument, however plausible, disposes of the feelingof this interior identity, of the feeling of this integral "I am I," underlying the stream of our impressions. The truth is that every man and every woman has, consciously or unconsciously, some sort of patched-up, thrown-together philosophy of life, a concretion of accumulated reactions gathered round this nucleus of personality. What, however, denotes the cultured person is the conscious banking up of this philosophy of his own, its protection from disintegrating elements, the guiding of its channel-bed through jungles of brutality and stupidity.

In a sentiment that Tom Wolfe would come to echo eight decades later in his *magnificent admonition against the rise of the pseudo-intellectual,* Powys draws the vital distinction between an educated person and a cultured person:

> The more culture a man has, the more austerely — though naturally with many ironic reserves — does he abide by his own taste ...
>
> An educated person can glibly describe what he wishes you to regard as his last ready-made philosophy. A cultured person often finds it very difficult to explain what his philosophy is; but when he does manage to articulate it you feel that this is what he has secretly and profoundly lived by for many a long year. For in a cultured person's life intellectual snobbishness has ceased to exist. He is not interested in the question whether his attitude is "intellectual" according to the current fashion or not.

The distinction Powys makes is essentially that between artifice and authenticity. The latter necessitates that we do something inherently difficult and increasingly rare today — cultivate a capacity for nuance and duality and master *the art of living with opposing truths.* Powys writes:

> Real culture has almost always a certain tendency to combine infinite subtlety with a kind of childish naïveté ... What a perpetual stumbling-block, for instance, is the cultured person's innate predilection for combining extreme opposites in his thought and his taste! His philosophical opinions will be found as a rule, judged by the standards of the merely educated, to be at once startlingly revolutionary and startlingly reactionary... One always feels that a merely educated man holds his philosophical views as if they were so many pennies in his pocket. They are separate from

his life. Whereas with a cultured man there is no gap or lacuna between his opinions and his life. Both are dominated by the same organic, inevitable fatality. They are what he is.

Living out of one's essence, and continually clarifying that essence through the daily act of living itself, is what Powys sees as both the measure of philosophy and the mark of the cultured person:

> To philosophize with the real wisdom of the serpent and the real harmlessness of the dove it is not necessary to exhaust one's brain upon riddles which are likely enough eternally insoluble. What is necessary, is to experiment with ordinary life; to adjust one's appreciative and analytical powers to all the natural human sensations which are evoked by the recurrences of the seasons, by birth and death, by good and evil, by all those little diurnal happenings which make up our life upon earth... To isolate them, as they form and re-form in the calm-flowing stream of the deeper reality, to contemplate them, to assimilate them, as they pass, this is the true philosophical art ...
>
> A cultured man is not one who turns from a disorganized feverish day to a nightly orgy with Hegel and Bergson. He is rather one for whom the diurnal magic-mirror, whether its fleeting images catch the sun or sink into shadow, offers a vision of the world that becomes steadily more and more his own. To philosophize is not to read philosophy; it is to feelphilosophy ... None can call himself a philosopher whose own days are not made more intense and dramatic by his philosophizing.

Out of this feeling philosophy, Powys argues, springs forth what Nathaniel Hawthorn memorably termed (and Oliver Sacks *memorably echoed*) "an intercourse with the world" — the dynamic interaction that comes to define our lived, living experience:

> This life in itself is not passively reflected, but is something that has been half-created, as well as half-discovered, by the creative mind ... In the lovely-ghastly world ... we are all of us half-creating and half-discovering.

In the remainder of the wholly rewarding *The Meaning of Culture*, Powys goes on to explore this symbiosis of creation and discovery by examining culture's dialogue with literature, nature, art, happiness, and love. Complement it with Bertrand Russell, a compatriot and contemporary of Powys's, on *what "the good life" really means* and Simone Weil on *how to be a complete human being.*

(Thanks to Tim O'Reilly for pointing me to this vintage gem. MP)

With no apologies for reproducing extensive quoting which most of us could look up for ourselves, this article has a special interest in the contemporary company it keeps. The Brainpicking archive lists The Meaning of Culture *with, among others, works by Susan Sontag, Alan Watts, Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, Chekhov, Anaïs Nin, Albert Camus, Oliver Sacks, Alain de Botton ... Phrases in italics are highlighted in the original. Maria Popova (b. 1984, Bulgaria) describes herself as "an interestingness hunter gatherer" and Brainpickings (only one of her multi-armed outreachings) as "an inventory of cross-disciplinary interestingness".* Wikipedia *calls it a website (formerly a Blog), Twitter feed and weekly digest.*

Thanks to Janet Prior for calling attention to this.

KK

Earth Memories – A Response

from Anthony Head

I like to think I would be the last to discourage a critical assessment of any book, particularly one that I had some part in producing. But the new collection of Llewelyn Powys's essays from the Little Toller press titled *Earth Memories* has racked up so many negatives in Stephen Powys Marks's estimation (*Newsletter* 85, July 2015) that I feel, as the putative editor, I ought to address at least some of his comments, especially as they raise some more general issues.

To begin with the volume's title. There is, of course, no copyright in book titles, though discretion would be called for in obvious cases where a title may be widely regarded as in some way sacrosanct. No publisher is likely to accept a new work of historical fiction if the author insists on calling it *Pride and Prejudice* or *1984*. No such qualms, though, attended the publication in 2001 of Stevie Davies' novel *Impassioned Clay*. In the realm of non-fiction especially, there are numerous examples of completely different books that have appeared under the same title. One that springs immediately to mind is Christopher Clark's monumental study of the origins of the first World War, *The Sleepwalkers*. When Penguin/Allen Lane published this in 2012 they were clearly not concerned that it is also the title of Arthur Koestler's acclaimed history of cosmology, first published over fifty years earlier and in print almost constantly ever since, as well as that of an earlier masterpiece by Hermann Broch, one of the great novels of the 20th century. Nor is it unusual for the contents of a collection of writings by the same author to vary from one appearance to the next and the title not at all, David Hume's *Essays Moral and Political* and Mark Twain's *What Is Man?* among many examples. When Gollanz published *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* by George Orwell in 1940, the volume consisted of three essays; when Penguin published *Inside the Whale and Other Essays* by George Orwell in 1962, the volume contained nine.

The first *Earth Memories* collection was published in the UK by the Bodley Head in 1934, consisting of 23 essays all previously published in various journals and with each accompanied by a woodcut by Gertrude Powys. Four years later, under the auspices of Van Wyck Brooks, these essays were published in the US by Norton in a collection that did away completely with Gertrude's woodcuts and included 18 other essays, which themselves constituted more than half the contents of another volume that had appeared in the meantime (*Dorset Essays*, 1935). This book was also titled *Earth Memories*. Whether or not one regards the American volume as in some sense an 'edition' of the British one seems to me to be a matter of opinion. That view may be quite supportable; equally I think it can be argued that it was a very different book published under the same engaging title.

For the Little Toller volume, 'Earth Memories' was the title initially considered, not only because half the essays in the collection had appeared in one or other of the

earlier *Earth Memories* volumes, but also because of its potential wide appeal. Alternatives were considered, but the publisher did not want a title denoting any geographical limitations; rather, one that conveyed the poetical essence of Llewelyn's work. This is why the title was retained and this is succinctly stated in the Foreword, as is the fact that the book is not a simple reprint of either of the two earlier volumes of this title. This is 'only explained in a handful of words' because they are all that is necessary.

The aim of the book is to invite new readers in, to keep Llewelyn Powys read by a new generation, not to appeal just to those who already know his work. This is an obvious but essential point. In publishing, sales and readership are everything, and it is reasonable for a publisher to do whatever he thinks best for the book in question, and for this to take precedence over notions among specialists regarding the sanctity of any particular title. When the American *Earth Memories* appeared, Llewelyn didn't take umbrage that the volume was not the same as the British book of that title, or that his *Dorset Essays* collection had been in some way violated in the making of it. On the contrary, he wrote to Van Wyck Brooks to say he was 'delighted and proud'. Llewelyn was not finicky about such things, and I see no reason why we should be. He wanted above all to be read.

It was not felt necessary to give the volume a sub-title, such as 'A new selection' as suggested. Quite apart from the deflating effect of something so prosaic after 'Earth Memories', it would mean nothing to the target reader, as readers new to Powys would be unlikely to know there had been two other books published eight decades ago that also bore this title (they would when reading the Foreword). The assumption, as it seems to be, that Powys books should be primarily directed toward the Powys cognoscenti is to my mind naive and self-defeating. I doubt that Picador or Penguin or Faber or Duckworth issued their paperback editions of John Cowper Powys's novels simply in the hope that people who knew them already and had their own copies would want to buy another one. They published them in the hope of attracting new readers. If publishers did not do this, focusing instead on the negligible number of Powys aficionados, none of the works of the Powys Brothers would ever be likely to be published again.

The absence of detailed sources for each of the essays in this volume is also lamented. Why the demand that there be any? No collection of Llewelyn's essays published in his lifetime had any notes giving details of their first publication, merely a general acknowledgement of some journals at the front. No publisher is obliged to provide such scholarly apparatus, especially when the work is not aimed at an academic readership. For the collection titled *A Struggle for Life* published by Oneworld Classics in 2010, the publisher requested some notes on the texts and duly included four pages of them; for the collections *Durdle Door to Dartmoor* (2007) and *Still Blue Beauty* (2008), the Sundial Press felt no need to have any. These matters are entirely up to the publisher concerned. In the Little Toller volume there is a clear reference to the provenance of the essays in the Foreword. Readers in need of further

details will find all they could wish for in Peter Foss's *A Bibliography of Llewelyn Powys* (2007).

Another 'black mark' is given for the lack of a biographical note on Gertrude. Regrettable though this may be, publishers must choose how to prioritize the space on the covers and flaps of their books as they see fit. Gertrude provided illustrations to accompany essays for three of Llewelyn's collections – *Earth Memories* (1934), *Rats in the Sacristy* (1937) and *A Baker's Dozen* (1939). In none of these publications, neither in the first editions nor any later reprint, is there a biographical note on her (and the Redcliffe Press reissue of the Bodley Head *Earth Memories* in 1983 also eliminates the woodcuts). Why the demand, again, that the Little Toller volume differ from all others and provide one? A book on Gertrude's life and work, or at least a monograph, would be the best way to address this deficiency, but until one is written anybody curious to know about her can discover ample information through the Internet and in the references to her in many other Powys-related books.

With regard to the 'cavalier treatment' of the woodcuts in the book, it is unfortunate that the selection of one originally done for an essay not included in this volume ('A House of Correction') – and that was accordingly identified as an oddity in the production stage – was not removed before printing, and I agree that the positioning of the woodcut of Stalbridge Cross diminishes its emotional resonance for a reader with detailed knowledge of Llewelyn's published works. But overall I doubt that new readers will notice such minor anomalies or suffer any ill effects from the selection and arrangement of the woodcuts, which can be appreciated collectively as adornments to an already attractive text.

Stephen says he is not in a position to assess the 'accuracy' of copies and transcriptions of the essay texts, but proceeds to note some 'omitted paragraph divisions' in the essay titled 'Somerset Names' as compared with the version in Peter Foss's collection *Wessex Memories* (2003). As detailed in the Bibliography, this essay was first published in the Western Gazette in August 1939 under the title SOUTH SOMERSET | MEMORIES | LONG-LASTING | LOCAL | NAMES | WHERE DURATION IS PRESERVED – a heading obviously concocted by someone on the newspaper's editorial staff. A draft of the essay in one of Llewelyn's notebooks gives 'Long Lasting Local Names' as a provisional title, while an extant typescript is headed 'Long Lasting Local Names in the Yeovil District'. Peter published this essay in *Wessex Memories* under the title 'South Somerset Names', and the Sundial Press published it in the *Still Blue Beauty* collection as 'Somerset Names', the title used again in the Little Toller volume.

I'm not entirely sure what the point of the observation is but it does at least raise questions about transcription and formatting, and at what point any given text is regarded as accurate. Would this be the first version published in book form, or a more recent version if it emended a newly discovered error? Would it be the version first published in a newspaper or journal? Or is it the original typescript? What if that contains errors of transcription? The original manuscript, then? What if that contains

mistakes and misquotations, such as Llewelyn was prone to make? The titles of many of Llewelyn's essays differ from their first appearance in a journal and their republication in a collection. There is no reason why an essay's title on first publication in book form should mean it is written in stone, unless clearly specified by the author. The formatting of many essays also varies, given the different requirements of pagination from one journal to another and one book to another. Provided there is no detriment to meaning or comprehension, a text that necessarily is broken into several one- or two-sentence paragraphs for publication in a newspaper column could happily be reproduced in book form as a single paragraph. Different editors may make different decisions, but I cannot think of a single example of obfuscation arising from the minor variations either of formatting or content in Llewelyn's published writings.

Another complaint on this score concerns 'several verses by Wordsworth' that appear in the essay 'On the Other Side of the Quantocks'. The two six-line stanzas in question are from the poem 'Ruth' and it is true that the first of these appears with an unwarranted line space that breaks it into two seeming triplets. It is said that these verses 'come from' the Bodley Head *Earth Memories* page 46, but what has happened is that the scan of the essay from which the text was formatted came from the Redcliffe Press edition, where different pagination splits one stanza between the bottom of one page and the top of the next. Readers whose understanding of the verse and enjoyment of one of Llewelyn's best essays are impeded by this unclosed line space have my sympathy.

More peculiar to me, however, in regard to these stanzas, is the claim that since the Bodley Head text has 'every third line indented to echo the rhyming scheme', the absence of such indentations in the Little Toller text makes 'nonsense of the original layout'. To my ear 'cheers' at the end of line three rhymes with 'hears' at the end of line six whether they are indented or not, but if 'original layout' is a matter of primacy then we must look to the authority of the poet himself. 'Ruth' was first published in London in 1800 by Longman in Volume 2 of Lyrical Ballads. All 38 six-line stanzas of this poem are published in it without the indentation of any line. This is how they appear again in the 2nd edition of 1802 and in the subsequent US edition published in Philadelphia. It is also how they were printed in Edward Moxon's six-volume edition of Wordsworth's works published in London over three decades later in 1836. If Wordsworth had any strange fits of passion over the lack of indentations in every third line of his poem he obviously kept them to himself. Clearly it is subsequent reproductions that have tampered with them, as is the case with many poems by many poets, indentations and punctuation often being the playthings of typographers.

The true question, then, if one has to be asked, is why did the Bodley Head indent these lines? Did an editor at the firm take it upon himself to do so, or copy the layout from somewhere else? Did Llewelyn write them like this in his original manuscript? Did whoever typed up the essay – Alyse Gregory or someone else – decide to indent

these lines? I don't know and I don't see that it matters. But to hold up the Bodley Head format as the 'original layout' is itself nonsense.

By a curious expansion, the lack of indentations in these lines of verse 'does not inspire confidence that the text of any of the other essays is accurate'. If it is seriously being suggested that the reliability of the text of an entire book can turn on the question of the 'original layout' of a couple of lines of poetry quoted within it, then by this very criterion the accuracy of the rest of the Bodley Head *Earth Memories* is clearly suspect.

On the 'classic' status or otherwise of Llewelyn's work, I would imagine the fact that *A Struggle for Life* is no longer listed on the website of Alma Classics, which took over the Oneworld Classics list, has less to do with their bothering to deem Llewelyn's work undeserving of such status than that the initial print-run has sold out or been otherwise disposed of and no new edition has been issued. In other words, the book is no longer available. It may be no more opinion as to what constitutes a 'classic' – numerous publishers, large and small, use the word to give an aura to their lists. But Little Toller's Nature Classics Library contains numerous titles that would qualify for this approbation in many people's estimation, and I would have thought the addition of a collection of Llewelyn's essays to its distinguished list of British writers would be something to welcome, as helping to give him the higher profile that — along with John Cowper and Theodore — the Powyses need if they are not to remain forever on the fringes of English Literature.

For myself, I appreciate Adrian Cooper's willingness to add Llewelyn Powys to his catalogue, with all the potentially ruinous risks that independent publishing involves. What Little Toller has produced is an attractive collection of Llewelyn's essays, with an appropriately evocative title, that is the first to bring together pieces relating almost entirely to the English country he knew and that does not also include essays on other writers or specifically philosophical topics such as 'Morality' or 'God'. I believe it is also the first time since the Village Press's edition of *A Baker's Dozen* in 1974 that any of Gertrude's woodcuts have been reproduced in book form at all. With a striking painting by Dorset-based Italian artist Marzia Colonna adorning the cover, a Foreword that provides an adequate explanation of the collection, and an excellent Introduction by John Gray, it is a well-bound and graceful volume that will draw the eye wherever it is displayed and give pleasure to readers discovering Llewelyn's work for the first time.

It would be foolish to expect unqualified recognition of every new publication of the Powys Brothers' work, and books must obviously stand or fall on their own merits or imperfections. Of the claim that this volume is a kind of 'confidence trick' I think the less said the better, but I feel the aims of the Society would be better served by moving away from this kind of pedantry and disparagement to an appreciation of the larger picture, which is the need to keep attracting new readers. If, in eighty years' time, an enterprising young publisher decided to put together a collection of Llewelyn's country essays and issue them under a title that had a particular reso-

nance - say, 'Earth Memories' - I for one, though I will no longer be around, would very much hope it attracted many readers. As things are, the Little Toller *Earth Memories* is now the only significant collection of Llewelyn's work in print. I would like to think that it would be welcomed and – along with the Powys-related titles of the Sundial Press, other independent ventures and the Powys Society itself – supported by anyone who has the true literary standing of the Powyses at heart.

Llewelyn Powys, Father Hamilton (a Cowper Johnson cousin), and John Cowper Powys deep in conversation in Patchin Place, New York. This was taken at the same time as another version printed in JCP's Letters to his Brother Llewelyn, *ed. Malcolm Elwin, vol 1 (London: Village Press, 1975), dated c. 1923.*

Stephen Powys Marks

All those Littleton Powyses

In 1646 Thomas Powys of Henley Hall (1617–1671) married Anne Littleton (*d.* 1655, aged 33), thus setting a precedent in the Powys family for the many sons who bore as a Christian name her Littteton surname. There are many examples of such conversion, like Dudley, Evelyn, Montagu, Sidney and Russell. Anne's father was Sir Adam Littleton of Stoke Milburne, Shropshire. The Littleton family had for many generations been distinguished in the top ranks of the law, and none so famous as Anne's great-great-great-grandfather, Sir Thomas Littleton (*see cover*), the author of the first exposition of the English system of land tenure, *Tenores Novelli* or *Treatise on Tenures*. He died on August 23rd 1481; he is portrayed as 'Judge Littleton the Famous English Lawyer' in an engraving done more than a century later by Robert Vaughan in Sir Edward Coke's work, *Institutes*; its first part, a Commentary on 'Littleton', was published in 1628, and the engraving in a second edition of 1629. The engraving has anachronistic details which could not have belonged to the dress of a judge of the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, this must be one of the earliest representations of an ancestor of the Powys clan. The author was indeed known as '*Tenures Littleton*'.

The *Treatise* was written in a combination of Norman-French and English phrases known as law French.

This Sir Thomas (de) Littleton, was the eldest of four sons of Thomas Heuster (later Westcote) and Elizabeth Littleton/ Lyttleton/ Lyttelton/ Luttleton, daughter of Thomas Littleton, Lord of Frankley; born Thomas Westcote, Sir Thomas changed his name to Littleton. Her family can be traced back four or five more generations, taking the Littleton name well towards the twelth century. Some of the lines of the Littleton wives can be taken further back, as for example the ancestry of Audrey Poyntz the wife of Sir Adam Littleton, to the eleventh century.

'Tenures' Littleton had three sons of whom the youngest, Thomas Littleton of Spetchley, Worcs, was the forebear of the Anne who married Thomas Powys. The two older sons, William and Richard, were the ancestors of families holding peerages of Cobham (formerly Lyttelton) and Hatherton.

Anne bore Thomas Powys 6 children. The first was Sir Littleton Powys, of Henley Hall in Shropshire (1647–1732), the first to be named Littleton; he died without surviving issue, and was succeeded by the second son, Sir Thomas Powys (1649–1719). It was this Sir Thomas who purchased the Lilford Estate, Northants in 1711, and is the ancestor of all the Powyses shewn on my Bar Chart (first reproduced in *The Powys Society Newsletter* 43 (2001), revised version printed in *The Powys Journal* xxi of 2011, 188); this chart includes the Montacute family, the Lilford family, the Hardwick family, among them the diarist Caroline Powys, and the Powys family at Meanwood, Yorks.

The next Littleton Powys (1748–1825) shewn in the Victoria County History

genealogical volume for Northamptonshire (1906) is Sir Thomas's great-grandson, who was installed as Rector of Tichmarsh in 1788, through the patronage of his elder brother Thomas (1743–1800), who, almost at the end of his life, became the first Lord Lilford in 1797. Then another Littleton Powys (1781–1842), the nephew of the first Littleton and son of the first Lord Lilford, also became Rector of Tichmarsh in 1805.

With these two Powys Rectors of Tichmarsh we see plenty of opportunity for confusion even by as learned a researcher as Mary Barham Johnson into the history of the Donne and Johnson families (ancestors of the Montacute Powyses) and her photocopied manuscript of some 800 pages bound in three volumes. Before the second Littleton Powys became Rector of Tichmarsh, he had been a Curate to his uncle Littleton: the parishioners would have had two Revd Littleton Powyses at the same time, though the younger was also Hon. as the son of Lord Lilford, so he was the Hon. and Revd Littleton Powys, assisting the Revd Littleton Powys.

We are now entering familiar territory. This nephew was the father of Littleton Charles Powys (1789–1872), the Rector of Stalbridge, father of Littleton Albert Powys (died of cholera in Kandahar in 1879) and of Charles Francis Powys (1843–1923), father of another Littleton Charles Powys; and carrying the name on, his brother JCP's son was named Littleton Alfred Powys.

I want to acknowledge the immense body of careful and authoritative work done by Timothy Powys-Lybbe in sorting out many confusing assertions in published works. I would have been lost without his website, www.tim.ukpub.net, Powys-Lybbe Ancestry, with more than 26,000 names.

Stephen Powys Marks

Rock, an Erratic on ridge above Phudd Hill – possibly JCP's 'Merlin's tomb'? His walks with named features could be traced. The trees would not have been there, more open scrub, stone, walls, a track. 'Rock' most impressive: Rock + people gives scale.